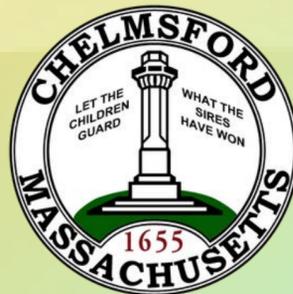
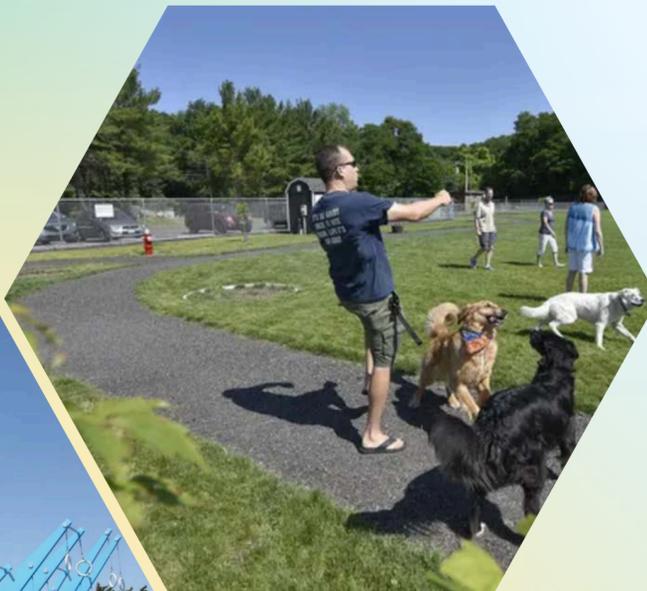




# chelmsford open space & recreation plan



# 2025



Prepared by Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG)

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## Acronym Table

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	American Disability Act
ARP	Adaptive Reuse Projects
AUD	Accessory Dwelling Unit
BAOD	Business Amenities Overlay District
BFRT	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
BLS	Bureau of Labor Statistics
BPAC	Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
BPP	Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
CEIOD	Community Enhancement and Investment Overlay District
CIRP	Commercial or Industrial Redevelopment Projects
CLCT	Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust
CPA	Community Preservation Act
CPC	Community Preservation Committee
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CPI-U	Consumer Price Index
CPW	Chelmsford Pop Warner Football
CR	Conservation Restriction
CSA	Community Support Agriculture Program
CSO	Combined Sewage Overflow
CST	Chelmsford Swim and Tennis
CTI	Community Teamwork, INC
CV	Center Village
CV	Center Village District
CWD	Chelmsford Water District
CYB	Chelmsford Youth Baseball
CYL	Chelmsford Youth Lacrosse
CYSA	Chelmsford Youth Soccer

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DPW	Department Public Works
ECWD	East Chelmsford Water District
EEA	Energy and Environmental Affairs
EJ	Environmental Justice
EOHLC	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FORTT	Friends of the Regional Towpaths and Trails
GIS	Geographic Information System
HHS	Health and Human Services
HMP	Hazard Mitigation Plan
IWPA	Interim Wellhead Protection Area
LA District	Limited Industrial
LID	Low Impact Design
LRTA	Lowell Regional Transit Authority
LRWWU	Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility
LSC	Lowell Sportsmen’s Club
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
MAPC	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MassDEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MCMOD	MBTA Communities Multi Family Overlay District
MDAR	Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness
NCWD	North Chelmsford Water District
NEMBA	New England Mountain Bike Association
NHESP	Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program
NMCOG	Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
NRPA	National Recreation and Parks Association

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OSRP	Open Space and Recreation Plan
OSRPC	Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee
PFAS	Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances
POS	Planned Open Space
QR code	Quick Response Code
RA	Residential A Zone (RA - lowest density)
RAO	Remedial Action Outcomes
RB	Residential B Zone (RB - low density)
RM	Residential Multi Family District
RMSTC	Russell Mill Swim and Tennis Club
RRRP	Residential Reuse Redevelopment Projects
SCORP	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
SIDP	Sustainable Infill Development Projects
SuAsCo	Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers
TREE	Tree Replacement Establishment and Enhancement
U.S. EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
UMDI	The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute
UPS	United Parcel Service
VCOD	Village Center Overlay District

## Section 1: Executive Summary

The Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) 2025 provides a forward-thinking blueprint to preserve, enhance, and expand the town's open spaces and recreational resources. Building on past OSRPs, this updated plan reflects Chelmsford's commitment to addressing new challenges, meeting evolving community needs, and ensuring the town remains a vibrant and sustainable place for future generations.

At its core, the 2025 OSRP emphasizes inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and adaptability. This document broadly uses the term "open space" to include not just conservation land,

forests, and parks but also agricultural lands, greenways, and undeveloped areas with potential for recreation or conservation. The plan recognizes the complex factors influencing open space—such as climate change, population dynamics, and equity—and seeks to offer clear strategies to navigate these challenges.



### Vision and Goals

The OSRP outlines a comprehensive vision for Chelmsford's open spaces: to maintain and enhance these areas as vital community assets that promote well-being, environmental sustainability, and recreational enjoyment for residents of all ages and abilities. To achieve this vision, the plan sets out five overarching goals:

- **Increase community engagement with open spaces** by improving communication, fostering youth programs, and expanding educational opportunities.
- **Enhance accessibility and equity** by investing in infrastructure that makes open spaces more inclusive, particularly in underserved neighborhoods.
- **Promote climate resilience** through strategic land use, conservation efforts, and public education on sustainability.
- **Maintain and upgrade facilities** for high-quality conservation, recreation, and agricultural uses.
- **Expand recreational opportunities** to meet the needs of a diverse and growing population.

Each goal is supported by specific objectives and a detailed Ten-year action plan to ensure measurable progress.



*Image: 1 - Fall on the Pond – Credit: Dave Sperry*

### Community Engagement and Inclusivity

Public participation played a central role in shaping the 2025 OSRP. The planning process, guided by the OSRP Subcommittee and supported by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), involved extensive community outreach efforts designed to capture the diverse perspectives of Chelmsford residents.

- **Surveys and Forums:** Residents shared their priorities and concerns through online surveys, focus groups, and public events like the Chelmsford Farmers Market and an Ice Cream Social.
- **Enhanced Outreach:** Particular attention was paid to engaging Environmental Justice communities, ensuring historically underserved populations had a voice. Outreach included targeted flyer distribution and direct engagement through interviews and focus groups.
- **Youth Participation:** Innovative programs, such as a train-the-trainer facilitation model for high school students, empowered young people to contribute ideas and develop leadership skills while participating in the planning process.

These efforts resulted in a comprehensive understanding of community needs and aspirations, ensuring the OSRP reflects Chelmsford’s diverse population and its collective vision for the town’s open spaces.

### Key Focus Areas

The plan identifies several critical areas of focus:

- **Accessibility:** Making open spaces and recreational facilities accessible to people of all abilities is a top priority. This includes increasing trail accessibility trails, improving connections to open spaces, and investing in underserved areas.
- **Environmental Justice:** Addressing inequities in access to open spaces by prioritizing investments in neighborhoods with fewer open spaces and recreational resources.
- **Climate Resilience:** Preserving climate-vulnerable areas, protecting water quality, and promoting land uses that mitigate climate impacts.
- **Recreational Expansion:** Meeting the needs of a growing and aging population through flexible recreational programming.

### Achievements Since 2017

The 2025 OSRP builds on the significant progress made since the previous plans. Chelmsford has successfully acquired and managed new parcels of land, improved existing recreational facilities, and introduced programs to educate residents about stormwater management and conservation. These accomplishments demonstrate the town’s ongoing commitment to preserving its natural resources while expanding community engagement and recreation opportunities.



*Image: 2 Trail Maintenance - Credit Karl Bischoff*

### Challenges and Opportunities

Chelmsford faces several challenges, including climate change, increasing demand for recreational spaces, and the need for sustainable funding. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation. The plan emphasizes partnerships with local organizations, community stewardship, and creative land-use strategies to maximize the impact of limited resources.

### Ten-Year Action Plan

The 2025 OSRP includes a detailed ten-year action plan to translate its goals into tangible outcomes. Key actions include:

- Developing comprehensive management plans for open spaces.
- Expanding public education programs to raise awareness about environmental issues.
- Identifying and conserving lands critical for climate resilience and local food production.
- Increasing recreational programming for residents of all ages.

### A Vision for the Future

The Chelmsford OSRP 2025 reflects a shared vision for the future: a town where open spaces are preserved and celebrated as integral to the community’s identity and quality of life. By fostering collaboration, embracing sustainability, and prioritizing inclusivity, Chelmsford aims to ensure its open spaces remain sources of pride and enjoyment for generations to come. This plan is a testament to Chelmsford’s dedication to thoughtful, community-driven planning and its commitment to creating a vibrant, equitable, and resilient environment for all residents.



Image: 3 Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Friendship Park – Credit Christine Clancy

## Section 2: Introduction

### Statement of Purpose

The Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan provides a comprehensive blueprint to preserve and enhance the Town's open spaces, parks, and recreational opportunities. It ensures everyone can enjoy the natural beauty and activities that make Chelmsford unique and guides the Town's conservation and recreational development efforts.

The term "open space" is often used to refer to conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks, wellhead protection areas, and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways, or any open area owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation. However, the term can also refer to undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interests. This includes vacant lots and brownfields that can be redeveloped into recreation areas. Some open spaces can be used for passive activities such as walking, hiking, and nature study, while others are used for more active recreational uses, including soccer, tennis, or baseball. The term is used throughout this document with this broader definition in mind. Although open space itself is a simple concept, the factors that affect it, and that it affects are complex.<sup>1</sup>

Building on the foundation of previous OSRPs, this update reflects Chelmsford's evolving priorities, directly addressing challenges in land use, recreational access, and climate change. With a focus on increasing accessibility, fostering resilience, and improving quality of life, the plan aims to safeguard and expand the town's open spaces, creating a sustainable, equitable environment that will serve the community for generations. Press releases, Town Manager's Newsletter, social media, and flyers were used to promote public outreach events.

Since the 2017 plan, Chelmsford has made progress in preserving and enhancing its open spaces. The town actively managed its resources by identifying issues at various parcels and addressing them based on use and demand. The town made targeted improvements to frequently used parcels and consistently monitored potential recreation sites to secure future opportunities. Chelmsford also acquired new parcels that meet recreational needs and worked to diversify the uses of both new and existing recreation and conservation lands. Beyond expanding recreational opportunities, Chelmsford focused on educating residents about stormwater protection to preserve natural water bodies. These initiatives demonstrate Chelmsford's ongoing commitment to sustaining and improving its open spaces for the benefit of all residents.

### Planning Process and Public Participation

Building on accomplishments since the 2017 plan, the planning process for the updated Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan was led by the project consultant, NMCOG, and a specially appointed sub-committee, the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee (OSRPC), which ensured broad community involvement and strategic direction. The OSRPC included town staff, conservation commission members, the planning board, the Select Board, and community members.

At the project kickoff, NMCOG led a visioning session with the sub-committee, setting the stage for the planning process. The agenda included a review of the community setting and a facilitated discussion on past accomplishments and areas for improvement in open space and recreation management. To ensure a comprehensive approach, NMCOG introduced the Environmental Justice

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<sup>1</sup> Open Space and Recreation Plan Workbook - The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services, 2008 Revision

(EJ) concept and emphasized the importance of recognizing and intentionally engaging Chelmsford's EJ communities as part of the planning process.

NMCOG developed the OSRP Community Engagement Plan to guide community engagement, which featured intentional EJ outreach through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Additionally, the plan included a wide range of outreach methods such as a comprehensive survey (available both online and printed), social media campaigns, marketing and branding efforts, newsletter articles, press releases, postcards, flyers, giveaways, community events, and public forums to gather broad input and ensure participation from all sectors of the community. Community outreach occurred between June and October 2024.

### Chelmsford Farmers Markets

The team kicked off community outreach and launched the online survey at two Chelmsford Farmers Markets, the first on June 1, Market for the Common's Pride Celebration, and the second on June 8. The primary goal was to educate the public about the OSRP process and encourage participation.

Market visitors learned about the importance of open space and recreation planning and how they could contribute to shaping Chelmsford's green spaces. To further engage the community, the team handed out wildflower seed packets labeled with a QR code linking to the project survey. This simple yet effective gesture spread awareness and provided a lasting reminder of the



project's significance. The OSRPC also encouraged visitors to take the survey and attend the upcoming Chelmsford OSRP Open House for deeper involvement.

*Image: Market on the Common Pride Day. Right to left Karl Bischoff, Meghan Tenhoff, Paul MacDougall, Peter Spawn. Credit: Tom Christiano*

### Public Forum 1 – Open House

During the first public forum, an Open House at the Chelmsford Senior Center, the team raised awareness about the upcoming ten-year OSRP and its significance to the community. Various organizations, including the Sudbury Valley Trustees, Merrimack Valley Watershed Council,

Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust, and others, set up tabletop displays to engage attendees and explain how their missions connect with the OSRP.

The two-hour event allowed participants to come and go freely. Activities, such as rock painting and a kids' table with Legos and rainbow loom, kept children engaged. Committee members and NMCOG representatives gave brief presentations, covering key aspects of the OSRP, including Chelmsford's open spaces, climate resilience, and recreational opportunities. The team encouraged participants to take the OSRP survey, share why they love living in Chelmsford, and offer feedback. Committee members were on hand to explain the planning process and collect feedback. 45 people signed in and were encouraged to share the OSRP survey with their neighbors, helping to broaden community input.



Image: 4 OSRP Open House Rock Paintings - Credit: Mike Asciola

### Public Forum 2 – Chelmsford Planning Social

The Chelmsford Planning Social functioned as the second public forum, blending multiple planning efforts, including the strategic plan, housing production, and digital equity initiatives. The event brought residents and planners together in a relaxed setting with an ice cream social and family-friendly activities like rock painting, encouraging broad community participation. The primary goal centered on gathering feedback for the OSRP, particularly on the vision statement and initial survey results, while also engaging the community in discussions about the future of Chelmsford's open spaces.



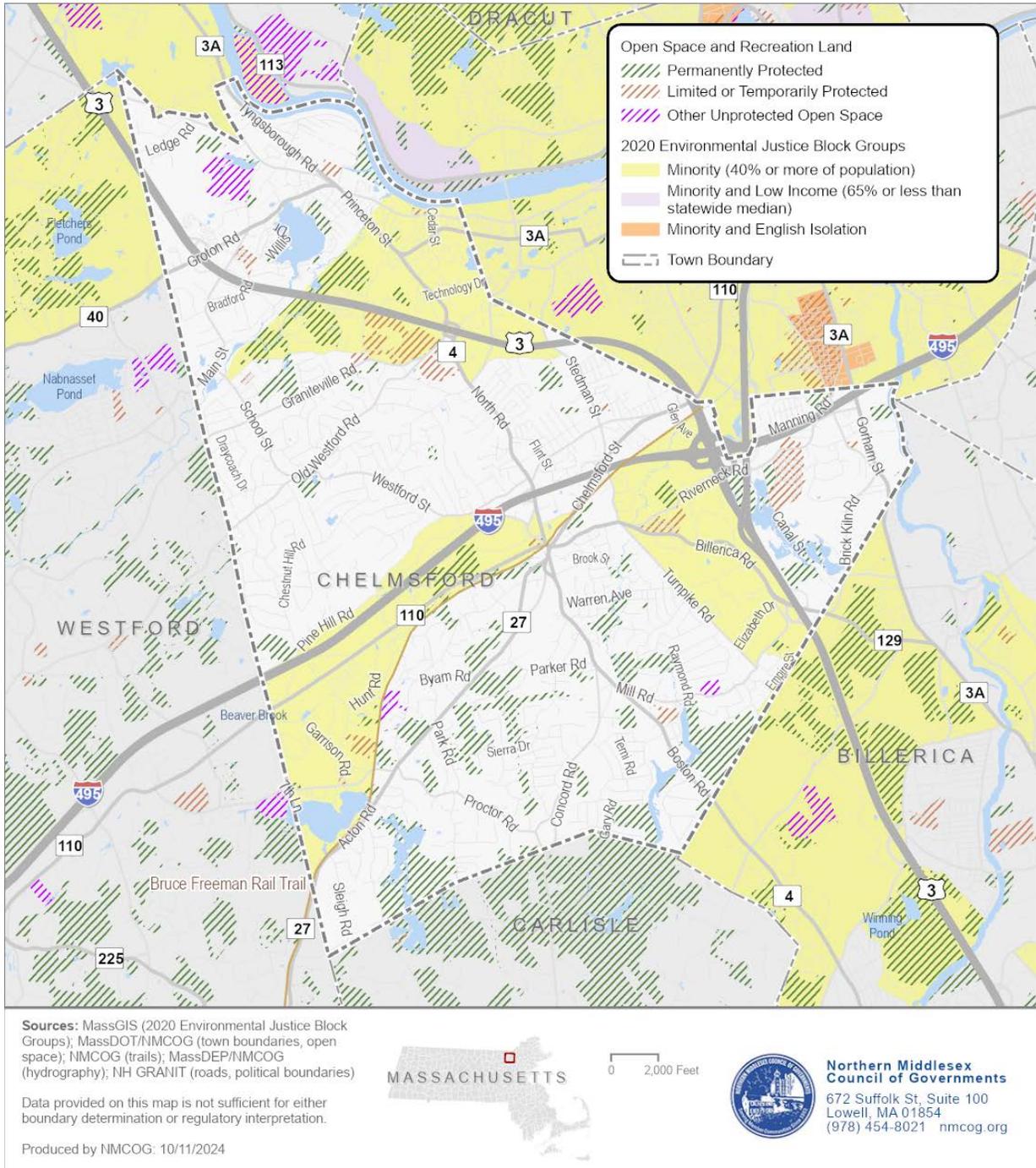
Image: 5 Planning Social Event - Credit: Mike Asciola

### Public Forum 3 – Virtual

Public Forum 3 held via Zoom, allowed the community to explore the plan's goals and implementation strategies while providing feedback on how to begin putting the plan into action. Among the 12 attendees, notable comments focused interest in establishing a Recreation Department, improving accessibility to community meetings, and fostering greater collaboration among town boards and committees.

## Enhanced Outreach

The Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan focuses on equity, accessibility, and environmental justice outcomes. Enhanced outreach and public participation were core to the planning process, focusing on engaging EJ populations. NMCOG worked closely with the OSRPC, providing education on identifying EJ indicators and fostering cultural sensitivity to ensure inclusive community engagement.



**Map: 1 Chelmsford Environmental Justice Communities Map**

The OSRPC distributed flyers in over 140 locations throughout Chelmsford, 95 of which were in EJ communities. Posted locations included bus stops, housing authorities, apartments, mobile home

## Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035

### Section 2 – Introduction

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parks, childcare centers, parks, playgrounds, coffee shops, corner stores, Walmart, and 13 properties near EJ-designated areas, as shown on *Map 1, Environmental Justice Communities Map*, above. The wide distribution aimed to reach underserved residents and encourage them to participate in the OSRP survey.

Direct engagement was a key focus, which included two important focus groups. The first occurred at the Chelmsford Woods Residences Community Center within the Chelmsford Housing Authority, where eight compensated residents participated. The family-friendly event included children's activities, such as coloring and snacks, ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment. The second focus group at Chelmsford High School brought together 16 student members of the Asian Student Organization (ASO), Black Student Union (BSU), Middle Eastern Student Association (MESA), and South Asian Student Association (SASA). Students shared ideas on how the OSRP could better serve youth and future generations. This event also included a “train-the-trainer” facilitation model, allowing students to build leadership and meeting facilitation skills while contributing to the planning process.

Semi-structured interviews provided a crucial avenue for directly engaging Chelmsford's marginalized populations. NMCOG began by interviewing the Town's Community Services Coordinator to understand the challenges faced by these groups. The Community Services Coordinator then introduced NMCOG to individuals identified through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) 2.0 process. NMCOG conducted follow-up interviews with these individuals, gathering valuable insights into their concerns. An OSRPC member, using a script developed by NMCOG, interviewed three staff members from Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI), a state-contracted organization providing family shelter services. The interview provided insights from those who support 60 shelter residents, many of whom speak Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole. At the close of the discussion, the interviewer expressed gratitude for the CTI staff's vital work and reaffirmed Chelmsford's commitment to ensuring shelter residents feel welcome in the community.

Targeted flyer posting, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups demonstrate Chelmsford's commitment to inclusive and equitable participation, ensuring that the voices of EJ populations and other underrepresented groups play a central role in shaping the future of the town's open spaces and recreation resources.

The Chelmsford OSRP reflects the Town's dedication to inclusive community engagement and forward-thinking planning. Through enhanced outreach, direct participation from Environmental Justice populations, and multiple public forums, Chelmsford actively involved residents in shaping the future of its open spaces. These efforts ensure that the plan builds on past achievements and addresses present needs, fostering a more accessible, resilient, and vibrant environment for all community members.

## Section 3: Community Setting

### Regional Context

Chelmsford is a suburban town of 36,392<sup>2</sup> people living within a 22.38<sup>3</sup> square mile area located 24 miles northwest of Boston and 10 miles south of the State of New Hampshire. Bounded by the City of Lowell and the towns of Billerica, Carlisle, Westford, and Tyngsborough, Chelmsford is part of the greater Lowell region in Northern Middlesex County. Greater Lowell is part of a larger metropolitan region oriented towards Nashua, NH, Interstates 95/495, and the Boston/Cambridge core.

Two major highways bisect the Town and place Chelmsford within two major regional transportation corridors. Route 3 connects Chelmsford southeast to Boston and its suburbs north to New Hampshire. Interstate 495 connects Chelmsford to the North Shore, Worcester, and Cape Cod. State routes connect Chelmsford with surrounding local communities, including Route 27 (Westford and Acton), Route 110 (Westford, Littleton, and Lowell), Route 4 (Bedford and Carlisle), Route 3A (Tyngsborough), Route 40 (Westford and Groton), and Route 129 (Billerica).

Chelmsford is located within the Merrimack and Concord River Watersheds. The Merrimack River creates the town boundary between Chelmsford, Tyngsborough, and Lowell, and the Concord River serves as a town boundary between Chelmsford, Lowell, and Billerica. *Map: 2 Regional Context Map* illustrates the spatial relationships described above.



*Image: 6 Thanksgiving Forest Credit: Jerry Schmidt*

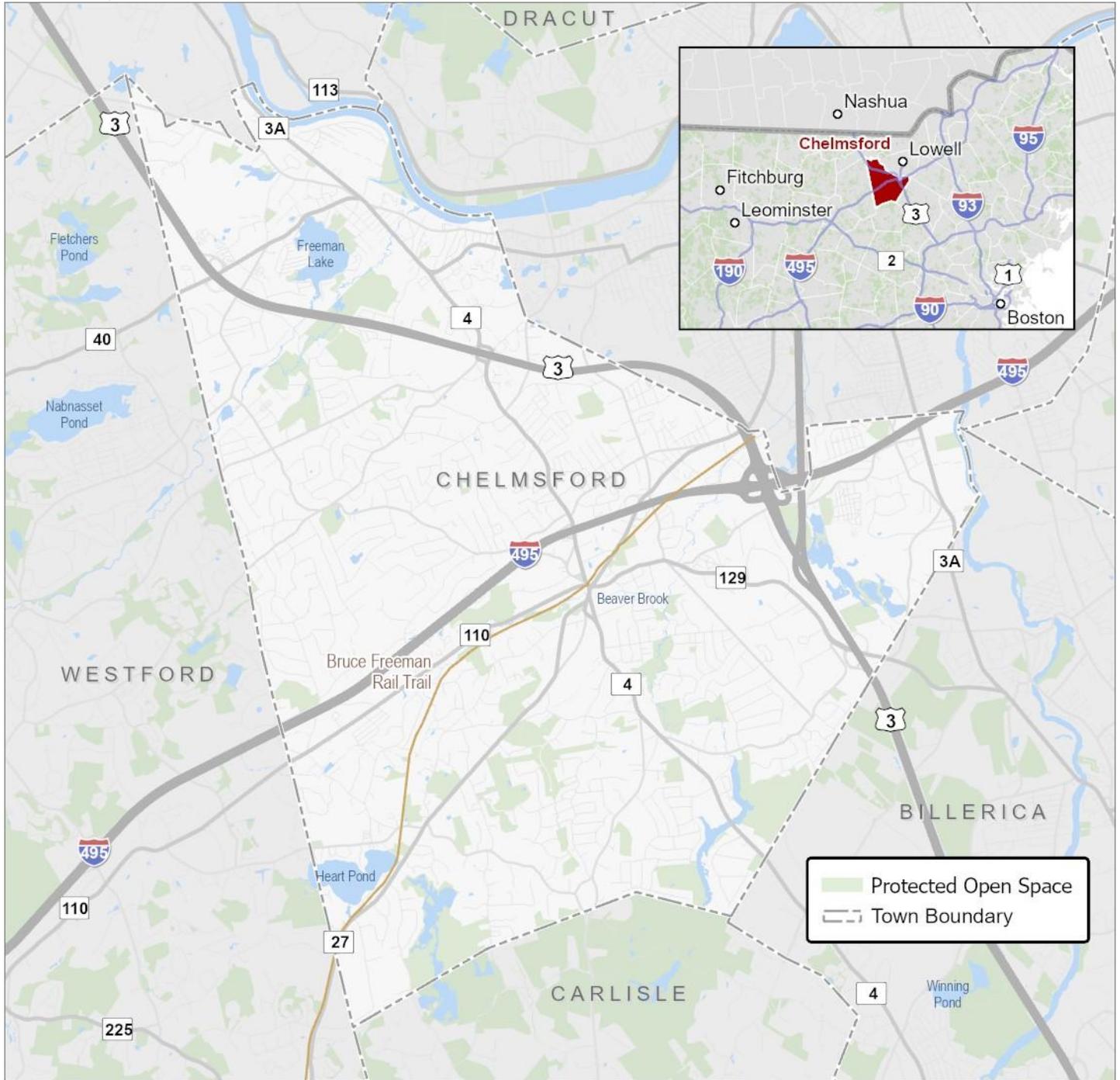
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<sup>2</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census of Population and Housing, updated every 10 years. Decennial Census by Decades

<sup>3</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, TIGER/Line Shapefiles and Gazetteer Files. Land area updated every 10 years. TIGER/Line Shapefiles Gazetteer Files Gazetteer Files U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) P1: RACE - Census Bureau Table

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
 Section 3 – Community Setting

Map: 2 Regional Context Map



**Sources:**  
 MassDOT/NMCOG (town boundaries, open space);  
 NMCOG (trails); MassDEP/NMCOG (hydrography); NH  
 GRANIT (roads, political boundaries)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either  
 boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 10/2/2024



0 2,000 Feet



**Northern Middlesex  
 Council of Governments**  
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 Lowell, MA 01854  
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## History of the Community

A community's physical development can be traced through its land use history. Chelmsford, Massachusetts, has a well-documented past, reflecting the growth patterns typical of New England towns. The Wamesit Tribe made their home in the town now called Chelmsford before settlement by people of European descent. The Wamesit, a subgroup of the larger Pennacook people, lived in the area that would become Chelmsford, utilizing its diverse ecosystems for sustenance and cultural practices. The first non-native settlers arrived in 1652 from Woburn and Concord. The original petition the General Court and Governor John Endicott granted in 1653 was for a 6-square-mile tract of land, which did not extend as far as the Merrimack River. Like other indigenous groups in the region, the Wamesit practiced an ethnoecology intricately tied to the landscape. Their practices reflected a deep understanding of the local environment, allowing them to manage the land sustainably while meeting their needs.

The arrival of European settlers in the mid-17th century brought profound changes to the Wamesit people. The introduction of European diseases, the loss of land, and the disruption of traditional practices led to significant challenges for the Wamesit. Despite these pressures, the legacy of the Wamesit people continues to influence Chelmsford's landscape and cultural heritage. Many of the area's natural features and place names can be traced back to the Wamesit and their interaction with the land.

The Town was incorporated in 1655 and named Chelmsford after the town in Essex, England, where many of the original settlers came. It is the only town in the nation by this name. Early settlers were primarily farmers, with millers and other tradesmen following soon after.

Trails once used by Native Americans evolved into routes connecting early colonial farms. Local taverns and inns became key stops along stagecoach routes that linked nearby towns. At the center of the community was the Common, which served as a hub for both travelers and residents in the mostly farming-based area. Chelmsford Center Village still maintains much of its traditional New England village charm, with small shops in older, standalone buildings and historic homes that continue to serve as single-family residences.

As industrial expansion accelerated in the early 20th century, Chelmsford's population nearly doubled. In the early 1930s, despite the Great Depression and an exodus of textile manufacturing firms to the southern United States, the population continued to expand.



*Image: 7: Winter Mill - Credit: Dave Sperry*

In the years following World War II, Chelmsford experienced a significant population surge and the rise of a car-dependent society. The construction of key highways, especially Interstate 495 and U.S. Route 3, opened new economic possibilities, transforming Chelmsford from a rural town into a developed suburb. The Town's population grew from 9,408 in 1950 to 15,130 in 1960, a 61% increase. Throughout the 1960s, Chelmsford's population more than doubled, reaching 31,432 by the end of the decade, making it the fastest-growing town in Massachusetts at the time. Since 1970, however, population growth has slowed significantly, increasing only about 8% between 1970 and 2010. However, between 2010 and 2020, Chelmsford saw its population increase to 36,392, an increase of 8%.

## Population Characteristics

This section provides an overview of the demographic changes in Chelmsford since the publication of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) update 2017. It includes analyses of population, households, age cohorts, race and ethnicity, disability status, and income. These analyses aim to understand how the population characteristics have changed over the past decade and project future growth rates. The data helps create a foundation for targeting certain goals contained within the OSRP.

### Population and Growth

The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) created population and household projections for the 2030-2050 period following the 2020 Decennial Census. These projections can be found in *Table 1: Total Population and Projections, Greater Lowell and Chelmsford (1950-2050)*, below. We can analyze population and household trends using historic Decennial Censuses and the aforementioned projection studies from UMDI and MAPC. It is important to note that projections can be influenced by many local, state, and national factors, including economic factors, federal immigration policy, and local housing policy.

As the post-World War II era suburbanization occurred in the US, Chelmsford was among the fastest growing communities in Massachusetts and the Greater Lowell Region, growing over 234 percent, from 9,408 to 31,432, between 1950 and 1970. During this period, the town outpaced the Greater Lowell Region, which also saw a population increase of 49 percent. It also saw its share of the Greater Lowell population go from 6 percent in 1950 to 14 percent in 1970. This share of the Greater Lowell population has been consistent over the past 50 years and is projected to remain consistent.

Chelmsford's population growth plateaued in the 1970s, with a modest growth of 7.5 percent over the 40-year period of 1970 – 2010, while the Greater Lowell Region saw a 30 percent population growth over this time frame. The 2000 – 2010 decade saw little growth in Chelmsford at 0 percent and 2 percent for the Greater Lowell Region. However, the 2010 – 2020 period saw growth of 8 percent in Chelmsford and the Greater Lowell Region. UMDI projections for the 2020 – 2030 decade show Chelmsford maintaining a 6 percent population increase similar to the previous decade, outpacing the 3 percent growth projection for the Greater Lowell Region.

### Population Density

Chelmsford's population density is consistently estimated between 1,600 and 1,625 people per square mile, reflecting a moderately dense suburban character by US Census ACS estimates. At this density, residents are spread out enough that neighborhood-based parks, trails, and playgrounds are highly valued, since not all families can easily walk to a central town facility. Well-distributed recreational spaces reduce car dependency and support equitable access.

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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Table 1: Total Population and Projections, Greater Lowell and Chelmsford (1950-2050)

Year	Chelmsford Population	Chelmsford Growth Rate	Greater Lowell Region	Regional Growth Rate	Chelmsford as a % of Region
1950	9,408	-	147,957	-	6%
1960	15,130	61%	169,403	14%	9%
1970	31,432	108%	220,039	30%	14%
1980	31,174	-1%	234,782	7%	13%
1990	32,383	4%	263,659	12%	12%
2000	33,858	5%	281,225	7%	12%
2010	33,802	0%	286,901	2%	12%
2020	36,392	8%	310,009	8%	12%
2030*	38,220	5%	320,695	3%	12%
2040*	38,700	1%	322,799	1%	12%
2050*	38,079	-2%	316,493	-2%	12%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1950-2020. \* *Projections from UMDJ, Long-Term Population Projections for Massachusetts Municipalities and Regional Planning Areas, 2023.*

### Population Age Distribution and Projection

To determine how best to meet future open space and recreation demand in Chelmsford, it is important to examine the age of the population, both currently and over time. Changes in the age composition of a community have significant implications for planning for specific demands. For example, households with young children have different open space and recreation needs than households without children, and empty nest households may have different needs than those with someone over 65 living alone. The size of cohorts can also be used to predict future needs, as children or young adults will grow older and may wish to form households of their own in Chelmsford, while older adults may need more accessible recreation needs. *Table 2: Age Distribution of Chelmsford Residents (2010 and 2020)* The breakdown of Chelmsford's population by age cohort in 2010 and 2020 is below.

The largest cohorts in Chelmsford are the 45-59 ages (22 percent or 7,832 people) and the 60-74 ages (18 percent or 6,543 people) a large portion of the population has reached or will be reaching the typical age of retirement from the workforce. This could suggest much of the community is aging and there may be a need for less physically demanding and accessible amenities and activities.

Chelmsford experienced an 8 percent growth in population during the 2010-2020 decade. However, decreases in four (4) age cohorts occurred during this time period in the following cohorts: the 0-9 years (-3 percent); 10-19 years (-3 percent); 35-44 years (-4 percent); and 45-59 years (-6 percent). The decrease in the 0-9 years cohort is likely due to a lower birthrate during this decade and the decrease in the percentage and the decrease in the 10-19 year cohort aligns with the count from the 0-9 year cohort in 2010, and suggests this group remained largely the same. The 34-44 years and 45-59 years cohorts, while representing two of the three largest cohort groups in 2010 and 2020, both saw the largest population losses.

The four (4) age cohorts that increased over the 2010-2020 period all saw substantial increases in growth. The 20-24 years cohort saw an increase of 34 percent or 469 people which was the largest percentage change of all cohorts. The 25-34 ages cohort increased by 24 percent or 795 people representing the second largest segment gain.

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Table 2: Age Distribution of Chelmsford Residents (2010 and 2020)

Ages	2010		2020		Change
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
0-9 years	4,003	12%	3,897	11%	-3%
10-19 years	4,400	13%	4,272	12%	-3%
20-24 years	1,395	4%	1,864	5%	34%
25-34 years	3,295	10%	4,090	11%	24%
35-44 years	4,806	14%	4,623	13%	-4%
45-59 years	8,351	25%	7,832	22%	-6%
60-74 years	4,979	15%	6,543	18%	31%
75+ years	2,573	8%	3,271	9%	27%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>33,802</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>36,392</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census Table P12.

Projections for age cohorts are shown in *Table 3: Projected Age Distribution of Chelmsford Residents (2025-2050)*. This data provides a useful indication of the future age distribution of Chelmsford residents. The projected total population in Chelmsford over the 25 years from 2025-2050, shows the population peaking in 2035 at 37,825, a 2.4 percent increase from 2025. However, the projections from 2035-2050 show a decline to 36,790, representing a net change from 2025 of -0.4 percent. The projected cohort populations during this period show a substantial gain in the 80+ cohort, with a 4 percent gain in the total population. There were also slight gains in the 40-49 and 50-59-year-old cohorts, each seeing a 1 percent increase in their share of the total population over the projected 25-year period. The 20-29 and 30-39 cohorts are projected to see the most substantial loss between 2025-2050, each showing a 2 percent decrease in their share of the population. Coupled with projected reductions from the 0-9 and 10-19 year old cohorts, Chelmsford is projected to have an older population by 2050, with the majority (62%) of residents over 40. While addressing the needs of an aging community often focuses on ADA accessibility and passive recreational amenities, the growing middle-aged cohorts should not be overlooked. Providing recreational assets and amenities to enable this group to be active and healthy must be accounted for.

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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Table 3: Projected Age Distribution of Chelmsford Residents (2025-2050)

Age	2025	2025 %	2030	2030 %	2035	2035 %	2040	2040 %	2050	2050 %
0-9	4,007	11%	4,317	11%	4,201	11%	3,912	10%	3,611	10%
10-19	3,723	10%	3,616	10%	3,860	10%	4,029	11%	3,688	10%
20-29	3,316	9%	2,909	8%	2,568	7%	2,507	7%	2,601	7%
30-39	5,078	14%	5,046	13%	5,010	13%	4,628	12%	4,268	12%
40-49	4,834	13%	5,467	15%	5,671	15%	5,583	15%	5,204	14%
50-59	5,064	14%	4,564	12%	4,730	13%	5,307	14%	5,383	15%
60-69	5,099	14%	5,094	14%	4,522	12%	4,118	11%	4,792	13%
70-79	3,307	9%	3,604	10%	4,000	11%	3,970	11%	3,249	9%
80+	2,515	7%	2,939	8%	3,263	9%	3,607	10%	3,994	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,943</b>		<b>37,556</b>		<b>37,825</b>		<b>37,661</b>		<b>36,790</b>	

Source: UMass Donahue Institute UMDI-DOT Vintage 2020 data, <http://www.pep.donahue-institute.org/>.

### Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Examining race and ethnicity is very important not only because of Chelmsford’s goal of providing open space and recreation amenities and opportunities for people of all backgrounds and types, but also because there is not an equitable distribution of income across race and ethnicity in Chelmsford, the region, or the United States.

*Table 4: Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Residents, Chelmsford, 2000, 2010, and 2020* breaks down the Town’s population by race and ethnicity for 2000, 2010, and 2020. According to the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, the population identifying as white decreased by 2% over the last 20 years, while nearly every other racial/ethnic category increased significantly. The population identifying as African American nearly tripled (285%); the population identifying as some other race alone more than tripled (322%); and the population identifying as two or more races increased sixfold (592%). The population identified as two or more races was the largest increase in absolute terms as well, at 1,284 individuals<sup>4</sup>. The population identifying as Hispanic or Latino/Latina increased by 255%. These nonwhite or, Hispanic or Latino/Latina populations make up a minority of the population (13 percent) but are growing rapidly.

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau changed this question in 2020 to make it easier to self-identify as two or more races. Therefore, these changes may be driven by a combination of changes in the way existing residents self-identify, small changes in the way Census and ACS questions are asked to prompt more detailed answers and the way those answers coded to more accurately capture responses, and actual diversification of race and ethnicity in Chelmsford.

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Table 4: Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Residents, Chelmsford, 2000, 2010, and 2020

Racial/Ethnic Category	2000		2010		2020		% Change
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%	2000-2020
White Alone	31,520	93%	29,944	89%	28,768	79%	-9%
Black or African American Alone	266	1%	358	1%	896	2%	237%
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	23	0%	35	0%	32	0%	39%
Asian Alone	1,563	5%	2,846	8%	4,071	11%	160%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone	3	0%	2	0%	3	0%	0%
Some Other Race Alone	177	1%	145	0%	614	2%	247%
Two or More Races	306	1%	472	1%	2,008	6%	556%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>33,858</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33,802</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>36,392</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Hispanic or Latino (All races)	418	1%	686	2%	1,509	4%	261%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010, and 2020 Decennial Census. \*0.007, \*\*0.003

### People with Disabilities

Residents with disabilities often have unique recreation needs, both in terms of the physical design and accessibility of the site or activity. This Plan should be sensitive to the specific needs of the community with disabilities and incorporate their needs into the goals and strategies for recreation and open space creation to ensure accessibility for all community members whenever possible.

*Table 5: Characteristics of the Community with Disabilities in Chelmsford (2018-2022)* provides information about the community with disabilities in Chelmsford as of 2018-22. An estimated 3,859 residents, approximately 11 percent of total estimated population at that time, were reported to have a disability. Of the population reported to have a disability, 43.6 percent are over the age of 65, 47.7 percent are between the ages of 18-64, and 8.7 percent are between the ages of 5-17. It is important to acknowledge that while more prevalent as the population ages, disability does affect people of all ages, accessible facilities and programming must address people of all ages and abilities.

Of the estimated 3,859 residents with at least one disability, 43 percent or 1,673 residents suffer from cognitive difficulty, 39 percent or 1,513 residents have an ambulatory difficulty, 30 percent or 1,167 residents experience an independent living difficulty, and 11 percent or 442 residents are not able to provide themselves self-care. It is important to note that some people experience more than one disability, which is reflected in the table.

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Table 5: Characteristics of the Community with Disabilities in Chelmsford (2018-2022)

Age Group and Disability Status	Number	Percent of Total Residents
Under 5 years old	0	0%
5-17 years old	336	1%
18-64 years old	1,839	5%
65+ years old	1,684	5%
<b>Total Number of Residents with a Disability</b>	<b>3,859</b>	<b>11%</b>
With a hearing difficulty (all ages)	1,292	4%
With a vision difficulty (all ages)	391	1%
With a cognitive difficulty (all ages)	1,673	5%
With an ambulatory difficulty (all ages)	1,513	4%
With a self-care difficulty (all ages)	442	1%
With an independent living difficulty (all ages)	1,167	3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey, Table S1810. Residents may report more than one disability.

### Households and Household Characteristics

Another important characteristic to understand the community is understanding the dynamics and trends surrounding the compositions of households. A household includes all the people who occupy a housing unit (such as a house or apartment) as their usual place of residence. A household includes the related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, wards, or employees who share the housing unit. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit such as partners or roomers, is also counted as a household. The households count excludes group quarters, more than four people living in one unit. There are two major categories of households, "family" and "nonfamily."

Traditionally, the number of residents and the number of households increase or decrease in corresponding patterns. However, variations between these numbers can show changes within the community. An increase in households without a population increase could indicate the next generation of Chelmsford residents are moving out from their family's household but staying in Chelmsford and becoming heads of households. Conversely, a decline in population and no change in households could indicate children moving away from Chelmsford entirely.

Between 2000–2010, Chelmsford experienced a 0 percent (+56 individuals) growth in population but saw a 4 percent or 501 increase in the number of households. The 2020 Decennial Census counted an increase of 6 percent in both households and population in Chelmsford. However, all other time periods in both historical and projected figures in [Table 1](#) & [Table 6](#) show the number of households outpacing population gains in both Chelmsford and the Greater Lowell Region.

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Table 6: Total Households, Greater Lowell and Chelmsford (2000-2050)

Year	Chelmsford	Change from Previous	Greater Lowell region	Change from Previous	Chelmsford Households as a % of the Region
2000	12,812		99,342		12.9%
2010	13,313	4%	104,022	5%	12.8%
2020	14,142	6%	112,764	8%	12.5%
2030*	15,387	9%	122,509	9%	12.6%
2040*	15,853	3%	125,842	3%	12.6%
2050*	15,760	-1%	125,065	-1%	12.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010, and 2020 Decennial Census. \* Projections from MAPC, Massachusetts Regional Household and Labor Force Projections and Subregional Allocation, 2023.

### Household Compositions

Breaking households further down into subtypes provides insight into the diversity of households in a community. Data from the U.S. Decennial Census and the ACS reflect the changes that have taken place in Chelmsford. Household types have become increasingly diverse over the past 20 years. *Table 7: Chelmsford Household Characteristics (2000, 2010, and 2020)* shows the various household types in Chelmsford in 2000, 2010, and 2020. Between 2000 and 2020, nonfamily households increased by 764 households or 22 percent. The most significant increase was to the nonfamily households 65 and older living alone gaining 563 households or 46 percent.

Family households with no spouse, in both male and female households also saw gains of 59 percent and 22 percent respectively over this timeframe. Also gaining in the family household category were married couples without children under 18, up 15 percent. Adversely, in the family household category married couples with children under 18 saw a 14 percent decline. This could indicate more empty nesters within the community than there were 20 years prior.

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Table 7: Chelmsford Household Characteristics (2000, 2010, and 2020)

Household Type	2000		2010		2020		Percent Change, 2000 to 2020
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
<b>Family Households</b>							
Married - couple	7,815	84%	7,763	83%	7,920	80%	1%
With related children under 18 years	3,711	47%	3,564	46%	3,199	40%	-14%
No related children under 18 years	4,104	53%	4,199	54%	4,721	60%	15%
Male householder, no spouse	344	4%	397	4%	548	6%	59%
Female householder, no spouse	1,148	12%	1,168	13%	1,405	14%	22%
<b>Total Family Households</b>	<b>9,307</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>9,328</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>9,873</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Nonfamily Households</b>							
Householder living alone	2,963	85%	3,391	85%	3,547	83%	20%
Householders 65 and older living alone	1,233	42%	1,591	47%	1,796	51%	46%
Householder living with others	542	15%	594	15%	722	17%	33%
<b>Total Nonfamily Households</b>	<b>3,505</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>3,985</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>4,269</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>12,812</b>		<b>13,313</b>		<b>14,142</b>		<b>10%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census Summary File 3 Table 012, 2010 Decennial Census Summary File 1 Table P21, 2020 Decennial Census Table P16.

### Housing Units and Type

The Chelmsford community is predominantly comprised of households residing in single family dwelling units. *Table 8: Chelmsford Number of Housing Units by Size of Structure, 2000, 2018-12, & 2018-22*, illustrates the total number of housing units (both occupied and unoccupied) by their type for 2000 through 2016-2020. Detached single family dwelling units are the most prevalent type of housing in Chelmsford making up over 68 percent of the housing units in Town. Between 2000 and 2022 it is estimated 409 new single-family units were produced.

This was only outpaced by the estimated development of multifamily developments with 10-19 units per structure with 498 over this timeframe. Multifamily developments with 20 or more units per structure are also estimated to have increased by 316 units. The development of more multifamily units in a suburban community like Chelmsford may be a sign that the community is becoming built out for single family type development and that there is demand for multifamily style units. Many of the multifamily developments in Chelmsford have limited recreational areas for the residents to utilize. These residents may seek to utilize public recreational areas to fulfil their recreational needs.

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Table 8: Chelmsford Number of Housing Units by Size of Structure, 2000, 2018-12, & 2018-22

Housing Units per Structure	2000		2008-12		2018-22		Percent Change	Unit Number Change
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	2000 – 2018-22	2000 – 2018-22
<b>1-unit, detached</b>	9,074	70%	9,360	68%	9,483	68%	4.5%	409
<b>1-unit, attached</b>	1,144	9%	1,145	8%	776	6%	- 32.2%	- 368
<b>2 units</b>	425	3%	332	2%	339	2%	- 20.2%	- 86
<b>3-4 units</b>	285	2%	237	2%	351	3%	23.2%	66
<b>5-9 units</b>	249	2%	206	1%	438	3%	75.9%	189
<b>10-19 units</b>	529	4%	731	5%	1027	7%	94.1%	498
<b>20 or more units</b>	1,053	8%	1488	11%	1,369	10%	30.0%	316
<b>Mobile Home or other</b>	266	2%	319	2%	182	1%	- 31.6%	- 84
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,025</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,818</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,965</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>940</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and 2008-2012 and 2018-2022 American Community Survey, Table B25024.

### Household Median Income

This section examines the median household income in Chelmsford and compares it with the median household income for Massachusetts and the United States. By reviewing this data, we can understand how Chelmsford household incomes compare at the state and national levels. [Table 9: Chelmsford Median Household Income \(1999, 2008-2012, and 2018-2022\)](#), shows the change in median household income between 1999 and 2018-22 for Chelmsford, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the United States.

It is important to adjust these values for inflation to make a more accurate comparison. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Inflation Rate Calculator, one dollar in April 1999 has the same buying power as \$1.54 in April 2022 dollars (chosen because the amounts reported in the 2016-22 ACS are inflated to this level). The Inflation Rate Calculator uses the average Consumer Price Index (CPI) for a given calendar year, and the data represents changes in the prices of all goods and services purchased for consumption by urban households.

The Town of Chelmsford’s median household income since 1999 has been significantly higher than the state and national median income. In 1999 the median household income for the Town was \$70,207 compared to Massachusetts at \$50,502 and the US at \$41,944. While Massachusetts has kept pace with the 13 percent increase, when adjusted for inflation, the national household median income has not, with only a 6 percent increase over this timeframe. In 2022, Chelmsford’s median household income now stands at \$134,291, much higher than the State (\$96,505) and national (\$75,149).

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Table 9: Chelmsford Median Household Income (1999, 2008-2012, and 2018-2022)

Geographic Area	1999	2008-2012	2018-2022	Percentage Change 1999 - 2018-22	% Inflation Adjusted Change 1999-2018/2022
<b>Chelmsford</b>	<b>\$70,207</b>	<b>\$92,549</b>	<b>\$134,291</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Massachusetts	\$50,502	\$66,658	\$96,505	91%	13%
United States	\$41,944	\$53,046	\$75,149	79%	6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and 2008-2012 and 2018-2022 American Community Survey, Table B19013.

### Income Distribution

While median household income is a valuable indicator, it does not account for the distribution of household incomes in a community. *Table 10: Chelmsford Household Income Distribution (1999, 2008-2012, and 2018-2022)* describes the changes in household income distribution in Chelmsford between 1999 and 2018-22. Note that starting in 2010, income was only collected as estimates as part of the American Community Survey, so the number of total households will not align perfectly with Decennial Census data. The number of households earning over \$200,000 and between \$150,000 - \$199,999 annually saw the largest gains between 1999 and 2018-2022, with increases of 799 percent and 244 percent, respectively. Although not adjusted for inflation, these gains may indicate those who make less than the median income are being priced out of Chelmsford.

Table 10: Chelmsford Household Income Distribution (1999, 2008-2012, and 2018-2022)

	1999 Households		2008-2012 Households		2018-2022 Households		Percent Change 1999 – 2018-22
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Less than \$10,000	923	7%	1003	7%	538	4%	-42%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	887	7%	720	5%	510	4%	-43%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	847	7%	768	6%	525	4%	-38%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	1,693	13%	1,342	10%	584	4%	-66%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	2,589	20%	1,699	13%	1,378	10%	-47%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	2,247	18%	1,702	13%	1,490	11%	-34%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	1,711	13%	1,712	13%	1,293	10%	-24%
\$100,000 - 149,999	844	7%	1,397	10%	1,178	9%	40%
\$150,000 - 199,999	672	5%	1,879	14%	2,312	17%	244%
\$200,000 or more	413	3%	1,261	9%	3,713	27%	799%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,826</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,483</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,521</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and 2008-2012 and 2018-2022 American Community Survey Table B19001

### Poverty Indicators in Chelmsford

Every year, the U.S. Census Bureau establishes a set of “Poverty Thresholds” to estimate the population’s poverty levels. They use a complex formula varying by family size and composition to determine who is living in poverty as part of the ACS. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) uses a simplified version of these census thresholds called the “Federal Poverty Guidelines” to determine eligibility for programs such as food assistance.

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For the ACS, if a family’s total income is less than the threshold, then that family and every individual in it is living under poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food assistance).

*Table 11: 2024 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the Dist. of Columbia*, displays the 2024 poverty guidelines, but the ACS data displayed in *Table 12: Characteristics of the Population Living under Poverty in Chelmsford (2016-2020)*, on the next page uses the more complex “Poverty Threshold” calculation. 5 percent, or 1,696 residents of Chelmsford’s population, live in poverty. Of this population, the majority, or 56 percent, are women, while men make up the remaining 44 percent. The largest age groups were those aged 55 to 64 years (19 percent), 18 to 24 years (16 percent) and 45 to 54 years (15 percent). Other age groups were distributed relatively evenly between 3 percent and 10 percent. It will be important to recognize these particularly large age cohorts living in poverty that will continue to age—alongside younger people and families—when prioritizing recreational opportunities that will meet the diverse needs of an aging population.

**Table 11: 2024 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the Dist. of Columbia**

Number of Persons in Family	Poverty Guideline
1	\$15,060
2	\$20,440
3	\$25,820
4	\$31,200
5	\$36,580
6	\$41,960
7	\$47,340
8	\$52,720
For each additional person	\$5,380

*Source: Poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2), <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>*

**Table 12: Characteristics of the Population Living under Poverty in Chelmsford (2016-2020)**

	Number Below Poverty Level	Percent of those in poverty
<b>Age</b>		
5 Years and under	93	5%
6 to 11 Years	94	6%
12 to 17 Years	164	10%
18 to 24 Years	268	16%
25 to 34 Years	45	3%
35 to 44 Years	167	10%
45 to 54 Years	256	15%
55 to 64 Years	327	19%
65 to 74 Years	163	10%
75 Years and Over	119	7%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	753	44%
Female	943	56%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>% of Total Chelmsford Population</b>
<b>Total Individuals Living in Poverty</b>	<b>1,696</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total Population of which Poverty Status is Known</b>	<b>36,001</b>	<b>99.5%</b>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey.*

## Growth and Development Patterns

### Historical Patterns and Trends

Chelmsford was settled by colonists in 1655 and began as a small agricultural community. Its early development centered around farming, mills, and localized trade, with the Merrimack River and Concord River playing a significant role in its economic activities. The initial settlement took place in the area now known as Chelmsford Center. This central location was chosen for its fertile land and proximity to water, which supported the community's agricultural and milling economy. Chelmsford Center remains the historic and cultural heart of the town, reflecting its early colonial roots.

Chelmsford Center is the oldest area of the town, where the first meetinghouse was constructed, providing a location for religious gatherings and town meetings. The community's oldest roadways converge in the Town Center. Today, the Center contains a well-preserved array of historic period buildings in an authentic village setting. It remains the civic center of the town and contains many small retail, service, and professional businesses that serve the community.

During the 19th century, Chelmsford's economy diversified with the rise of mills and manufacturing. The availability of waterpower and proximity to industrial hubs like Lowell helped foster industrial activity, attracting workers and shaping its village centers. This growth was concentrated in areas with access to waterpower, which was vital for operating mills. The key locations included North Chelmsford (Vinal Square) which served as both a manufacturing and residential area for mill workers. The proximity to the Merrimack River, Stoney Brook and various other brooks powered textile and grist mills, leading to significant industrial activity in North Chelmsford. The area became a hub for manufacturing, including wool and cotton mills, and attracted a growing workforce, particularly immigrants.

The Middlesex Canal, which connected the Merrimack River to Boston, played a key role in transporting goods and materials. Chelmsford industries, particularly near the canal, could efficiently ship their products to larger markets. Streams like Stony Brook also supported smaller-scale mills and industries scattered across the town. These operations included sawmills, gristmills, and later, manufacturing enterprises producing goods such as shoes and textiles.

Industrial growth in Chelmsford during this period contributed to its transition from a primarily agricultural economy to a more diversified one, with manufacturing playing a central role. These areas laid the foundation for Chelmsford's development into a suburban-industrial town.

Post-World War II, Chelmsford saw significant suburban expansion, driven by improved transportation routes (e.g., Route 3 and I-495) and economic shifts. Housing development catered to a growing population of commuters working in Boston and nearby cities. New neighborhoods and subdivisions developed predominantly of single-family homes spread throughout the town as highways and roadways expanded to accommodate an autocentric society.

Chelmsford's land use pattern highlights the significant transformations brought about by postwar development. The town embodies a blend of development traditions, many of which emerged before the introduction of zoning regulations. While local rules have influenced more recent growth, this development has unfolded within the context of long-established neighborhoods.

### Zoning and Master Planning

Chelmsford regulates development through zoning, subdivision control, Board of Health regulations, and wetlands regulations. Zoning is the most essential of these regulatory tools. Chelmsford adopted its first zoning bylaw in 1942. This initial regulation was introduced as a response to growing development pressures, particularly as suburbanization began to take hold in the mid-20th century.

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It aimed to organize land use, separating residential, commercial, and industrial areas to manage growth effectively and protect the town's character. Early zoning focused on separating residential, commercial, and industrial uses to manage growth and protect community character. Zoning regulations supported the rapid suburban expansion of single-family homes while reserving specific areas for business and industrial development, especially along major highways like Route 3 and I-495.

As the Town evolved zoning has been updated to encourage mixed-use development, preserve open spaces, and support affordable housing initiatives. Overlay districts have been introduced for targeting specific goals, such as water resource protection, historic preservation, and revitalization of Town Centers like Center Village and Vinal Square. In a mature suburb like Chelmsford, a zoning bylaw's capacity to direct redevelopment is as important as its capacity to guide the development of vacant land.

The first master plan was developed 1963, and subsequent plans were completed in 1975, 1986 and 1996. In earlier versions of the Master Plan, much of the focus was on promoting development and economic growth to accommodate the burgeoning population and workforce in Town and the overall region. The current 2020 Master Plan adopted a Land Use and Zoning goal to “Manage and direct growth, including redevelopment and new development projects, in a manner consistent with the community’s character and ensure that the Town’s zoning and land use policies and practices are consistent with the approved Master Plan.”

The adopted master plans resulted in comprehensive revisions to the Town’s zoning bylaw and map and were reflective of the community’s desires at that time. These changes directly influenced the historical land use patterns and trends and established a framework for future development activity.

#### **Development Trends and Patterns Under Zoning**

Chelmsford is predominately zoned for residential development. As shown in [Map: 3 Chelmsford Zoning District Map](#). The minimum lot size for residential districts ranges from 20,000 to 60,000 square feet. As a result, the town’s residential zoning regulations significantly impact its overall land use pattern as it nears build-out. Chelmsford has four residential zones, all of which allow single-family dwellings. Two-family dwellings are allowed only in the RC and RM Districts; multifamily dwellings are allowed in the RM district and the Center Village (CV) only by Planning Board special permit. Planned Open Space Residential Developments (POS) are only permitted in the RA and RB zoning districts, by special permit from the Planning Board. POS developments, however, require a minimum of 5 acres of land, with a minimum of 25% being set aside for open space.

*Table 13: Land Use Change in Chelmsford, 1971-2018*, below outlines the changes in land use from 1971 to 2018. This data was compiled by the University of Massachusetts Amherst and NMCOG GIS through aerial photo interpretation. The land use is graphically displayed in [Map: 4 Chelmsford Land Use per Assessor’s Parcels](#) Map on the following page. This information reflects that amount of land covered by a specific use based on physical attributes and is not parcel specific.

As outlined in *Table 13: Land Use Change in Chelmsford, 1971-2018*, the most dramatic land use change occurred from 1971-1985, when 343 acres of commercial and industrial lands were developed. Although population growth in the community began to level out after 1970, an additional 716 acres of land were converted to residential use between 1971 and 1985. This is largely due to a decrease in household size and the formation of new households.

While residential development continued from 1971-1985, the growth in commercial and industrial development brought the most significant change. The Town’s location was key to much of the economic growth that occurred during that period. Eastern Massachusetts experienced record

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commercial growth over the past few decades due to growth in the high technology sector. Chelmsford’s advantageous location along Route 3 and I-495 was largely responsible for its economic vitality and its ability to attract new business and industry and was a catalyst for the increase in industrial development.

During the period from 1985 to 1999, the rate of new development in Chelmsford slowed considerably, as evidenced in the land use change data. Commercial and industrial land uses grew by 30% and 28% respectively. Residential land uses increased by 13% during this same period. As can be seen in Table 13, since 1999, there has been minimal change in land use within the Town of Chelmsford. This can be attributed to a slowing economy and the lack of vacant land, requiring change in patterns to more often happen through infill or redevelopment. As shown in *Table 13*, by 2018 approximately 66% of the town’s land area was developed, with more than half of the town’s land area in residential use.

Table 13: Land Use Change in Chelmsford, 1971-2018

Class of Land Use	Acres in Use					Percent Change				% of Town 2018
	1971	1985	1999	2005	2018	1971-1985	1985-1999	1999-2005	2005-2018	
<b>Commercial</b> <sup>5</sup>	238	334	435	470	486	40%	30%	8%	3%	3%
<b>Industrial</b> <sup>6</sup>	207	454	584	559	555	119%	28%	-4%	-1%	4%
<b>Residential</b> <sup>7</sup>	5,763	6,479	7,303	7,385	7,473	12%	13%	1%	1%	51%
<b>Other</b> <sup>8</sup>	8,569	7,510	6,456	6,364	6,264	-12%	-14%	-1%	-2%	42%
<b>Summary</b>										
<b>Developed</b>	7,201	8,403	9,435	9,570	9,683	17%	16%	1%	1%	66%
<b>Undeveloped</b>	7,577	6,375	5,343	5,208	5,095	-16%	-16%	-3%	-2%	34%
<b>Total</b>	14,778	14,778	14,778	14,778	14,778	-	-	-	-	100%

*Source: MassGIS MacConnell Land Use (1951-1999) with corrections and 2005 and 2018 land use interpreted by NMCOG GIS. 2005 and 2018 land use data was interpreted at a scale of 1:4,000 using MassGIS 1:5000 Ortho Imagery (captured April 2005) and MassGIS’s Licensed Six-Inch Google Ortho Imagery (captured Spring 2018).*

<sup>5</sup> The McConnell Land Use System defines “Commercial” land uses as general urban and shopping centers.

<sup>6</sup> The McConnell Land Use System defines “Industrial” land uses as light and heavy industrial.

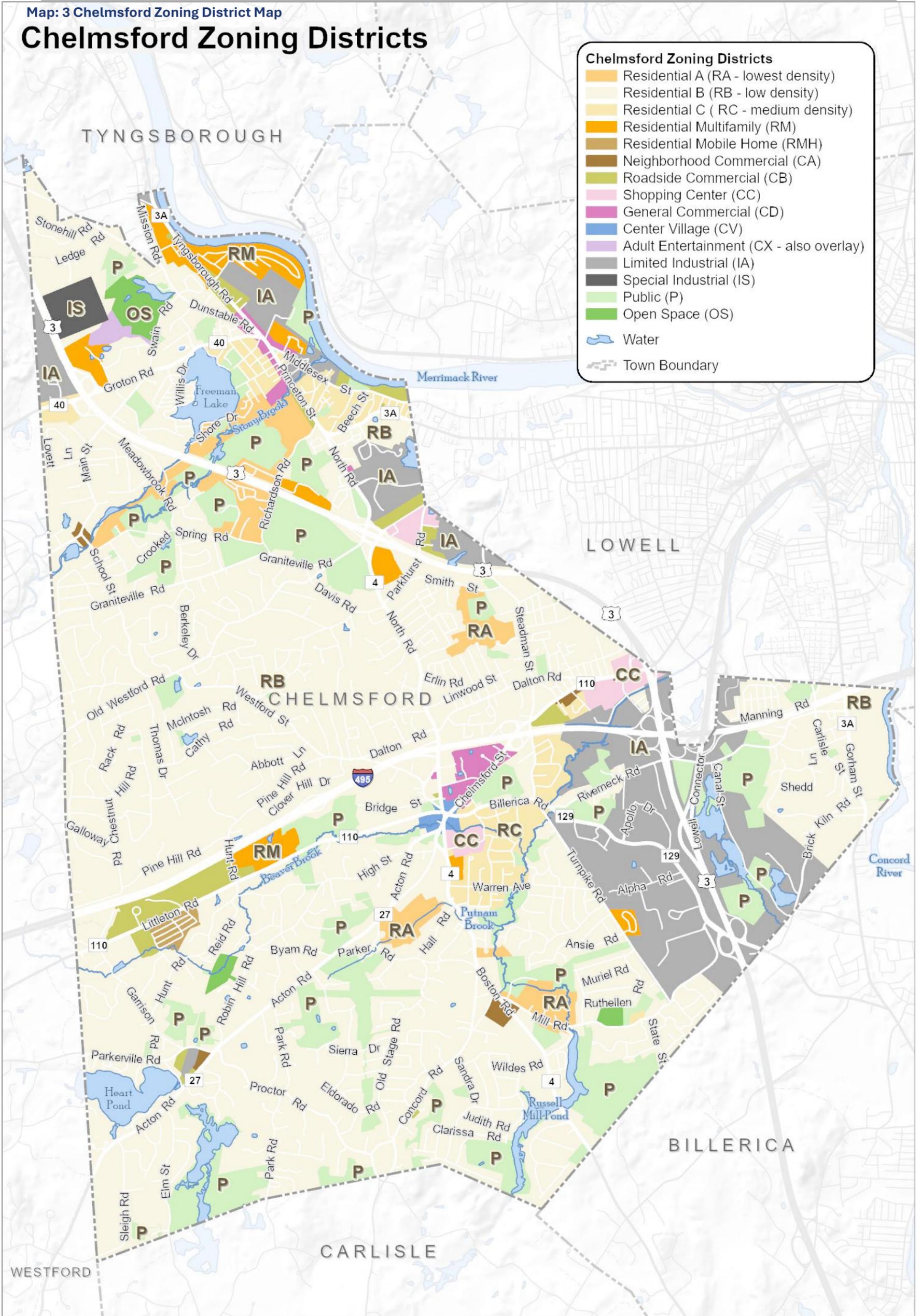
<sup>7</sup> The McConnell Land Use System defines “Residential” land uses as of the following: multi-family, smaller than ¼ acre residential lots, ¼ - ½ acre residential lots and larger than ½ acre residential lots.

<sup>8</sup> The McConnell Land Use System defines “Other” land uses as of the following: Cropland, Pasture, Forest, Wetland, Mining, Open Land, Participation, Spectator and Water Based Recreation, Salt Wetland, Urban Open, Transportation, Waste Disposal, Water and Woody Perennial.

Map: 3 Chelmsford Zoning District Map

# Chelmsford Zoning Districts

- Chelmsford Zoning Districts**
- Residential A (RA - lowest density)
  - Residential B (RB - low density)
  - Residential C (RC - medium density)
  - Residential Multifamily (RM)
  - Residential Mobile Home (RMH)
  - Neighborhood Commercial (CA)
  - Roadside Commercial (CB)
  - Shopping Center (CC)
  - General Commercial (CD)
  - Center Village (CV)
  - Adult Entertainment (CX - also overlay)
  - Limited Industrial (IA)
  - Special Industrial (IS)
  - Public (P)
  - Open Space (OS)
  - Water
  - Town Boundary



**Sources:**  
Town of Chelmsford (zoning districts GIS data); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries, shaded relief); MassDEP/NMCOG (2011 hydrography)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 11/26/2024



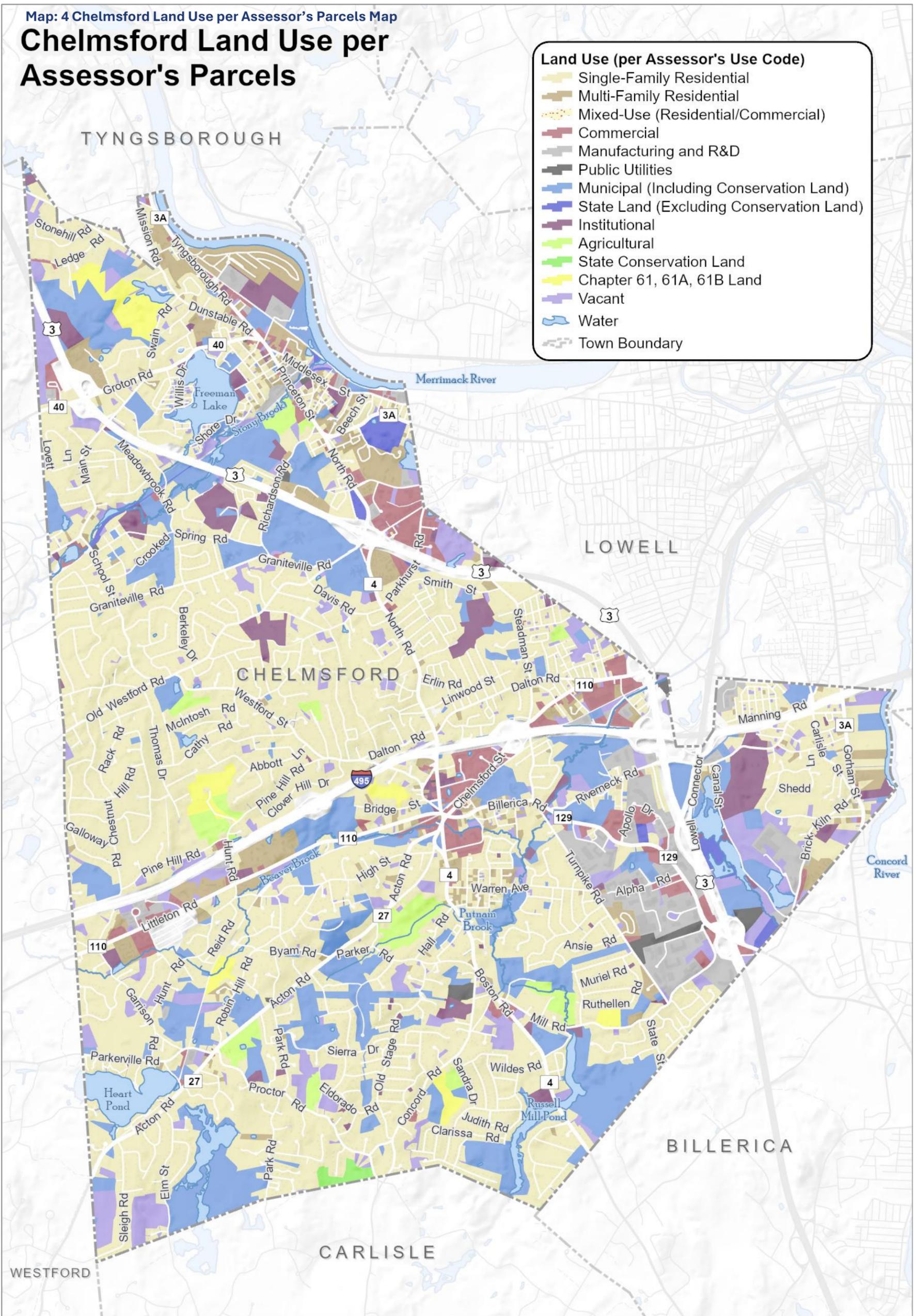
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Map: 4 Chelmsford Land Use per Assessor's Parcels Map

# Chelmsford Land Use per Assessor's Parcels

**Land Use (per Assessor's Use Code)**

-  Single-Family Residential
-  Multi-Family Residential
-  Mixed-Use (Residential/Commercial)
-  Commercial
-  Manufacturing and R&D
-  Public Utilities
-  Municipal (Including Conservation Land)
-  State Land (Excluding Conservation Land)
-  Institutional
-  Agricultural
-  State Conservation Land
-  Chapter 61, 61A, 61B Land
-  Vacant
-  Water
-  Town Boundary



**Sources:**  
Town of Chelmsford (FY24 parcels and Assessor's codes); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries, shaded relief); MassDEP/NMCOG (2005/2009 hydrography)

Notes: Land use was categorized by NMCOG based on Assessor's land use codes. Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 10/2/2024



0 2,000 Feet

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# Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035

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### Infrastructure

#### *Wastewater and Sewer System*

The Town of Chelmsford began its sewer infrastructure program in 1984, intending to provide two-thirds of its residents with service. Town Meeting decades later voted to expand the sewer project to cover the entire town. The last pipe was installed in September 2010 and became active in 2011. The total project cost was \$165 million<sup>9</sup>. Currently, the sewer system accommodates 98%, with the remaining 2% serviced by onsite septic systems.

The Department of Public Works Sewer Division is responsible for maintaining the Chelmsford sewer system, which incorporates approximately 190 miles of gravity and pressure sewer lines and 41 pump stations. In 2016, the Sewer Division staff developed a comprehensive capital improvement plan. The Sewer Division also conducts ongoing inspections of the pipe and manhole infrastructure with scanning and TV equipment.

Sewerage is transmitted to the Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility (LRWWU). This utility serves Lowell, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury and Tyngsborough. The capacity of the LRWWU affects Chelmsford's ability to approve new developments. Without sufficient wastewater treatment capacity, town growth could be stymied. Chelmsford's total allotted capacity is 3.01 MGD at LRWWU. Chelmsford is estimated to utilize 95-99% of the allotted capacity. Without the ability to increase allotted capacity at LRWWU, individual or community wastewater systems may be proposed, which may be limited by inadequate soil types and could adversely affect groundwater quality if not properly maintained.

#### *Public Water Supplies*

Approximately 95% of the Town is serviced by public water systems through one of three water districts: Chelmsford Water District; North Chelmsford Water District; and the East Chelmsford Water District. Only a few isolated areas served by private wells. All three districts rely on groundwater wells for drinking water supplies and provide their own treatment plant facilities. All three districts are considered at high risk for contamination. The three districts utilize twenty-one wells and draw water from the Merrimack and Concord River Watersheds. *Map: 5 Chelmsford Wellhead Protection Areas, Aquifers, and Floodplains Map* identifies public water resources.

The Chelmsford Water District (CWD) pumps water from 20 wells, which supply three water treatment plants, two full-time plants and one emergency/seasonal plant with a combined potential flow of 2,600 gallons per minute. CWD serves approximately 8,600 customer connections.

All of the CWD's twenty (20) wells are protected by well head protection zones. The district owns and/or controls all of the Zone I areas as required by MassDEP regulations. Zone I requires either a 400-foot radius for a wellhead or a 250-foot radius for a wellhead. Additionally, the CWD's water resources have an added protection from the Town's adoption of an Aquifer Protection District Bylaw cited in Article XIV Aquifer Protection District of the Town of Chelmsford's Bylaws (Section 159-69 through 159-75). Because of a lack of subsurface hydro-geologic barriers (i.e. clay) which helps prevent contaminant migration, the twenty CWD wells are in an aquifer with a *high* vulnerability to contamination.

The East Chelmsford Water District (ECWD) owns and operates two wells located on Canal Street with a combined yield of 700 gallons per minute. The ECWD serves approximately 700 customers, including 324 residences and 70 businesses. The ECWD's wells are considered at high risk for

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<sup>9</sup> Northern Middlesex Council of Governments Regional Wastewater Infrastructure Study April 10, 2023

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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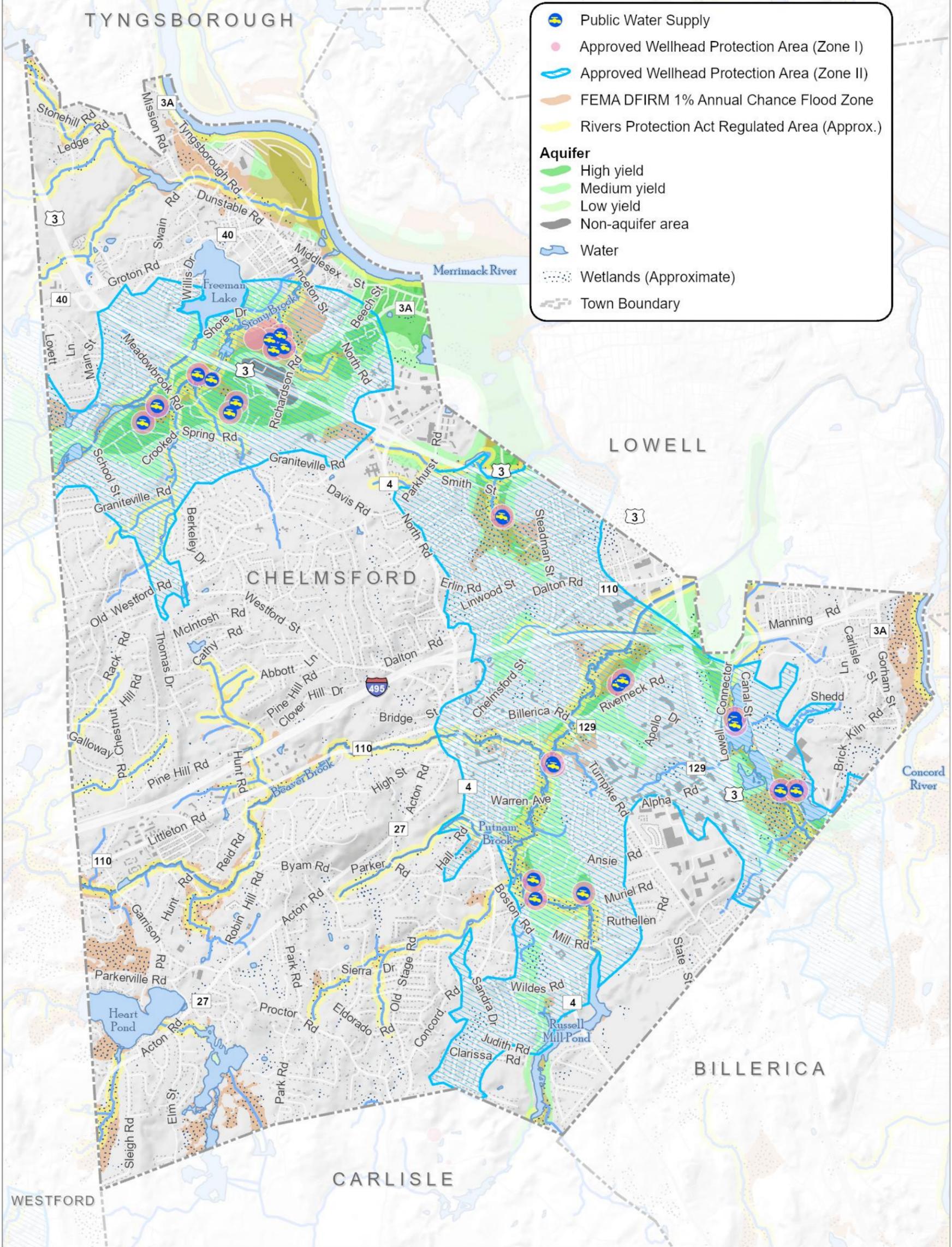
contamination, especially from roadway stormwater runoff and local businesses using hazardous materials in their operations. The recommendations for mitigating these risks are identical to those described by the other two districts: improving stormwater runoff through roadside capture basins and other low-impact design (LID) techniques, formally requesting that some roads be designated for “Low Salt Use,” and partnering with business owners to train them in the proper use, handling, and disposal of chemicals.

The final water district in Chelmsford is the North Chelmsford Water District (NCWD). The NCWD owns and operates four gravel-packed wells and two deep bedrock wells within the Bomil Wellfield at 55 Richardson Road. The NCWD serves approximately 3,200 customers. Like the wells operated by the CWD, the NCWD’s water supply is designated at high risk for contamination because of a lack of hydrogeologic barriers and the mix of commercial, industrial, residential, and transportation uses within the Zone II protection area. Many of the key issues and planning strategies identified in the CWD’s *Source Water Assessment and Protection Plan* are applicable for the NCWD, especially in terms of transportation corridors, rail rights-of-way, and local business owners.

Chelmsford works to protect its water supply sources, such as wells and aquifers, by maintaining buffer zones, controlling land use, and minimizing potential contamination risks, as outlined in the Aquifer Protection District Bylaw, CWD’s *Source Water Assessment and Protection Plan* and DPW’s stormwater management best practices. Additionally, Chelmsford promotes awareness among residents and businesses about water conservation, proper disposal of hazardous materials, and the importance of protecting water sources. Building upon these efforts are essential to enhance water protection strategies for future generations.

Map: 5 Chelmsford Wellhead Protection Areas, Aquifers, and Floodplains Map

# Chelmsford Wellhead Protection Areas, Aquifers, and Floodplains



**Sources:**  
MassDEP (2011 hydrography and wetlands, Water Protection Zones, aquifers); FEMA (DFIRM flood zones A, AE); MassGIS (shaded relief); NMCOG (approximate Rivers Protection Act areas); MassGIS/NMCOG (roads, town boundaries)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 10/22/2024



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#### *Transportation*

Chelmsford and neighboring communities offer various transportation options, including walking, cycling, buses, rail, and automobiles. However, Chelmsford's transportation infrastructure is currently focused almost entirely on automobiles, with plans to expand multi-modal opportunities. A multi-modal transportation system is essential to a community's vitality by providing access to housing, employment centers, local services, retail establishments, and recreational amenities. Chelmsford's streets, sidewalks, trails, and regional transit services significantly influence its residents' health, well-being, and quality of life.

#### *Roadways*

Interstate Highways and Principal Arterials form the basic framework for the roadway network. They help link major geographic and economic regions and urban centers. Collector roads are generally shorter than arterials and serve to gather trips from local roads and distribute them to arterials. Local roads consist of all roads not defined as arterials or collectors and provide access to land with little or no through movement. Ownership of roadways is key to identifying the responsible parties for maintaining and improving Chelmsford's transportation network. MassDOT owns 11.2% of the roadway mileage in Chelmsford, including Route 3 and portions of Drum Hill Road. The town's highway department is responsible for maintaining all public roads that MassDOT does not maintain.

In many communities, bicycling and walking have become key factors for measuring quality of life. Communities promoting walking and other non-motorized transportation can reap significant social, environmental, and health benefits. Chelmsford has taken many actions to integrate pedestrian and bicycle amenities into its roadway system to create Complete Streets.

The Town established a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) in 2008 to provide input to the Select Board and various Town Boards and help advance community bicycle and pedestrian planning. The BPAC meets with DPW staff annually to discuss initiatives, projects, and concerns. In 2016, the BPAC published the Chelmsford Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan<sup>10</sup> (BPP). The plan identifies locations for additional bicycle and pedestrian facilities and improvements.

Sidewalks are an essential element in creating multimodal transportation options. They separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic, reducing the risk of accidents and provide a safe space for walking, especially for children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. Chelmsford's suburban development pattern and municipal budget constraints present significant challenges for providing sidewalks throughout the town. While providing sidewalks on every street may not be practical, a lack of accessible sidewalks in critical areas creates public safety concerns. The 2016 Chelmsford Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identified priority areas for pedestrian improvements and categorized them into pavement/sidewalk extensions, crosswalk installations, and signage improvements. The plan helped create the framework for how the DPW directs sidewalk improvement and the development of the DPW Sidewalk Master Plan.

A Complete Streets approach provides safe and accessible options for all travel modes: walking, biking, transit, and motorized vehicles for people of all ages and abilities. The MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program was created by legislative authorization through the 2014 Transportation Bond Bill, with the intent of rewarding municipalities that demonstrate a commitment to embedding Complete Streets in policies and practices. To be eligible for technical assistance, a municipality must attend training and approve a Complete Streets Policy and to be eligible for project funding,

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<sup>10</sup> <http://ma-chelmsford.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/9041/Bicycle-and-Pedestrian-Plan-June-2016>

## Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035

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the municipality must complete a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, which is a targeted investment strategy. The Chelmsford Select Board approved the Town’s Complete Streets Policy in 2017. The Town then applied for and was awarded a \$50,000 technical assistance grant for development of the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan<sup>11</sup>.

#### Bicycle Facilities and Paths

Currently, Chelmsford does not have any designated on-road bicycle facilities. Closed circuit trails, multi-use paths and walkways can be found in many of Chelmsford’s parks and open space areas, and 5.2 miles of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) are located within Chelmsford. The BFRT enters Chelmsford from Lowell and continues to Westford and Concord, with a planned extension to Framingham. The rail trail consists of a 10-foot-wide paved path with a 2-foot-wide shoulder on each side, crossing several Chelmsford roadways.

In order to prioritize roadways for bicycle facility improvements, the 2016 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identifies

popular recreation destinations and points of interest, and the safest or most common bicycle routes used to access these destinations. Based on these destinations and routes, the BPP identifies and prioritizes specific projects that include adding bike lanes, widening roadway shoulders,



Image: 8 Bruce Freeman Rail Trail - Credit: Jerry Schmidt

painting sharrows, installing bike racks, and installing signage. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee has also developed recommended guidelines for the styles and location of bicycle racks, which can be found on the BPAC webpage<sup>12</sup>.

#### Public Transportation

Chelmsford lies within the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) service area. The LRTA is one of fifteen regional transit authorities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts dedicated to the

<sup>11</sup><https://www.townofchelmsford.us/DocumentCenter/View/11690/Chelmsford-Complete-Streets-Prioritization-Plan-Report>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.townofchelmsford.us/265/Bicycle-Pedestrian-Advisory-Committee>

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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mission of increasing the use of mass transit on a regional basis. The LRTA provides both fixed route bus service and paratransit service. Chelmsford is also included in the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) assessment area, as the Town is contiguous to two communities served by MBTA commuter rail service (Billerica and Lowell).

#### Commuter Rail

The MBTA operates commuter rail between the Gallagher Intermodal Transportation Center in Lowell and North Station in Boston. The service consists of nineteen (19) inbound trains on weekdays operating between 5:00 AM and 11:15 AM and eighteen (18) outbound trains operating between 5:20 AM and 11:45 PM. Headways vary from 35 minutes during the peak travel periods, and approximately every hour and a half during off-peak periods. Commuter Rail service is also available on weekends with nine (9) daily trips in both directions with headways of every 2 hours. In addition to Lowell, the train stops at North Billerica, Wilmington, Anderson, Winchester, Wedgemere and Medford.

#### Bus Service

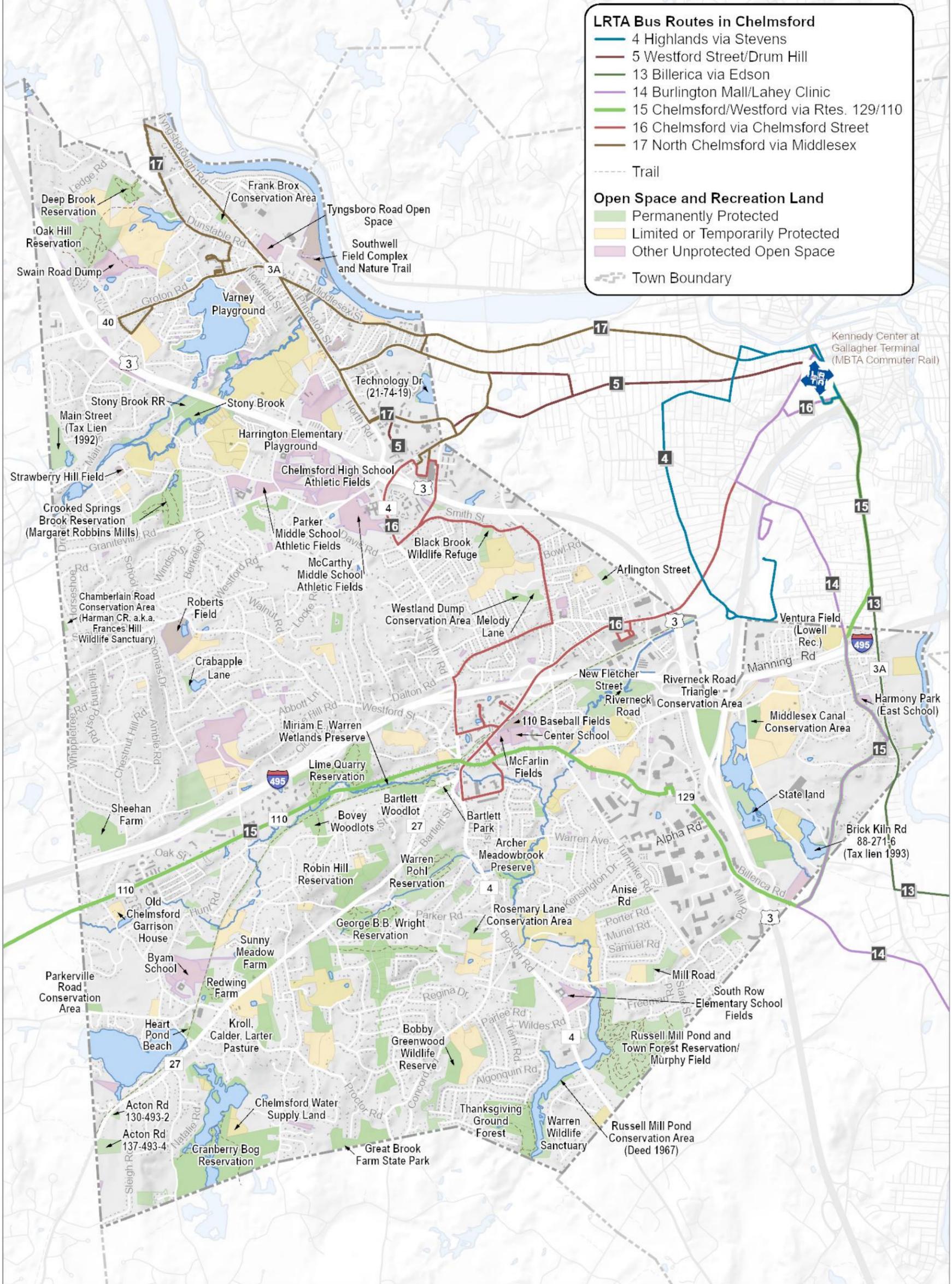
The LRTA operates eighteen fixed bus routes in five communities within its service area (Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford) and five communities beyond the service area (Andover, Bedford, Burlington, Littleton, and Wilmington). All the LRTA bus routes originate at the Gallagher Intermodal Transportation Center in Lowell, providing a direct link to the MBTA commuter rail station.

The LRTA provides five fixed bus routes within Chelmsford as described in detail below and seen on *Map: 6 Chelmsford Transit Fixed Bus Routes Map*:

- **#04, Highlands Via Stevens Bus** touches the boarder of Chelmsford from Lowell, briefly along Swan Street connecting with the Ventra Field neighborhood.
- **#05, Westford Street Bus** enters Chelmsford from Westford Street in Lowell, connecting with the Lowell General Occupational Health Center on Technology Drive and the Drum Hill Plaza.
- **#13, Billerica Bus** enters Chelmsford from Route 3A/Gorham Street in Lowell and continues through Chelmsford on Route 3A to Boston Road in Billerica.
- **#14, Burlington Mall/Lahey Clinic Bus** enters Chelmsford from Boston Road in Lowell and continues onto Brick Kiln Road. Connecting with the UPS distribution facility, the 14 bus route then turns left onto the Route 129/ Chelmsford Road in Billerica.
- **#15 Chelmsford/Westford Bus** enters Chelmsford from Carlisle Street in Lowell, and continues to Brick Kiln Road, connecting with the UPS distribution facility, and then extends to the Route 129/ Billerica Road. The route then continues along the Route 129 business corridor into Chelmsford Center and out Route 110/ Littleton Road to Westford.
- **#16 Chelmsford Center Bus** enters Chelmsford along Route 110/Chelmsford Street in Lowell, traveling through Chelmsford Center. The route continues from Chelmsford Center to Drum Hill Plaza via North Road, Dalton Road, Stedman Street, and Smith Street.
- **#17 North Chelmsford Bus** enters Chelmsford from Westford Street in Lowell, connecting with the Lowell General Occupational Health Center on Technology Drive and the Drum Hill Plaza. The route continues along Route 4 to Princeton Boulevard and Middlesex Street through Vinal Square. The Chelmsford portion of Route 40 corridor is covered by the number 17 bus, as well as Dunstable Road and Tyngsborough Road (Route 3A).

Map: 6 Chelmsford Transit Fixed Bus Routes Map

# Chelmsford Transit Fixed Bus Routes



**Sources:**  
Town of Chelmsford (municipal open space 8/2024, trails); LRTA/NMCOG (bus routes); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries, shaded relief); MassDEP/NMCOG (2011 hydrography)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 11/26/2024



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## Long-Term Development Patterns

Since its incorporation in 1655, Chelmsford has seen significant development of its lands. Under current zoning regulations, the Town is nearing substantial buildout. Much of the vacant lands are either undevelopable due to environmental conditions or have deed restrictions preventing development. Much of Chelmsford's prospective future development is in redevelopment and targeted infill development of specific areas. The Town has been active in identifying these areas and utilizing overlay zones to entice and incentivize investment and development.

### Overlay Zoning Districts

Chelmsford has adopted three (3) overlay districts specifically designed to enhance economic development through redevelopment. The following districts are described below and can be identified geographically on *Map: 7 Chelmsford Zoning Overlay Districts Map*:

#### *Community Enhancement and Investment Overlay District*

The Community Enhancement and Investment Overlay District (CEIOD) was adopted at the October 21, 2013, Town Meeting to provide an incentive for the redevelopment of property, prevent the deterioration of obsolete land and buildings, support the expansion of small businesses and the growth of commercial districts, and encourage appropriate site design. CEIOD projects have alternative dimensional requirements for each zoning district, and these are generally less restrictive than the standard requirements for the underlying zone.

There are four (4) types of CEIOD projects defined by the zoning bylaw: Adaptive Reuse Projects (ARP), Commercial or Industrial Redevelopment Projects (CIRP), Residential Reuse or Redevelopment Projects (RRRP) and Sustainable Infill Development Projects (SIDP). CEIOD projects are allowed on properties that have nonconforming uses, structures or parking lots, and sites or buildings determined to be vacant, obsolete or underutilized. The Planning Board determines if a project qualifies as a CEIOD project. The criteria to determine whether a CEIOD project is by right or requires a special permit includes the gross square footage of building area, the extent of noncompliance with underlying dimensional requirements, and number of residential units (if applicable). In addition, the Zoning Bylaw includes performance standards that developments must be consistent with in order to qualify as CEIOD projects. Except for multifamily residential units which are permitted in all of the CEIOD Overlay other than the IA district, the allowed uses are determined by the underlying zoning district.

#### *Route 129 Business Amenities Overlay District*

The Route 129 Business Amenities Overlay District (BAOD) was adopted at the October 24, 2016, Town Meeting in order to provide employers and employees in the Limited Industrial (IA) zoning district with local access to goods, services and other business amenities, to promote quality development in the Route 129 area, and provide appropriate housing opportunities in the area. In addition to uses allowed in the underlying IA District, retail store and services, restaurants, fast food restaurants, banks, health clubs, car rental services, and hotels/motels are permitted by right, and multifamily residential units and certain drive-thrus for freestanding single-tenant uses are allowed by special permit.

#### *Village Center Overlay District*

The Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) was adopted by Town Meeting on April 28, 2014, in order to maintain the character and enhance the vitality of Chelmsford's village center by promoting appropriate mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development. Mixed-use projects are allowed within the VCOD that would not otherwise be allowed in the underlying zoning

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district, but such projects must meet the VCOD standards defined in the zoning bylaw. The additional uses permitted in the VCOD are small mixed-use buildings (up to 10,000 gross floor area), medium mixed-use buildings (up to 20,000 gross floor area), commercial buildings, live/work units, rowhouses or townhouses, multifamily buildings, and community buildings and space.

Standards for VCOD project include residential uses located above the first floor or within 40 feet from the public street right-of-way and outside of the VCOD frontage zone. VCOD standards also include landscaping requirements, additional setbacks along Beaver Brook and the Bruce Freeman Trail, building design and building placement standards, open space requirements, and design standards.

### Future Housing Development

An overwhelming majority of the existing homes in Chelmsford are detached single-family residences built in tract subdivisions. Subdivisions of single-family homes, while providing desirable housing options for many, require careful planning to balance their benefits with sustainable land use practices and environmental considerations.

#### Multifamily Housing

As these subdivisions were developed throughout Town, the spread-out nature of the subdivisions contributed to urban sprawl, increasing the consumption of greenfields. As a result, much of the recent residential development in Town have been multifamily developments, which require less land area to accommodate per unit. This is a trend that is likely to continue as land availability decreases and demand for diverse housing grows, there could be an increase in multi-family housing, townhomes, and condominiums. The Town permits higher density multifamily development within the Residential Multi-Family District (RM), the Center Village District (CV) and the aforementioned overlay zones by special permit. Additional multifamily development could occur through Chapter 40B, also known as the Comprehensive Permit Law. This process can allow development to circumvent certain zoning regulations including regulations relating to use location, which makes anticipating future development patterns difficult.

#### MBTA Communities Overlay District

The purpose of the MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District (MCMOD) is to allow multi-family housing as of right in accordance with Section 3A of the Zoning Act (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A). The locations and boundaries of the MCMOD overlay districts are hereby established and made part of this bylaw as shown on the UMass West Area Subdistrict (Map 20, Block 74, Lots 1,4, and 11) and the Route 110 West RM Area Subdistrict (Map 92, Block 320, Lots 1,2,3,4,5, and 6). The Route 110 West RM Area Subdistrict is entirely built out with multifamily residential condominiums and is likely to be redeveloped in the long term. However, the UMass West Area Subdistrict has a substantial area already permitted for 340 units with a mix of senior and affordable units.



Image: 9: UMass West Area Subdistrict - Credit: NMCOCG

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*State Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Law*

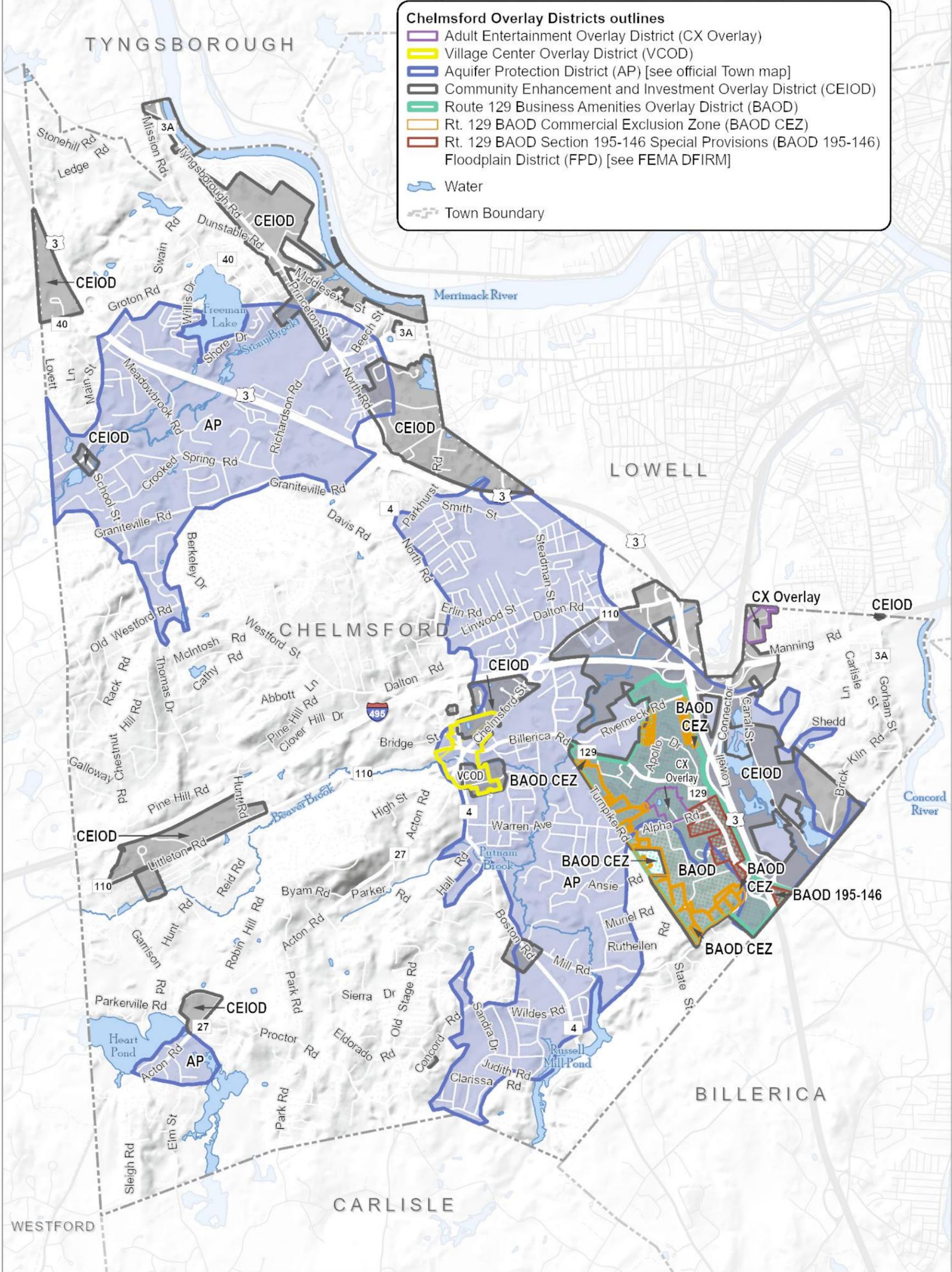
Massachusetts' new accessory dwelling unit (ADU) law, part of the Affordable Homes Act signed in 2024, permits ADUs "by right" in single-family residential zones. These units, often referred to as "granny flats" or "in-law apartments," are separate living spaces within or attached to a single-family home, typically with their own kitchen and bathroom. This change aims to increase housing flexibility and affordability across the state. These units will be allowed by right if they meet the standards set forth in the law. This could increase the number of dwelling units within Town without the need to expand infrastructure and land areas of typical new residential development. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) anticipates adding 8,000–10,000 ADUs statewide over five years.



*Image: 10 Summer Meadow - Credit: Christine Clancey*

Map: 7 Chelmsford Zoning Overlay Districts Map

# Chelmsford Zoning Overlay Districts



**Sources:**  
Town of Chelmsford (zoning districts GIS data); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/NMCOG (town boundaries, shaded relief); MassDEP/NMCOG (2011 hydrography)

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## Section 4: Environmental Inventory and Analysis

### Geology, Soils and Topography

#### Essential Structure

Chelmsford is in the Merrimack Valley, with elevations between 100 and 200 feet above sea level. Robins Hill, the Town's highest point at 408 feet, stands out geologically due to its limestone-rich composition and neutral soil, creating a distinct habitat rarely found in this region of Massachusetts. Two main drainage basins, the Merrimack and Concord Rivers, define Chelmsford's terrain and direct its natural water flow, contributing to its ecological diversity.

Shaped by the glaciers that once covered New England, Chelmsford's topography features varied soil types formed from erosion and the gradual accumulation of organic material. Glacial retreat deposited extensive sand and gravel across the area, contributing to the soils that underlie much of the Town today. However, in some areas, the exposed bedrock and quarries reveal the deeper layers of the earth's crust, providing a glimpse into the region's geologic history.

Chelmsford's geological features shape its local ecology, land use, and development. Different soil types support various agricultural, residential, and recreational activities. In some areas, soil erosion and nutrient depletion challenge preserving the Town's unique landscape.

#### Soils

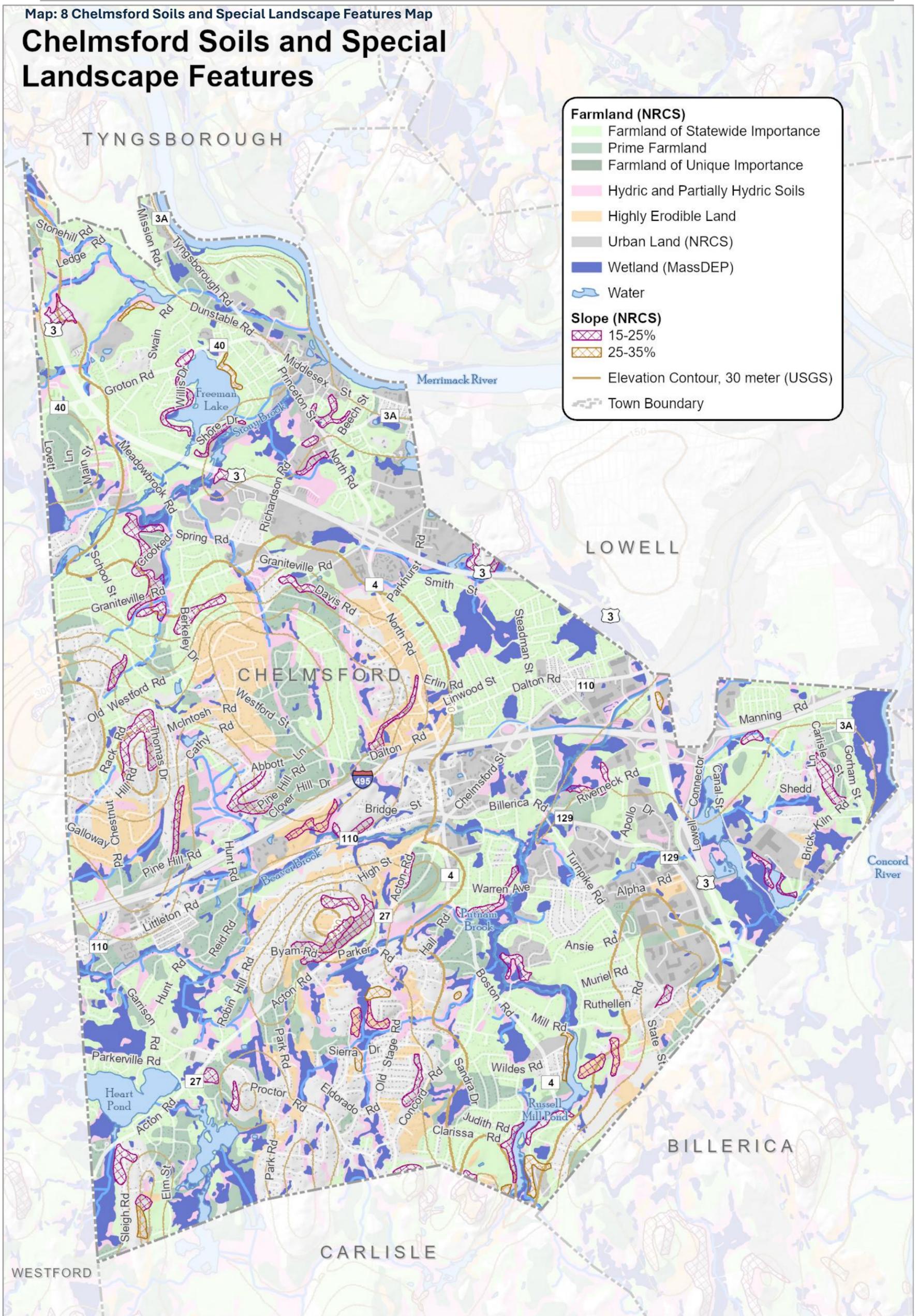
Chelmsford's diverse soil composition reflects its glacial history, with thirty-seven soil types identified in a 1989 Natural Resources Conservation Service survey. These soils are grouped into five main associations: Urban Land, Mucky, Paxton-Hollis-Woodbridge, Scituate-Essex, and Windsor-Hinckley. The Windsor-Hinckley series, formed in glacial outwash, features high permeability, allowing for easier groundwater movement compared to denser glacial till soils, like the Paxton and Canton series, or the shallow-to-bedrock soils of the Charlton-Hollis-Rock Outcrop Complex. Outwash soils, typically found in upland areas, have lower nutrient levels and are more drought prone. Conversely, nutrient-rich and poorly drained soils, like FreeTown Muck, retain water and support wetland vegetation in low-lying areas.

Urban Land soils, Chelmsford's most extensive soil type, consist primarily of sand and silty loams layered over glacial till and are moderately to well-drained. The second largest soil group includes the loamy sands of the Hinckley, Windsor, Carver, Merrimack, and Suncook series, which are highly permeable outwash soils.

Hydric soils, rich in organic matter and capable of retaining moisture, are common near Chelmsford's rivers and wetlands, as shown in [Map: 8 Chelmsford Soils and Special Landscape Features Map](#). Soils in the Saco Variant, Swansea, and FreeTown subseries maintain high-water tables and flat terrain, making them suitable for wetland vegetation. Urban Land soils dominate much of the town, providing adequate drainage for various land uses. However, high-permeability loamy sands pose challenges for septic systems by increasing the risk of groundwater contamination. Chelmsford also has approximately 1,930 acres, or 13 percent of its land, classified as Prime Farmland Soils. Community efforts, guided by Chelmsford's Open Space and Recreation Plan, have preserved some of this valuable agricultural land, including Sheehan Farm and Sunny Meadow Farm.

Map: 8 Chelmsford Soils and Special Landscape Features Map

# Chelmsford Soils and Special Landscape Features



**Farmland (NRCS)**

- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Unique Importance
- Hydric and Partially Hydric Soils
- Highly Erodible Land
- Urban Land (NRCS)
- Wetland (MassDEP)
- Water

**Slope (NRCS)**

- 15-25%
- 25-35%
- Elevation Contour, 30 meter (USGS)
- Town Boundary

**Sources:**  
 USGS NCRS (soil survey, farmland, urban land, slope); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads); MassGIS/  
 NMCOG (town boundaries, shaded relief); MassDEP/NMCOG (2011 hydrography)

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Certain soil types in Chelmsford, such as the Scituate and Essex series, present challenges for certain types of development due to their slow permeability and seasonally high-water tables, which complicate building projects. While much of Chelmsford's agricultural land has given way to suburban development, recent conservation efforts have protected wildlife coordinators, habitat connectivity, and flood mitigation benefits of farmland.

## Landscape Character

Scattered fragments of pastures, forests, and wetlands set against the backdrop of the Merrimack and Concord River corridors define Chelmsford's landscape. Scenic views of streams and lakes, unique geological features, and historical remnants represent natural and cultural resources worth preserving. The multitude of surface water bodies that contribute to its landscape character are discussed further in the Water Resources section of this document. Wetlands surround most streams and provide natural wildlife habitat and scenic vistas.

## Water Resources

### Watersheds

Chelmsford is located within the Merrimack River Basin and spans two key sub-watersheds: the Merrimack and SuAsCo (Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers), as shown on [Map: 9 Chelmsford Watershed Sub-Basin Map](#). Most of Chelmsford's land drains into the Concord River, which forms part of the Town's eastern boundary. The remaining lands drains directly into the Merrimack River. Rivers, streams, and other surface water bodies account for approximately 3.04% of Chelmsford's area, covering around 448 acres<sup>13</sup>.

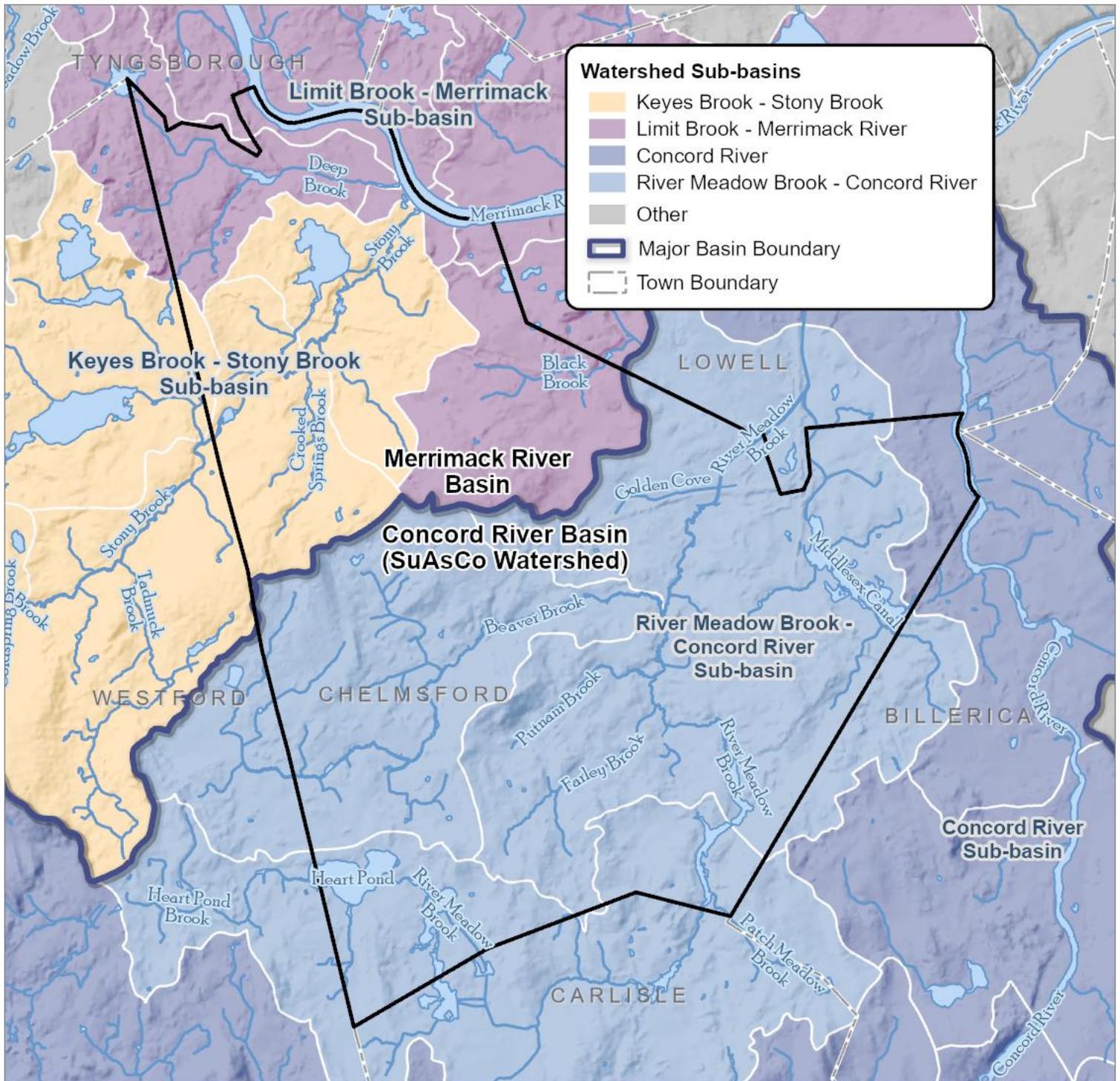
Currently, local organizations work to protect these water resources. The Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust (CLCT) preserves open spaces along the Concord River and other water bodies, which helps filter pollutants and reduce flood risks. The Sudbury Valley Trustees focus on conserving habitats and improving water quality within the SuAsCo watershed, benefiting Chelmsford and nearby communities. Meanwhile, the Merrimack River Watershed Council leads initiatives to enhance water quality and access along the Merrimack River, further supporting regional environmental resilience.

Despite these efforts, Chelmsford faces ongoing water resources challenges. Industrial activities and contamination from nearby facilities, including PFAS pollution associated with the nearby 3M facility, contribute to water quality concerns. Stormwater runoff, invasive species, and climate change also threaten water quality and overall ecosystem health.

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<sup>13</sup> "2022 U.S. Gazetteer Files: Massachusetts: County Subdivisions". United States Census Bureau. Retrieved June 8, 2023.

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**Sources:** USGS NHD/MassGIS/NMCOG (watershed sub-basins named per NHD flowlines, hydrography); USGS NHD/NMCOG (streams and flowlines); MassDOT/NMCOG (town boundaries, open space); NMCOG (trails); NH GRANIT (roads, political boundaries)

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**Map: 9 Chelmsford Watershed Sub-Basin Map**

0 2,000 Feet



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**Rivers and Streams**

The Merrimack River spans 180 miles, flowing through central and southern New Hampshire and northeastern Massachusetts. The Merrimack is a crucial natural resource, serving as New England's second-largest surface drinking water source, supplying water to over 300,000 people in the Greater Lowell area<sup>14</sup>. In Chelmsford, this section of the river, known as the "Lower Merrimack River," forms the Town's northeastern border with Lowell and Tyngsborough.

This area supports diverse wildlife, including federally protected bald eagles that winter along the river, and serves as a key migratory route for waterfowl and songbirds.

The Merrimack and Concord Rivers are



classified as Class B waterways, indicating they are suitable for recreational activities, fish and wildlife habitat, agricultural use, industrial applications, and navigation, as defined by the Mass DEP. Under normal and low-flow conditions, the Merrimack River meets Class B standards; however, during wet weather, it is subject to combined sewer overflow (CSO) discharges from upstream communities like Nashua and Manchester, New Hampshire, impacting water quality. Chelmsford has improved facilities at Southwell Field to enhance public access, and it now offers the only public boat launch between Lowell and New Hampshire.

Chelmsford also features eleven named streams, including Beaver Brook, Scotty Hollow Brook, Deep Brook, and River Meadow Brook. These waterways create scenic landscapes, offer fishing, hiking, and canoeing areas, and serve as important habitats and wildlife corridors. Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) regularly stocks various water bodies across the state. In Chelmsford, Stony Brook is listed among the stocked waters in the Northeast District<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> The Merrimack River Watershed Council, [www.merrimack.org](http://www.merrimack.org). Retrieved October 11, 2024.

<sup>15</sup>[https://www.mass.gov/doc/masswildlife-northeast-districts-trout-stocked-waters/download?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.mass.gov/doc/masswildlife-northeast-districts-trout-stocked-waters/download?utm_source=chatgpt.com). Retrieved on December 5, 2024.

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Chelmsford is home to Freeman Lake (92.5 acres) and Heart Pond (76.8 acres), both of which feature accessible shorelines and connect to natural areas like the Cranberry Bog Reservation. Additional ponds, such as Swains Pond, Eagle Mill Pond, and Russell Mill Pond, contribute to Chelmsford's aquatic ecosystems.

Initially dammed for industrial use, Russell Mill Pond is now part of the Town's recreational landscape. However, it experiences issues with invasive species and flow alteration.

Freeman Lake and Heart Pond face impairment issues. Mass DEP classified Heart Pond as impaired due to pathogens, with frequent seasonal swimming closures attributed to high E. coli levels and incidents of lifeguard harassment. An annual invasive treatment program at Heart Pond has been initiated and is ongoing. While the Freeman Lake treatment plan has been put on hold as a comprehensive lake management plan is underway.

### **Aquifer Recharge Areas**

Chelmsford's drinking water relies entirely on aquifers. Protecting surface water quality is critical to ensuring safe and sufficient drinking water. The Town's drinking water comes from public aquifers managed by three independent water districts: the Chelmsford Water District, East Chelmsford Water District, and North Chelmsford Water District. The Town's aquifers, closely linked to water bodies like Russell Mill Pond, River Meadow Brook, and Stony Brook, are of notable size and currently have the capacity to meet both present demands and an estimated 20% increase to accommodate future growth<sup>16</sup>.

To safeguard these water sources, the Massachusetts state-designated Wellhead Protection Areas identify three protective zones around each wellhead, As shown in *Map: 5 Chelmsford Wellhead Protection Areas, Aquifers, and Floodplains Map*.

- Zone I, a 400-foot radius surrounding the wellhead, prohibits any usage to protect water quality.
- Zone II covers the broader extent of the aquifer's capture zone and permits limited land use, while the Interim Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA) serves as a temporary Zone II for wells without specific delineation.
- Zone III includes the entire watershed up gradient from Zone II, encompassing land that influences the water quality entering the aquifer.

Chelmsford implemented an Aquifer Protection Overlay District to preserve its drinking water quality and prevent harmful land uses near aquifer zones. The overlay district, which includes Zones I and II of the Wellhead Protection Areas, limits or prohibits certain types of land development to protect water quality. The Board of Health also adopted regulations to establish the Groundwater Protection Zone to further safeguard the communities drinking water sources.

### **Flood Hazard Areas**

Flooding poses a recurring risk in Chelmsford, especially along Tyngsborough Road, Route 3A in North Chelmsford, and nearby residential areas, such as the Williamsburg Condominiums, Butterfield Street, and Sleeper Street. These areas, affected by the Merrimack River overflow,

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<sup>16</sup> Chelmsford Master Plan Update 2021

## Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035

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frequently require road closures to maintain safety. FEMA's 2014 floodplain maps identify Chelmsford's flood-prone zones, which are managed under the Town's Wetlands Bylaw and Zoning Bylaw to mitigate flood risks and maintain resilience. Additional flood-prone areas such as Evergreen Street, Donna Road, and Noble Drive face challenges from undersized culverts, overgrown vegetation, and sediment buildup hindering adequate drainage. These areas can be seen in [Map: 5 Chelmsford Wellhead Protection Areas, Aquifers, and Floodplains Map](#)

It should be noted, the Town is set to adopt the new 2024 FEMA floodplain maps and updated floodplain zoning bylaw in Spring 2025.

Climate projections from the 2023 ResilientMass Plan<sup>17</sup> indicate Chelmsford and the broader Northern Middlesex region can expect increased rainfall intensity and more frequent extreme weather events. These changes are likely to exacerbate current flood risks, with projections showing extreme precipitation events may increase in frequency and intensity, further stressing stormwater and drainage infrastructure. Increased runoff volumes, especially during major storm events, will require Chelmsford to expand its flood resilience strategies.

#### Wetlands

Archer Meadowbrook Preserve and Cranberry Bog Reservation provide critical ecological functions, and Bill Edge/Deep Brook Reservation also slows run-off, absorbs stormwater, and protects infrastructure in flood-prone areas like Tyngsborough Road and Route 3A. These wetlands are protected under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and Chelmsford's Wetlands Bylaw<sup>18</sup>, enforced by the Conservation Commission. The bylaw establishes robust protective measures, including a 100-foot buffer zone around wetlands, a 25-foot "no disturb" zone, a 50-foot "minimal impact" zone, and a 30-foot restriction on impervious surfaces. Additionally, Chelmsford's regulations mandate a one-for-one replacement of altered wetlands, or in specific cases, a two-for-one replication ratio, ensuring no net loss of wetland resources.

Long-term management responsibilities outlined in the Wetlands Bylaw require applicants to provide detailed mitigation plans, professional monitoring, and reporting for any wetland replication or significant disturbance. These requirements aim to ensure the success of wetland restoration projects and mitigate impacts on wildlife habitat and water quality. Further, the bylaw incorporates a 200-foot riparian buffer zone along perennial streams, emphasizing the importance of these areas in flood control and ecosystem integrity.

Despite these protections, Chelmsford's wetlands face ongoing challenges such as sediment buildup, invasive species proliferation, and stormwater management issues. Town staff have highlighted the need for consistent oversight of conditions outlined in Orders of Conditions<sup>19</sup> and Certificates of Compliance<sup>20</sup> and enforcement of maintenance requirements for stormwater infrastructure. Addressing these issues will require proactive management strategies, public

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<sup>17</sup>[https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2023/10/10/2023%20ResilientMass%20Plan\\_10.10.23%20508.pdf](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2023/10/10/2023%20ResilientMass%20Plan_10.10.23%20508.pdf). Retrieved November 1, 2024

<sup>18</sup><https://www.chelmsfordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/70/ChelmsfordWetlandsRegulations?bidId=>. Retrieved November 15, 2024

<sup>19</sup><https://ecode360.com/8274364#8274394> . Retrieved on November 15, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

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education on wetland importance, and strengthened enforcement mechanisms to maintain Chelmsford's wetland systems' ecological health and resilience.

## Vegetation

Chelmsford is in a transitional forest zone of New England, featuring a mix of northern and southern forest characteristics. This forest mix includes northern hardwoods, hemlock, white pine, and southern species such as oak and hickory. Dominant canopy trees in Chelmsford include oak, hickory, birch, maple, and Eastern white pine, while the understory consists of sassafras, ferns, wildflowers, and various shrubs. Much of Chelmsford's forested land is on former agricultural land, where farming ceased many years ago. The largest forested area, Russell Mill Pond, covers 132 acres in the southeast. Additional forests include Thanksgiving Forest (45 acres) and Concord Road Forest (12 acres) in the southeast, and Oak Hill (80 acres) in the north.

Currently, Chelmsford's vegetation reflects the typical patterns of a suburban landscape. Beyond the larger forested areas, Chelmsford's "urban forest" consists of smaller patches of trees and individual plantings scattered across backyards, subdivision buffers, roadsides, and parking lots, primarily composed of landscaping species. This urban vegetation requires increasing management as larger forested areas decline.

Chelmsford's vacant lots and fields currently support grasses like foxtail, fescue, and timothy, along with wildflowers like red clover, wild carrot, and goldenrod. Wetland areas are predominantly occupied by red maple, while freshwater meadows near streams contain reeds, woodgrass, and sedge, providing essential food and habitat for wildlife. As climate changes influence local vegetation, Chelmsford's diverse plant communities will require careful management to maintain their ecological and aesthetic value. *Table 14 Partial List of Plant Species Found Within Chelmsford* below contains a partial list of plant species found within the Town:

Table 14 Partial List of Plant Species Found Within Chelmsford

<b>Partial List of Plant Species Found Within Chelmsford</b>		
<b>Common Name: Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name: Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name: Scientific Name</b>
Black Oak: <i>Quercus velutina</i>	Grey Birch: <i>Betula populifolia</i>	Silky dogwood: <i>Cornus amomum</i>
Scarlet Oak: <i>Quercus coccinea</i>	White Birch: <i>Betula papyrifera</i>	Shadbush: <i>Amelanchier arborea</i>
Red Oak: <i>Quercus rubra</i>	Black Birch: <i>Betula lenta</i>	White Ash: <i>Fraxinus americana</i>
Chestnut Oak: <i>Quercus prinus</i>	River Birch: <i>Betula nigra</i>	Green Ash: <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>
White Oak: <i>Quercus alba</i>	Black Cherry: <i>Prunus serotina</i>	Aspen: <i>Populus tremuloides</i>
Pin Oak: <i>Quercus palustris</i>	Black gum: <i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Big-toothed Aspen: <i>Populus grandidentata</i>
Scrub Oak: <i>Quercus ilicifolia</i>	Maple-leaved Viburnum: <i>Viburnum acerifolium</i>	American Hazlenut: <i>Corylus Americana</i>
Swamp White Oak: <i>Quercus bicolor</i>	White Pine: <i>Pinus strobus</i>	Chestnut: <i>Castanea dentate</i>
Red Maple: <i>Acer rubrum</i>	European buckthorn: <i>Rhamnus frangula</i>	Hemlock: <i>Tsuga canadensis</i>
Sugar Maple: <i>Acer saccharum</i>	Sassafras: <i>Sassafras albidum</i>	Beech: <i>Fagus grandifolia</i>
Silver Maple: <i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Flowering Dogwood: <i>Cornus florida</i>	Hickory: <i>Carya ovata</i> , <i>C. tomentosa</i> , <i>C. glabra</i> , and <i>C. ovalis</i>
Mountain laurel: <i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	Buttonbush: <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Sweet pepper bush: <i>Clethra alnifolia</i>

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<b>Partial List of Plant Species Found Within Chelmsford</b>		
<b>Common Name: Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name: Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name: Scientific Name</b>
Spicebush: <i>Lindera benzoin</i>	Swamp azalea: <i>Rhododendron viscosum</i>	Arrow wood: <i>Viburnum dentatum var. lucidum</i>
Swamp candles: <i>Lysimachia terrestris</i>	Black willow: <i>Salix nigra</i>	Cottonwood: <i>Populus deltoids</i>
Witch hazel: <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>	Shagbark and other hickories: <i>Carya ovata, C. labra and C. ovalis</i>	Low-bush blueberries: <i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i>
Highbush blueberries: <i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	Speckled alder: <i>Alnus incana spp. rugosa</i>	Smooth alder: <i>Alnus serrulata</i>
Winterberry: <i>Ilex verticillata</i>	Nannyberry: <i>Viburnum lentago</i>	Huckleberry: <i>Gaylussacia baccata</i>
Elderberry: <i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	Partridgeberry: <i>Mitchella repens</i>	Bracken fern: <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Cinnamon fern: <i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i>	Ostrich fern: <i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i>	Christmas fern: <i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i>
Sensitive fern: <i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	Royal fern: <i>Osmunda regalia</i>	Pink lady slipper: <i>Cypripedium acaule</i>
Club mosses: <i>Lycopodium spp</i>	False nettle: <i>Boehmeria cylindrical</i>	Canada mayflower: <i>Maianthemum canadense</i>
White wood aster: <i>Aster divaricatus</i>	Indian cucumber: <i>Medeola virginiana</i>	Water parsnip: <i>Sium suave</i>
Wintergreen: <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i>	Wild sarsaparilla: <i>Aralia nudicaulis</i>	Poison Ivy: <i>Toxicodendron radicans</i>
Poison sumac: <i>Toxicodendron vernix</i>	Skunk cabbage: <i>Symplocarpus foetidus</i>	Marsh marigold: <i>Caltha palustris</i>
Meadowsweet: <i>Spiraea alba var. latifolia</i>	Male-berry: <i>Lyonia ligustrina</i>	Star flower: <i>Trientalis borealis</i>
Perfoliate bellwort: <i>Uvularia perfoliata</i>	False Solomon’s Seal: <i>Maianthemum racemosum</i>	Early meadow rue: <i>Thalictrum dioicum</i>
False foxgloves: <i>Aureolaria flava, A. pedicularia, and A. virginica</i>	Little blue stem grass: <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	Pennsylvania sedge: <i>Carex pensylvanica</i>
Awed sedge: <i>Carex crinita</i>	Bugleweeds: <i>Lycopus spp.</i>	Poverty grass: <i>Danthonia spicata</i>

According to the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), Chelmsford is known to have six (6) plant species classified as state endangered, threatened, or species of special concern<sup>21</sup>. *Table 15: Plant Species Considered Threatened, Endangered or Of Special Concern in Chelmsford* below, lists these species as well as their state designations. Most of these species have not been observed in Chelmsford for over a century.

<sup>21</sup> Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, [www.state.ma.us/dfw](http://www.state.ma.us/dfw)

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Table 15: Plant Species Considered Threatened, Endangered or Of Special Concern in Chelmsford

Common Name	Scientific Name	Designation	Date Last Observed
Purple Needlegrass	<i>Aristida purpurascens</i>	Threatened	1907
New England Blazing Star	<i>Liatris scariosa var. novae-angliae</i>	Special Concern	1900
Stiff Yellow Flax	<i>Linum medium var. texanum</i>	Threatened	1902
Lion's Foot	<i>Nabalus serpentarius</i>	Endangered	1914
Adder's-tongue Fern	<i>Ophioglossum pusillum</i>	Threatened	1884
Wild Senna	<i>Senna hebecarpa</i>	Endangered	1902

Like much of New England's, climate projections indicate Chelmsford's vegetation will experience shifts due to rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events. These changes are expected to stress native plant species, particularly those suited to cooler climates, while potentially favoring more heat-tolerant or drought-resistant species from southern regions. This gradual shift may impact forest composition, water retention, and food and habitat availability for wildlife, potentially reducing biodiversity and altering the character of Chelmsford's forests and urban green spaces<sup>22</sup>.

### Invasive Species

Chelmsford's invasive species challenge reflects a wider issue seen across the state. Non-native plants, such as Japanese knotweed, burning bush, oriental bittersweet, and purple loosestrife, are especially prevalent in disturbed areas like roadsides, fields, and right-of-way corridors. Invasive species thrive due to their lack of natural predators and diseases, which would otherwise control their populations. Consequently, invasives often outcompete native flora, altering ecosystems and threatening local biodiversity. Aquatic invasive species, including water chestnut and fanwort, also present significant issues by forming dense mats on water bodies, blocking sunlight, and reducing oxygen levels—ultimately affecting aquatic life and water quality.

In recent years, Chelmsford has focused on securing funding for invasive species management programs, raising public awareness, and applying preventative measures. These efforts are critical as climate change exacerbates the issue. Warmer temperatures and changing precipitation patterns have expanded the range of certain species, such as the hemlock woolly adelgid, which was once constrained by colder winters but is now moving into areas like Chelmsford.

### Public Shade Trees

The Tree Replacement, Establishment, and Enhancement (TREE) Committee supports Chelmsford's efforts to provide public shade trees in collaboration with the Town's Tree Warden. Chelmsford prioritizes native species better suited to local soil and climate conditions. The emphasis on native plantings supports the region's biodiversity while enhancing public spaces, including parks, streets, and other community areas.

Over the past seven (7) years from 2017-2024, the TREE Committee estimates a 1-1.5% canopy loss. To fight this issue, they have undertaken tree planting and maintenance across Chelmsford. Recent projects include planting trees along 22 miles of roadways and planting 22 trees on the Town

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2023/10/10/2023%20ResilientMass%20Plan\\_10.10.23%20508.pdf](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2023/10/10/2023%20ResilientMass%20Plan_10.10.23%20508.pdf) Retrieved on November 1, 2024.

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Common in 2023. At the 2024 Town Meeting they were awarded funding to plant an additional 80 trees in the fiscal year 2025.

Beyond aesthetics, these trees provide shade, reduce urban heat, and bolster Chelmsford's ecological resilience. The Town and DPW have established a revolving tree-planting account to fund these activities.

**Agricultural Lands**

Chelmsford's agricultural lands are essential for preserving the Town's heritage and supporting local food production. Historically, Chelmsford was an active farming community known for dairying, orchards, and grazing. Today, much of this agricultural legacy is sustained through the work of the Chelmsford Agricultural Commission and the CLCT. These organizations help maintain the Town's agricultural landscape and promote practices that support local food systems and environmental sustainability.

Currently, the Agricultural Commission advises local government on land use issues and advocates for policies that protect farmland, ensuring that prime agricultural lands remain available for farming. The CLCT is complementary by securing open spaces, including farmlands, and conserving land for agricultural and ecological benefits. As climate change presents new challenges, safeguarding productive farmland becomes increasingly important for local food security and climate resilience. Chelmsford's agrarian lands help buffer against climate impacts by supporting biodiversity, enriching soil health, and reducing urban heat through open, vegetated spaces.



*Image: 12 Hay Field Visit - Credit Dave Sperry*

## Fisheries and Wildlife

### Fisheries

Most ponds and streams in Chelmsford are home to warm-water fish species that can reproduce in the wild and sustain their populations without the help of external forces. The Division of Fisheries & Wildlife stocks a few streams and ponds in the area, which are suitably cold and oxygenated and can sustain salmonids with brook, brown, or rainbow trout. Stony Brook is the only trout stocked stream in Chelmsford and is accessible on foot.

Chelmsford does not have a formal, location-based, Town-wide inventory of fisheries and wildlife habitats/sightings. The Merrimack River Comprehensive Watershed Assessment Report, prepared by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs in 2003, identified a multitude of fish species within the Merrimack River Watershed, which are listed in *Table 16: Fish Species in the Merrimack River Watershed* below:

Table 16: Fish Species in the Merrimack River Watershed

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
3-spine stickleback	<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>	Falfish	<i>Semotilus corporalis</i>
4-spine stickleback	<i>Apeltes quadracus</i>	Gizzard shad	<i>Dorosoma cepedianum</i>
9-spine stickleback	<i>Pungitius pungitius</i>	Golden shiner	<i>Notemigonus crysoleucas</i>
Alewife	<i>Alosa pseudoharengus</i>	Goldfish	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
American shad	<i>Alosa sapidissima</i>	Largemouth bass	<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>
American smelt	<i>Osmerus mordax</i>	Longnose dace	<i>Rhinichthys cataractae</i>
Atlantic salmon	<i>Salmo salar</i>	Margined madtom	<i>Noturus insignis</i>
Atlantic silverside	<i>Menidia menidia</i>	Mummichog	<i>Fundulus heteroclitus</i>
Atlantic sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus</i>	Northern pike	<i>Esox lucius</i>
Banded killfish	<i>Fundulus diaphanus</i>	Northern pipefish	<i>Syngnathus fuscus</i>
Banded sunfish	<i>Enneacanthus obesus</i>	Pumpkinseed	<i>Lepomis gibbosus</i>
Black crappie	<i>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</i>	Redbreast sunfish	<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>
Blacknose dace	<i>Rhinichthys atratulus</i>	Sand lance	<i>Ammodytes hexapterus</i>
Smallmouth bass	<i>Micropterus dolomieu</i>	Shortnose sturgeon	<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>
Blueback herring	<i>Alosa aestivalis</i>	Spottail shiner	<i>Notropis hudsonius</i>
Bluegill	<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>	Striped bass	<i>Morone saxatilis</i>
Bowfin	<i>Amia calva</i>	Swamp darter	<i>Etheostoma fusiforme</i>
Bridle shiner	<i>Notropis bifrenatus</i>	Tesselated darter	<i>Etheostoma olmstedii</i>
Brown bullhead	<i>Ictalurus nebulosus</i>	White catfish	<i>Ictalurus catus</i>
Carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	White perch	<i>Morone americana</i>
Chain pickerel	<i>Esox niger</i>	White sucker	<i>Catostomus commersoni</i>
Channel catfish	<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>	Yellow bullhead	<i>Ictalurus natalis</i>
Common shiner	<i>Luxilus cornutus</i>	Yellow perch	<i>Perca flavescens</i>
Eel	<i>Anguilla rostrata</i>	Sea lamprey	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>

Source: Merrimack River Comprehensive Watershed Assessment Report, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 2003.

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**Wildlife**

Wildlife resources reflect the terrestrial ecosystem of Chelmsford. The most important species within Town include ruffed grouse, woodcock, varying hare, gray squirrel, ring-necked pheasant, white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, eastern coyote, woodchuck, red fox, red-tailed hawk, owls, wild turkey, muskrat, beaver, mink, and raccoon, bobcat, black bear, moose, barred owl and great horned owl. The wetland areas of the Concord River provide high-value waterfowl habitat for species such as Canada geese, mallards, black ducks, and wood ducks.

An informal survey of wildlife that has been identified by community members Ruth Luna and Tom Wilson and naturalist Thomas Sileo was completed in 2003 and updated for the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan identifies the following species as native to Chelmsford:

American Black Duck	Fox	Pileated woodpecker
American eels	Flycatcher	Pine warbler
American Goldfinch	Goldfinch	Prairie warbler
American restart	Goshawk	Purple finch
Bald eagle	Grackle	Raccoon
Barred owl	Gray catbird	Redstart
Beaver	Rose-breasted grosbeak	Red-tailed hawk
Black & white house sparrow	Gray squirrel	Red wing blackbird
Black racer snake	Great blue heron	Robin
Black-capped	Great horned owls	Rusty blackbird
Chickadee	Great-crested	Savannah sparrow
Blue jay	Hairy woodpecker	Scarlet tanager
Brown creeper	House wren	Screech owl
Brown thrashers	House finch	Short-tailed shrew
Bufflehead duck	Hummingbird	Skunk
Butterflies	Indigo bunting	Snapping turtle
Canada geese	Kingbirds	Solitary sandpiper
Cardinals	Kingfisher	Song sparrows
Carolina wren	Leopard frog	Spotted salamanders
Catbird	Little brown bat	Spotted sandpiper
Cedar waxwing	Mallard	Spring peepers
Chestnut-sided warbler	Meadow vole	Squirrel
Chipping sparrows	Mink	Swamp sparrows
Cold water bass	Mockingbird	Tree swallow
Cowbird	Monarch butterfly	Tufted titmouse
Coyote	Moose	Turkey vulture
Crow	Moss animal	Turtles
Deer	Mourning dove	Virginia opossum
Downy woodpecker	Muskrats	White-breasted nuthatch
Eastern chipmunk	Nighthawk	White-throated sparrow
Eastern kingbird	Northern cardinal	White-tailed deer
Eastern peewee	Northern flicker	Wild calla
Eastern phoebe	Northern junco	Wild turkey
Eastern towhees	Northern mockingbird	Wood ducks
Egret	Northern orioles	Wood thrush
European starling	Otter	Yellow throat warble
Fisher	Ovenbird wrens	
Flickers	Phoebe	

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### Rare Wildlife Species

Chelmsford supports several rare wildlife species identified by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP). These habitats protect species such as the wood turtle, listed as a species of special concern in Massachusetts. Wetland areas within Chelmsford are crucial for migratory birds and local amphibians, providing necessary breeding and feeding grounds that bolster the region's biodiversity<sup>23</sup>.

### Vernal Pools

As of December 2024, Chelmsford had twenty-five (25) certified vernal pools recognized by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)<sup>24</sup>. These pools provide essential breeding habitats for amphibians and invertebrates. Due to groundwater levels and rainfall, vernal pools generally fill with water in winter and spring, stay wet through spring and early summer, and dry up by mid-to-late summer. Chelmsford's wetland protection bylaw protects both certified and uncertified categories of vernal pools.

### Wildlife Corridors

Although open space is fragmented throughout Chelmsford, there are areas where wildlife corridors connect habitat and open space. These corridors consist of long, narrow stretches of wildlife habitat that run between larger habitat areas and tend to follow most perennial streams and large, open-water bodies such as Freeman Lake and Russell Mill Pond. Identified wildlife corridors in Chelmsford include the following:

- Along Beaver Brook, west of Chelmsford Center, including the Limestone Quarry Reservation, Bartlett Woodlot and the Bruce Freeman Bike Path right-of-way.
- The greenway, which includes the Wright Reservation and the Robins Hill Reservation in South Chelmsford;
- Robins Hill Reservation, separated by Route 27, adjacent to the Wright Reservation;
- National Grid high tension lines that run east-west across Town;
- Land extending along the banks of the Merrimack River in North Chelmsford, including Southwell Park and the land along Deep Brook;
- Hales Brook/Middlesex Canal area of East Chelmsford, which extends into the Manning State Forest in Billerica;
- The corridor extending through Thanksgiving Forest, Russell Millpond Forest, and the Great Brook State Park into Carlisle;
- The cranberry bog properties in Chelmsford and Carlisle;
- Tenneco gas pipeline easement running east-west along the Chelmsford/Carlisle and Chelmsford/Billerica borders;
- The area along the Concord River in East Chelmsford; and
- Stony Brook and Crooked Springs Brook in North Chelmsford.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-nhesp-priority-habitats-of-rare-species>. Retrieved on October 29, 2024.

<sup>24</sup> NHESP Certified Vernal Pools - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-nhesp-certified-vernal-pools> Retrieved December 5, 2024

## Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

Chelmsford has several unique and scenic areas scattered throughout the Town that remind residents and visitors of its agrarian past. Some areas preserve a portion of the forest landscape and provide recreation and/or wildlife habitat, as seen on *Map: 10 Chelmsford's Scenic and Unique Features Map*.



*Image: 13 Warren Pohl Reservation - Credit Dave Sperry*

### Scenic Resources

Chelmsford has a multitude of surface water bodies that contribute to its landscape character, which are discussed further in the Water Resources section of this document. Wetlands surround most streams and provide natural wildlife habitat and scenic vistas. The 310-acre Cranberry Bog Reservation, purchased by the Town in 1986, is one of the Town's most unusual features. Half the site lies within the Town of Carlisle and includes 40 acres of a former cranberry bog. Other scenic landscapes throughout Town include:

1. *Beaver Brook, River Meadow Brook, Crooked Spring Brook, and Stony Brook* have similar scenery, including grassy meadows, woodlands, and pleasant walking areas. Beaver Brook also runs through the historic Chelmsford Center Village, providing a scenic and cultural resource.
2. The railroad bridge on Princeton Street offers views of the meadows surrounding *Stony Brook*.
3. *Eagle Marsh*, seen from Route 4 in North Chelmsford, is an important area for waterfowl and other wildlife.
4. The wetlands on the south side of Littleton Road (Route 110) just west of Chelmsford Center, including the *Warren Wetlands Preserve*, are scenic.
5. Vistas around *Heart Pond* and *Freeman Lake* provide beautiful water views.
6. *Southwell Park* in North Chelmsford offers views of the Merrimack River that are attractive.
7. *Bartlett Park* in Chelmsford Center provides historic pasture views.
8. *Roberts Field* on Old Westford Road has a pollinator park and nature trails.

### Unique Environments

Chelmsford's diverse natural environments feature unique geological and ecological elements, including limestone deposits, glacial topography, remaining cultural farmlands, and habitat areas designated by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). Robin Hill, the Town's highest point at 404 feet, was named after a Native Chief whose tribe historically farmed the area. Its limestone-rich soil extends into the Lime Quarry Reservation, which was once an active site for lime extraction from 1736 to 1830, providing lime for local construction. Today, a fire tower stands atop Robin Hill, offering views of the Boston skyline on clear days. The neutral limestone soil supports a distinct vegetation community unique to this region of Massachusetts.

Chelmsford's conservation areas include Thanksgiving Ground Forest, historically used for fox hunting each Thanksgiving. Now covered in tall pines and mixed oaks, this forest contains notable glacial erratics near the reservation's center. Another significant site, Oak Hill Reservation in North Chelmsford, is protected by the Conservation Commission for recreational activities such as hiking and nature walks. Formerly part of a granite quarry, Oak Hill is dotted with smaller glacial rocks and potential vernal pools. It also supports Scotty Hollow Brook, which flows through a larger wetland system feeding into Swain's Pond and eventually the Merrimack River.

Chelmsford's few remaining large farms, ranging from 10 to 100 acres, are essential to the Town's agricultural legacy. Notable farms include Misty Meadows, Pine Hill Road Farms, Pohl-Warren Farm, Sheehan Farm, Parlee Farm, Lupien Farm, and Sunny Meadow Farm, which are scattered across southern, central, and western Chelmsford. These properties represent the last active agricultural areas in this largely suburban Town.

NHESP currently designates two (2) key areas in Chelmsford as Priority Habitats of Rare Species: River Meadow Brook and a portion of the Merrimack River shoreline in North Chelmsford<sup>25</sup>. These critical habitats support a range of rare or vulnerable species, including reptiles, amphibians, mussels, dragonflies, butterflies, and various vascular plants, reflecting Chelmsford's role in regional biodiversity conservation.



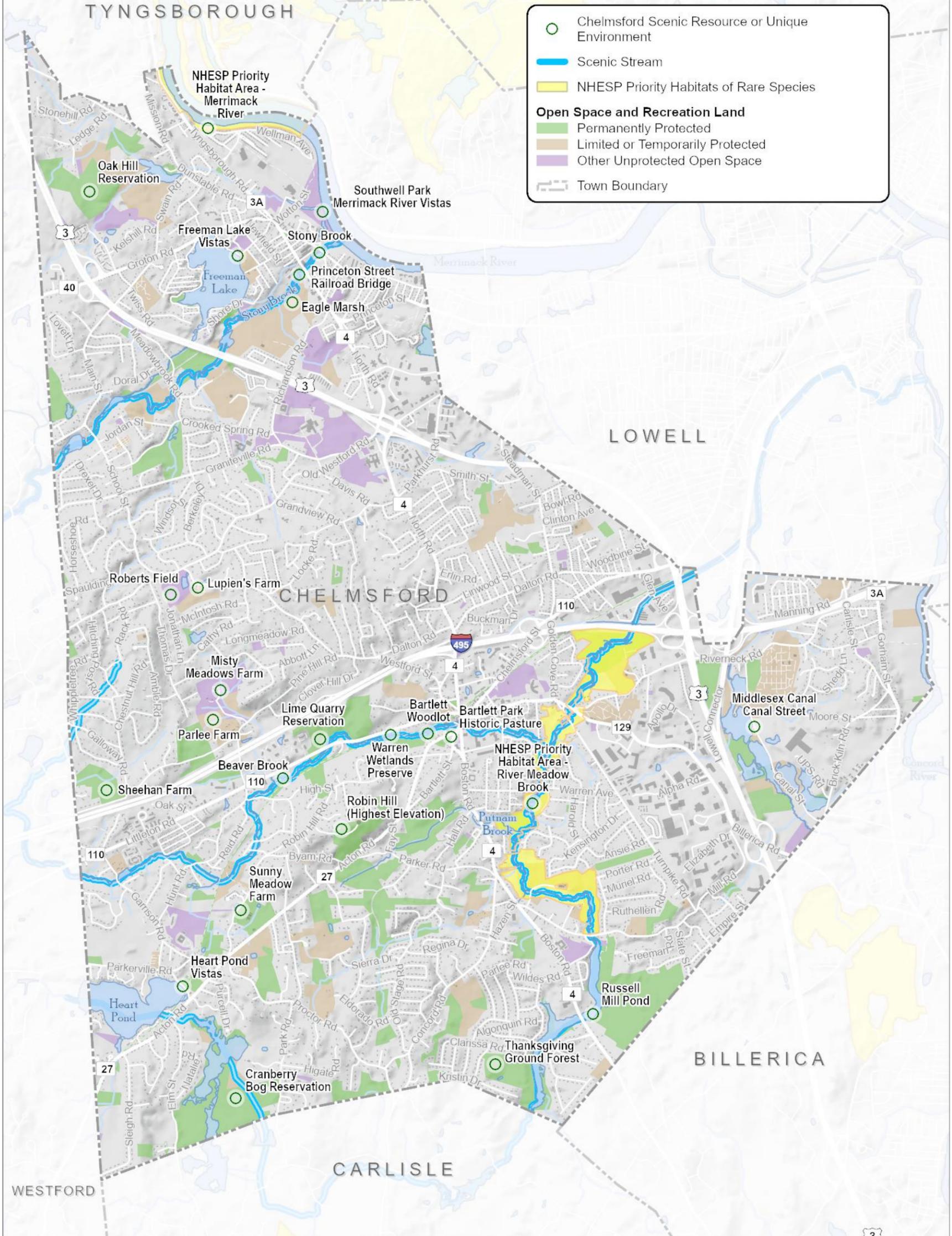
*Image: 14 Lime Quarry Reservation - Credit: Jerry Schmidt*

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-nhosp-priority-habitats-of-rare-species> retrieved December 2, 2024

Map: 10 Chelmsford's Scenic and Unique Features Map

# Chelmsford Scenic Resources and Unique Environments



**Sources:**  
Town of Chelmsford (scenic and unique resources); MassGIS (shaded relief, 8/2021 NHESP priority habitats of rare species (latest available)); MassGIS/NMCOG (stream flowlines, roads, town boundaries); MassGIS (2011 hydrography)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 12/2/2024



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**Cultural, Archaeological, and Historic Areas**

Chelmsford’s historic district in the Town Center is rich in landmarks, including the Forefather’s Burial Ground, 18th-century churches, homes, and commercial establishments. However, Chelmsford’s history extends far beyond these structures, encompassing the land’s original Native American heritage. The area was historically home to the Pawtucket and Massachusetts Tribes, who cultivated the region’s fishing, hunting, and agriculture resources. Artifacts such as stone tools, pottery fragments, and other archaeological findings have been uncovered in various parts of Town, providing insight into the lives of Indigenous peoples before European settlement.

Today, many historical homes are dispersed throughout Chelmsford, particularly in the former villages of North, South, East, and West Chelmsford, and plaques commemorating their history are displayed. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Town’s identity transitioned from a classic New England village to a desirable suburban community, driven by the expansion of single-family homes and improved highway access.

North Chelmsford also holds significant historic and cultural value, representing the Town’s industrial past. The mill buildings along Stony Brook, repurposed for modern use, remain symbols of Chelmsford’s 19th-century industrial foundation. Noteworthy sites include the Garrison House on Garrison Road and the Byam Homestead, now home to the Chelmsford Historical Society. Other relics of Chelmsford’s early history include the Middlesex Canal, the lime kilns at Robin Hill, and several dams from the 17th to 19th centuries.

The Middlesex Canal, a 27-mile waterway connecting the Merrimack River to Boston, was chartered in 1793 and operated from 1802 to 1851. Portions of the canal are still visible along Canal Street, where markers placed by the Middlesex Canal Association commemorate its route. The 17th-century Samuel Adams saw/grist mill on Russell Mill Pond, and Thomas Hinchman’s sawmill on Stony Brook also represent Chelmsford’s industrial roots; Hinchman’s mill was converted to electric power in the 1970s and is maintained by a trust. Bartlett Woodlot and the nearby Bartlett Park along Beaver Brook serve as historical focal points in Chelmsford’s Town Center.

Significant cultural, archeological, and historic open space and recreational areas include:

- *Robin Hill* – Native American heritage, local historical significance
- *Lime Quarry and Beaver Brook* – local industrial history
- *Canal Street* – Middlesex Canal regional transportation history
- *Russell Mill Pond* – supports local pre-American Revolutionary War industrial history
- *Stony Brook and Freeman Lake* – support local industrial history
- *Thanksgiving Ground Forest* – local cultural heritage
- *Bartlett Woodlot and Beaver Brook* – local industrial history
- *Town Common* - local historical and cultural center

## Environmental Challenges

### Hazardous Waste and Brownfield Sites

Chelmsford has 254 contaminated sites identified by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup. Of these, five sites are classified as either Tier 1 or Tier 2 due to petroleum or hazardous material releases, and they are shown on the Environmental Challenges Map. Additionally, 159 sites have been remediated, with Remedial Action Outcomes (RAOs) submitted to MassDEP, certifying that the sites no longer pose a significant risk. Three of these are Tier 1, and another 2 are Tier 2 – petroleum or hazardous material release sites and can be seen on *Map: 11 Chelmsford Environmental Challenges Map*.

One notable site, 275 Billerica Road, formerly occupied by Electrometals, Inc., has been identified by the EPA as a candidate for cleanup under the Superfund program due to its risks to human health and the environment.

Another key site, 27 Katrina Road, is a three-acre town-owned parcel recognized as both a local Priority Development Site and a State Brownfield Priority Project. While the site requires a \$1 million hazardous waste cleanup, the Town has been actively seeking redevelopment opportunities and is currently in negotiations with a potential developer. These efforts are part of Chelmsford’s commitment to addressing environmental challenges and encouraging sustainable redevelopment.

### Landfills

The Swain Road Landfill is a capped landfill owned by the Town. The Glenview Landfill, a privately owned and entirely capped landfill, is located off Stedman Street, north of Route 3. The Swain Road Landfill became eligible for the Commonwealth’s post-closure development use permits, and the site is now an operational energy-generating photovoltaic solar array.



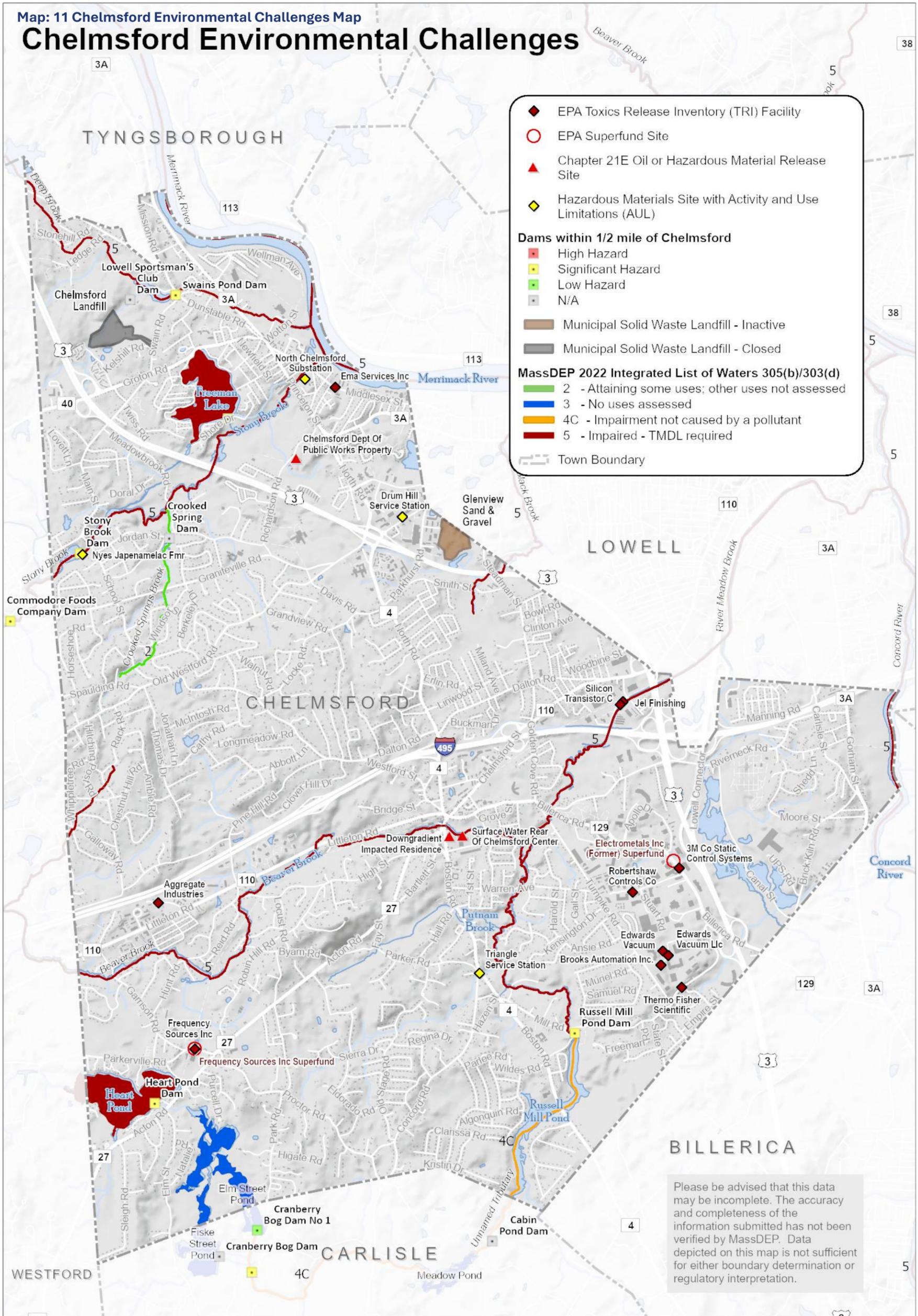
*Image: 16 Rusty Truck Reclaimed - Credit: Dave Sperry*

### Erosion

Varney Beach at Freeman Lake experiences erosion during high-intensity rain and poses a risk to retaining walls. DPW is aware of the issue and conducts frequent maintenance.

Map: 11 Chelmsford Environmental Challenges Map

# Chelmsford Environmental Challenges



◆ EPA Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) Facility  
○ EPA Superfund Site  
▲ Chapter 21E Oil or Hazardous Material Release Site  
◆ Hazardous Materials Site with Activity and Use Limitations (AUL)

**Dams within 1/2 mile of Chelmsford**

■ High Hazard  
■ Significant Hazard  
■ Low Hazard  
■ N/A

Municipal Solid Waste Landfill - Inactive  
 Municipal Solid Waste Landfill - Closed

**MassDEP 2022 Integrated List of Waters 305(b)/303(d)**

2 - Attaining some uses; other uses not assessed  
 3 - No uses assessed  
 4C - Impairment not caused by a pollutant  
 5 - Impaired - TMDL required

Town Boundary

Please be advised that this data may be incomplete. The accuracy and completeness of the information submitted has not been verified by MassDEP. Data depicted on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

**Sources:**  
MassGIS/MassDEP Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup (6/2024 Chapter 21E sites, oil and/or hazardous material sites with Activity and Use Limitations (AULs), 2014 solid waste); EPA (11/15/24 Facility Registry Service (FRS) geodatabase with Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) and Superfund Enterprise Management System (SEMS) Superfund sites); MassDEP (2022 Integrated List of Waters); DCR (3/2024 dams); MassGIS (shaded relief); MassGIS/NMCOG (roads, town boundaries)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation. Produced by NMCOG: 11/25/2024



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### **Chronic Flooding**

Several areas have reportedly been observed to flood regularly during storm events or after an extended period of heavy rains:

- Littleton Road, west of Chelmsford Center
- Turnpike Road at River Meadow Brook
- Portions of Southwell Park near the Williamsburg Condominium complex and the Merrimack River
- High Street at Beaver Brook
- Warren Avenue at River Meadow Brook
- Butterfield and Sleeper Streets
- Crooked Spring Road and Meadowbrook Road
- Meadowbrook Road at Stony Brook

The Stormwater Master Plan provides a comprehensive list and detailed information on areas prone to flooding, offering critical insights for mitigation and planning efforts. Appendix G, the Flood Area Summary, identifies several locations reportedly prone to regular flooding during storm events or following extended periods of heavy rainfall.

### **Sedimentation**

Sediment deposition along streams and riverbanks over a set observation period is not documented in detail for any specific areas of the Town.

### **New Development**

Section 3's *Growth and Development Patterns* subsection includes development trends and patterns, including the Town's planning relative to future housing and economic development. Any development is subject to either inspection services review or the Planning Board's review of other land use. Further, development within areas subject to the Wetlands Protection Act or other environmental controls relative to the Town's natural resources is reviewed accordingly, and decisions note any potential requirements that must be followed during development.

### **Ground and Surface Water Pollution**

Chelmsford's ground and surface waters face pollution risks from multiple sources, including historical industrial sites, hazardous waste locations, and agricultural areas where pesticides were applied. The Town's former industrial sites and older waste facilities may still harbor contaminants that can seep into the soil and groundwater over time. Additionally, flood-prone areas with capped landfills and gas stations may release pollutants during intense storms, exacerbating the potential for contamination.

Agricultural runoff from past and present pesticide applications is a pollution source, impacting surface water and groundwater quality. Agricultural pollutants can carry harmful substances into rivers, wetlands, and aquifers, impacting the ecosystem and residents' water quality. Localized efforts to monitor and remediate affected areas are part of Chelmsford's broader water quality protection strategy.

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) have also been detected in Chelmsford's water supply, adding to concerns. The Chelmsford Water District has implemented advanced filtration methods to address PFAS contamination levels, ensuring compliance with state standards and offering

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resources to residents for safe water usage. Together, these efforts contribute to long-term strategies for managing and reducing contamination across Chelmsford’s water sources.

### Impaired Water Bodies

The water bodies in Chelmsford listed as "impaired" by the U.S. EPA and the MassDEP experience various issues related to water quality, largely due to factors like pollution, sediment buildup, and pathogens. Impairments include:

- **Beaver Brook (MA82A-34):** Impairments include dissolved oxygen, E. coli, and low pH.
- **Black Brook (MA84A-17):** Challenges include siltation, unknown toxins, pathogens, turbidity, debris, trash, and benthic macroinvertebrate impairments, often linked to stormwater runoff, land development, and upstream contaminants.
- **Crooked Spring Brook (MA84B-09):** Designated as having attained uses for fish and other aquatic life.
- **Deep Brook (MA84A-21):** Impairments include organic enrichment, low dissolved oxygen, siltation, sedimentation, lack of a cold water assemblage, and benthic macroinvertebrate impairments (E. coli). These issues are often exacerbated by nutrient runoff from fertilizers and decaying plant material, reducing oxygen levels and harming aquatic species.
- **Heart Pond (MA82059):** Issues include non-native fish, shellfish, and zooplankton species (e.g., water chestnut), E. coli, mercury in fish tissue (from atmospheric deposition), and the introduction of non-native organisms (accidental or intentional). Waterfowl activity also contributes to contamination.
- **Newfield Pond (MA84046):** Impairments include curly-leaf pondweed, water milfoil, fanwort (all non-native plants), dissolved oxygen issues, and mercury in fish tissue.
- **Unnamed Tributary (MA82A-31):** Impaired by flow regime modification and water chestnut, particularly at the inlet to Russell Mill Pond.
- **River Meadow Brook (MA82A-10):** Impairments include pathogens (likely from residential areas, septic systems, or animal waste), debris, water chestnut, benthic macroinvertebrate impairments, low dissolved oxygen, E. coli, fecal coliform, elevated temperature, trash, and chloride.
- **Stony Brook (MA84B-04):** Impairments include nutrient pollution, imbalanced pH, organic enrichment, pathogens, dewatering, benthic macroinvertebrate impairments, and E. coli, often associated with agricultural runoff, urban development, and natural organic matter breakdown.

The Merrimack River and Concord River are also listed on the 2008 Massachusetts Impaired Waters list<sup>26</sup>. The Merrimack River struggles with metals and pathogens, likely resulting from industrial discharge and combined sewer overflows. The Concord River’s impairments—metals, nutrients, pathogens, and exotic invasive species—pose risks to biodiversity and water quality, commonly due to urban and agricultural runoff.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://open-data-massgis.hub.arcgis.com/maps/44645473918547ab95502109df9f5e52/explore>. Retrieved October 29, 2024.

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**Forestry Issues**

The Town recognizes the need for healthy forests and trees to maintain its open spaces and historic silvicultural past.

- **Low Canopy Cover:** Most of Chelmsford comprises suburban residential neighborhoods with adequate tree coverage. The developed portions of Town: Chelmsford Center, Vinal Square, the “Golden Triangle” industrial zone on Billerica Road, Chelmsford Street, Drum Hill, and the commercial/industrial developments along Littleton Road have the lowest canopy coverage. Street trees and site redevelopment improvements proposing additional plantings could greatly enhance these areas of Town. The Vinal Square area of Town is due to receive enhancement through new tree plantings under the strategic action plan.
- **High Numbers of Hazard Trees:** Chelmsford does not have large tree hazard incidents. Limbs falling on utility wires and downed trees within Conservation Reservations are typical annual management projects. The Tree Warden is responsible for the safety of all public trees, and the COSS volunteers its time and resources to remove hazard trees within Conservation Reservations.
- **High Ratio of Tree Removals to Plantings:** The Selectmen’s 2001 one-for-one policy is designed to ensure that Town projects do not result in tree loss. Site design standards upheld by the Planning Board also ensure that new parking areas maintain trees and green buffers as part of their design. This policy has been followed where practicable and as often as possible.
- **Invasive Species:** The Vegetation Section extensively discusses invasive species' challenges. Roberts Field has been working to remove the invasive bittersweet to save the forest canopy. Further efforts will be made under the Roberts Field Master Plan. The Chelmsford Conservation Commission joined the SuAsCo Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area in November 2010.



*Image: 17 Thanksgiving Forest - Credit: Jerry Schmidt*

## Environmental Equity Issues

To assess the equitability of Chelmsford’s open space and recreational resources for its Environmental Justice (EJ) communities, the OSRPC and NMCOG conducted a spatial analysis using GIS mapping. The analysis focused on how open space and recreational amenities—both for active and passive use—are distributed in relation to EJ-designated block group zones.

### Open Space and Recreation Equity Analysis

The equity analysis directly evaluated open space availability and walkable access in Chelmsford. Two OSRPC members worked with NMCOG to identify open-space properties with recreational resources like trails and playgrounds. The team calculated total open space acreage within EJ block groups, excluded water features, and compared the results with non-EJ areas. To assess walkable access, they mapped access points, including driveways, parking lots, and trailheads. They also reviewed roads and paths within a quarter mile of these points, focusing on pedestrian-friendly features such as sidewalks, lower speed limits, and safe road designs. Finally, the analysis identified parcels near these walkable routes and counted residential units in both EJ and non-EJ areas to reveal differences in access to open space.

As of 2024, Chelmsford’s EJ communities are primarily located near major highways, including Route 3 and Route 129 in East Chelmsford (Southeast EJ Block Groups), as well as I-495 and Route 110 in Central Chelmsford (Southwest EJ Block Groups), with additional clusters near the Lowell border in North Chelmsford (North EJ Block Groups). These areas have undergone significant residential growth through Chapter 40B projects and other redevelopment efforts, resulting in denser housing developments. However, open spaces and recreational facilities have not kept pace, creating inequities in access.

Recognizing the disparities, the OSRPC and NMCOG emphasize the importance of enhancing transportation interconnectivity between EJ zones and open spaces. Using the findings from *Map: 12 Chelmsford Open Space and Recreational Lands Equity Map* and *Table 17: Chelmsford Open Space and Recreational Lands Equity Analysis*, the Town can identify and prioritize the acquisition and development of open spaces and amenities to address these inequities.

### Environmental Justice Populations in Chelmsford

This equity analysis relied on the 2020 Environmental Justice (EJ) Populations criteria established by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and the corresponding block group data from MassGIS. According to the EEA, a Census block group qualifies as an Environmental Justice area if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- i. The annual median household income is 65% or less than the statewide median;
- ii. Minorities constitute 40% or more of the population;
- iii. At least 25% of households lack English language proficiency; or
- iv. Minorities make up 25% or more of the population, and the municipality’s annual median household income does not exceed 150% of the statewide median.

In Chelmsford, six Census block groups meet the criteria for minority justice populations. These block groups qualify because minorities make up at least 25% of the population, and the town’s annual median household income does not exceed 150% of the statewide median<sup>27</sup>. These areas can be seen on *Map: 12 Chelmsford Open Space and Recreational Lands Equity Map*.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-2020-environmental-justice-populations>

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*Open space properties included in the equity analysis:*

For the equity analysis, NMCOG and members of the Chelmsford OSRP Committee reviewed the Open Space and Recreation Inventory to identify public open space and recreation properties with no-cost, active or passive recreation resources such as walking trails, playgrounds, beaches, and open fields.

*Other notes: These properties include town-designated open space and recreation destinations (Conservation Commission, recreation department, athletic fields, playgrounds, beaches, agricultural programs, and bike paths), state-designated open space (DCR properties), and Land Trust land. Cemeteries are not included in the analysis as they are not designated for recreational purposes. Also, the Chelmsford Country Club is not included as the cost may preclude use by some residents.*

*Open Space within Chelmsford Environmental Justice Block Groups summary:*

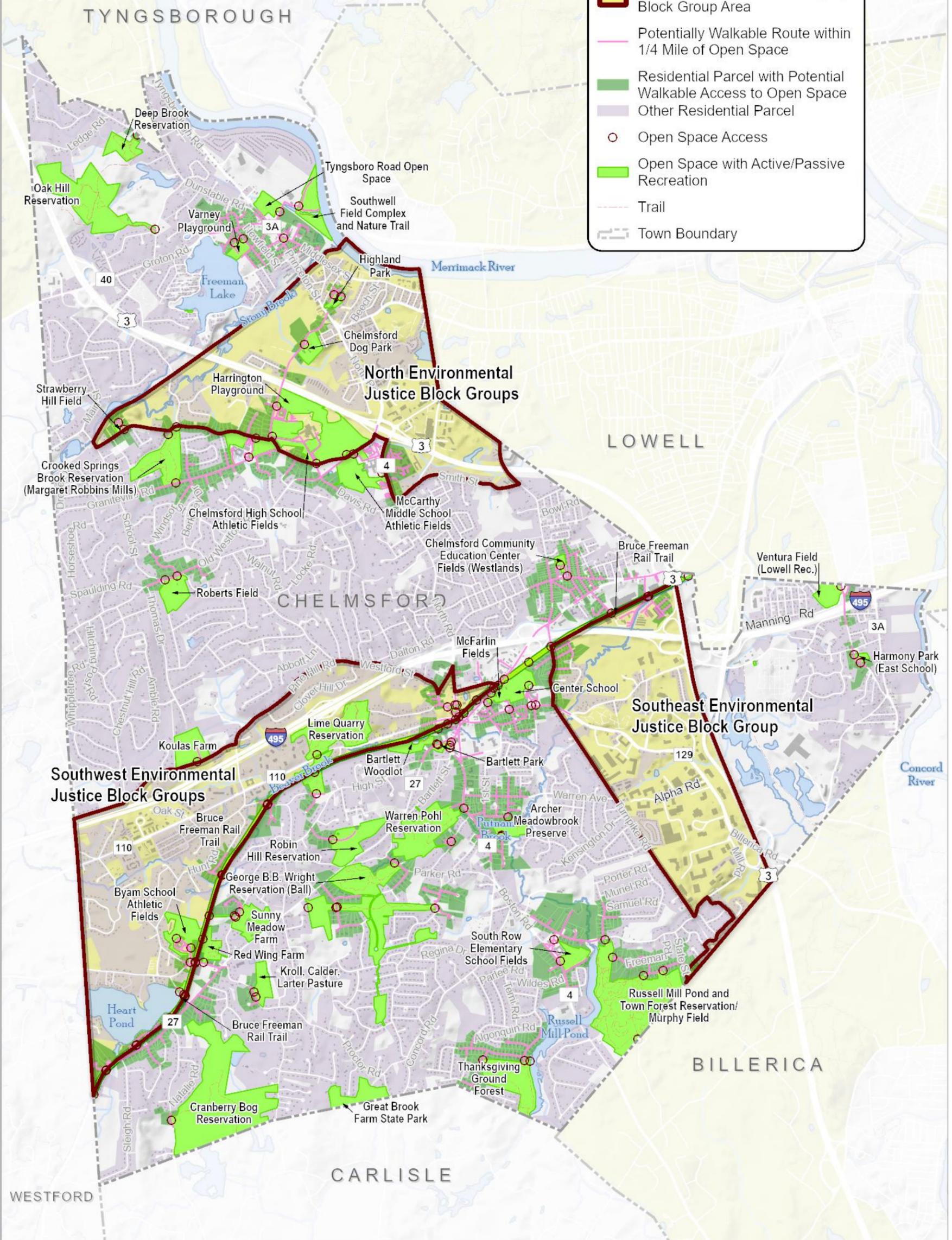
Open space land comprises approximately 5.9% of land acreage within Chelmsford’s environmental justice block groups, whereas 8.6% of land acreage outside of the environmental justice block groups is open space. Approximately 16% of residential units within environmental justice block groups have walkable access to open space compared to 21% of areas outside of environmental justice block groups.

Table 17: Chelmsford Open Space and Recreational Lands Equity Analysis

<b>Environmental Justice Block Group Area Name</b>	<b>Total Land Acres</b>	<b>Open Space Acres (w Active/ Passive Recreation)</b>	<b>Open Space Acres Percentage</b>	<b>Estimated Total Residential Units</b>	<b>Residential Units w Walkable Access to Open Space</b>	<b>Percentage of Residential Units w Walkable Access to Open Space</b>
<b>North EJ Block Groups</b>	1,178	99	<b>8.4%</b>	1,628	438	<b>27%</b>
<b>Southeast EJ Block Group</b>	957	2	<b>0.2%</b>	663	104	<b>16%</b>
<b>Southwest EJ Block Groups</b>	1,277	101	<b>7.9%</b>	1,799	111	<b>6%</b>
<b>Outside of Environmental Justice Areas</b>	10,807	935	<b>8.6%</b>	10,620	2,230	<b>21%</b>

Map: 12 Chelmsford Open Space and Recreational Lands Equity Map  
**Chelmsford Open Space and Recreational Land Equity Analysis**

-  2020 Environmental Justice (EJ) Block Group Area
-  Potentially Walkable Route within 1/4 Mile of Open Space
-  Residential Parcel with Potential Walkable Access to Open Space
-  Other Residential Parcel
-  Open Space Access
-  Open Space with Active/Passive Recreation
-  Trail
-  Town Boundary



**Sources:**  
Town of Chelmsford (open space 8/2024, trails), MassGIS (2020 Environmental Justice block groups, shaded relief), NMCOG (walkable routes), MassGIS/NMCOG (roads, town boundaries); MassDEP (2011 hydrography)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 12/17/2024

Chelmsford  
MASSACHUSETTS



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## Section 5: Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

### Overview of Open Space and Recreation Lands in Chelmsford

As stated in Section 1, open space protection is important because it contributes to the quality of life in Chelmsford. Additionally, open space: protects drinking water supply quantity and quality; provides space for recreation; protects natural ecosystems and wetlands; provides clean air; contributes to protecting public health; provides opportunity for natural exploration/education; protects local agriculture; protects groundwater and surface water supplies; provides wildlife habitat; and protects the aesthetic values deemed important to the community.

Open space is broadly defined by the Open Space and Recreation Planner’s Workbook as, “*conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation.*” This definition complements the Recreational and Open Land statute [M.G.L. Ch. 61B] that defines open land as that “*retained in substantially a natural, wild, or open condition, or in landscaped condition in such a manner as to allow to a significant extent the preservation of wildlife and natural resources.*”

Protected lands are recognized as property that is legally safeguarded against development, alteration, usage, or land uses inconsistent with its conservation, recreation, agricultural, water supply, or historic preservation purposes. This protection is secured through constitutional provisions (such as Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution), statutory restrictions (e.g., Conservation Restriction (CR), Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), Historic Preservation Restriction (HPR), or Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR)), or ownership by public entities or qualified conservation organizations (such as a municipality or land trusts). Protected status typically requires legislative or legal action for any change in use or disposition and, in the case of Article 97, often mandates replacement land to prevent net loss of conservation value.

Chelmsford generally distinguishes active recreation areas from other open space and conservation land, although several properties in Town accommodate both types. The different types of open space include agricultural, cultural/historical, natural resource area/conservation, recreation, and wellhead protection. These types are based on the lands’ current use and degree of protection. In addition to type, open space has been classified by current use, management, National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) classification, state primary purpose, and several other categories. Refer to the detailed open space inventory matrix located in Appendix E for a complete listing as well as *Map: 13 Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Lands Map*.

Open space land totals approximately 2,814 acres or 23% of the total acreage in Chelmsford (12,108). Of this, permanently protected open space makes up about 1,430 acres or 12% of the total land area in Town. Active recreation comprises only 250 acres or about 2.1% of the total land area in Town. The tables below summarize the total land area of the detailed open space inventory matrix located in Appendix E.

Please note the previous OSRP classified 963 acres of vacant private lands as open space. However, this does not meet the State’s classification as open space and has been omitted from this plan.

#### Community Preservation Act’s Role in Open Space Land Acquisition

Chelmsford residents have long valued the Town’s open space and recreation resources and have consistently demonstrated their commitment through actions such as approving local funding for open space acquisition and adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2001. The nine-

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Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

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member Community Preservation Committee (CPC) administers the CPA. The CPC holds an annual public hearing to receive comments on the proposed Community Preservation Plan. The CPC then finalizes the plan for allocating the funds and presents its plan to Town Meeting for approval. Town Meeting then votes on the proposed recommended appropriations.

CPA has played a critical role. Over the past decade and a half, the CPC established two capital accounts: open space and recreation. These accounts are dedicated to providing cost-sharing funding for smaller projects such as improvements and replacements to trails, bridges for open spaces, and accessory structures related to recreation. The Town has utilized CPA funds as the sole source for open space acquisitions, with most acquisitions being bonded over a ten-year period. The only other lands conserved have been through Open Space Residential Developments under the Town's Zoning Bylaw. The Open Space Development bylaw was updated at the 2019 Town Meeting to reduce ten (10) acre minimum down to five (5) acres thus targeting some of the remaining large developable tracts.

Over-reliance on CPA funding may not be in the Town's best interest; the major challenge is the continued decline in state matching funds, which were 100% and are down to approximately 25-28% in recent years. The Town's average annual state and local disbursement is approximately \$850,000. The typical land acquisition costs can cost as much as \$100,000 per acre depending upon on factors like accessibility and natural features; for example, the most recent acquisition by the Town was Koulas Farm, a 42-acre agricultural parcel off Pine Hill Road was purchased for \$4.1 million in fall 2023. Looking ahead to future land preservation, the Town may need to consider alternative sources, including grants or additional Town funds.

#### **Conservation Commission's Role in Open Space Land Management**

The Chelmsford Conservation Commission is a seven (7) member authority working to protect and manage the town's natural resources. The Commission is the permitting authority specifically charged with administration of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (MGL 131, §40) and the Chelmsford Wetlands Bylaw (Chapter 187). The Commission also acquires, holds and maintains property on behalf of the Town to protect land and water resources. It manages over 1,000 acres of town-owned open space, including 13 reservations and public trail systems. They also provide educational resources for residents to be actively involved in the use and enjoyment of Chelmsford's open spaces.

#### **Accomplishments Since 2017 OSRP:**

- In the fall of 2017, Town Meeting approved the transfer of 40,122 square feet off Mill Road to the Conservation Commission for Conservation purposes.
- In 2018, Friendship Park Playground at Robert's Field was completely rebuilt using Community Preservation Fund monies appropriated by Town Meeting members in the amount of \$450,000. Volunteers raised an additional \$86,000 to contribute toward the cost of construction.
- The Skate Park Committee was appointed. In 2018, reconstruction and improvements commenced.
- In 2020, the Town acquired, via CPC funds, the Warren Pohl farm, 54.03 acres of residentially zoned land in the South Row Park area of South Chelmsford between Acton Road and Boston Road. This property will be owned and maintained by the Conservation Commission.

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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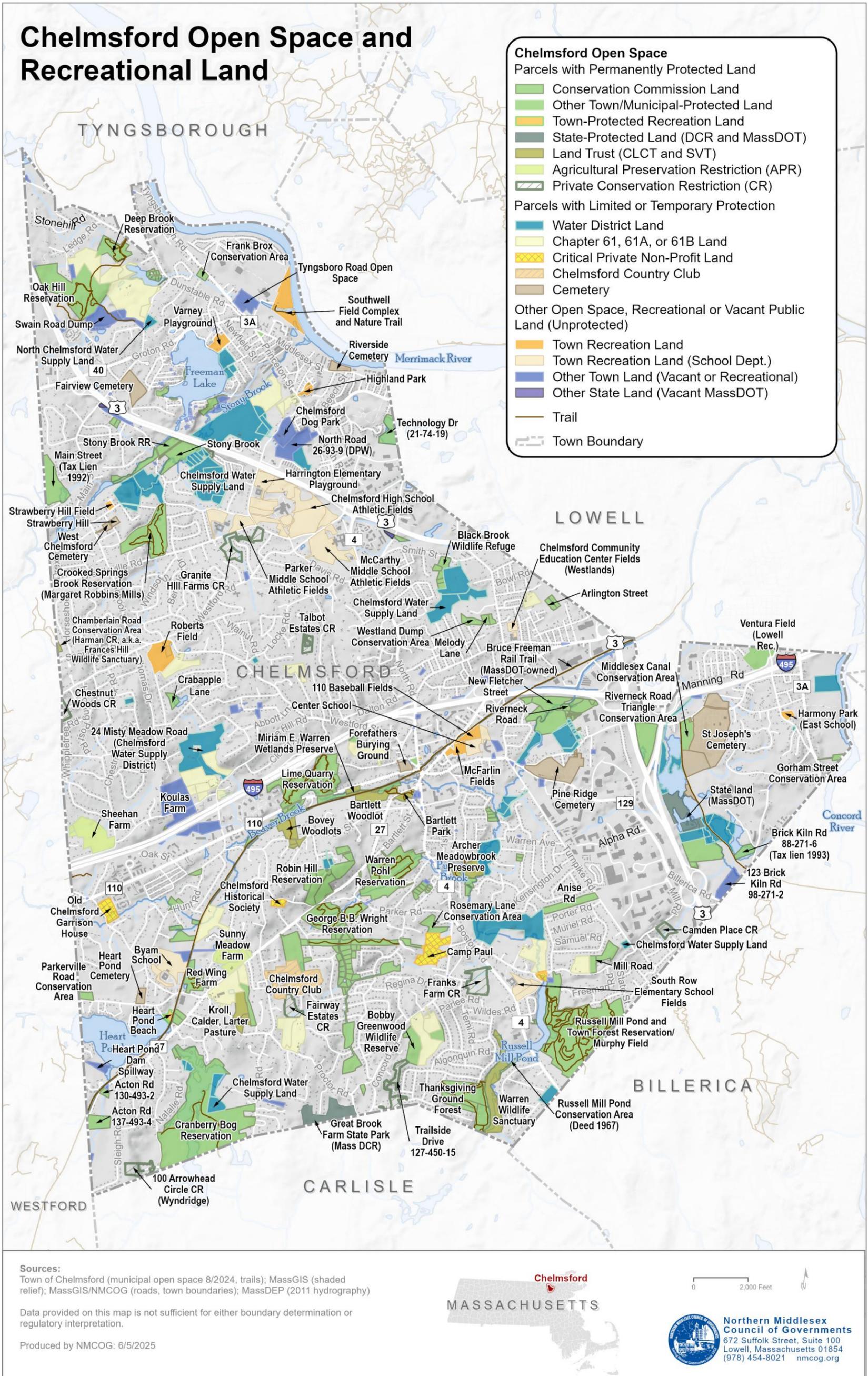
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- In 2020, via a Chapter 61 right of first refusal, the Town designated the Chelmsford Water District to acquire the Misty Meadows Farm, 41.16 acres of RB zoned land located in the Hitchinpost area of Chelmsford between Bridle Road and Pine Hill Road.
- In 2020, a new pickleball court was constructed at Varney Park. Consideration has been given to creating a bocci ball court and an age-friendly exercise fitness circuit. Moving forward this effort will likely be associated with the Town’s Age Friendly initiatives.
- Town acquired the 42-acre Koulas Farm property off Pine Hill Road to be conserved under the management of the Conservation Commission by vote at Fall 2023 Town Meeting.
- The Department of Public Works (DPW) began a program to upgrade all school property and neighborhood playgrounds for ADA compliance.
- DPW has contracted for multiple Town watershed studies related to flooding issues.
- Routinely over the years, at town meeting, dozens of town owned parcels (mostly former tax title) have been conveyed to the Conservation Commission for ownership.
- Over last several years town has made advancements related to invasive species management through regulatory improvements and as well as town projects funded through recent state earmark for tree inventory along town-owned roadways.
- The Conservation Commission has initiated several reservation-specific programs such as biodiversity and habitat studies as part of an improved land management program.
- The Town was awarded grant funding to participate in the MVP 2.0 program in 2023 and the project is ongoing.
- Over last several years Town, with direct input from members of the Tree Committee, Conservation Commission, DPW Tree Warden, and members of the Land Trust and COSS, have made enhancements (funding / implementation / policy) related to town tree management program.



*Image: 18 Pollinator Garden - Credit: Dave Sperry*

Map: 13 Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Lands Map



Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Table 18: Open Space in Chelmsford

<b>Total Open Space</b>	<b>Land Area (Acres)</b>
<b>Private Open Space</b>	
Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)	53.46
Chapter 61, 61A, 61B	299.30
Cemetery (Private)	81.25
Chelmsford Country Club	31.5
Private Conservation Restriction (CR)	66.46
Other Private Lands	34.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>565.97</b>
<b>Public Open Space</b>	
Conservation Commission	1,082.64
Cemetery Commission	60.15
City of Lowell	14.71
Water Districts	444.19
State Aquifer Protection Land	21.75
State Protected Land	79.90
Other State Land	1.65
Town Recreation Land	74.18
Town Recreation Land (Protected)	2.13
Town Recreation Land (School Department)	173.80
Town-Protected Land (not Cons. Comm.)	1.40
Other Town Land	155.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,112.45</b>
<b>Nonprofit Open Space</b>	
Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust	79.48
Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT Land Trust)	0.93
Critical Private Non-Profit	34.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>114.67</b>
<b>Total Open Space</b>	
	<b>2,813.63</b>

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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Table 19: Protected Open Space in Chelmsford

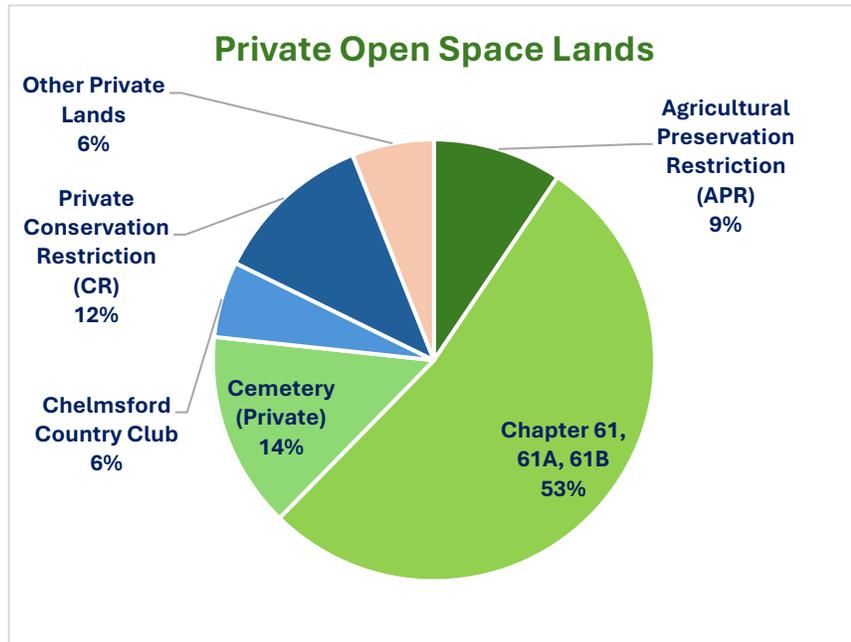
Protected Open Space	Land Area (Acres)
<b>Private Protected Open Space</b>	
Private Conservation Restriction (CR)	66.46
Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)	53.46
<b>Total Private Protected Open Space</b>	<b>119.92</b>
<b>Public Protected Open Space</b>	
Conservation Commission	1,082.64
Town Protected Recreation	2.13
Other Town Protected Lands	43.31
State Aquifer Protection Land	21.75
State Protected Land	79.90
<b>Total Public Protected Open Space</b>	<b>1,229.73</b>
<b>Nonprofit Protected Open Space</b>	
Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust	79.48
Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT Land Trust)	0.93
<b>Total Nonprofit Protected Open Space</b>	<b>80.41</b>
<b>Total Protected Open Space</b>	<b>1,430.06</b>



Image: 19 Trail Bridge - Credit: Jerry Schmidt

## Private Lands

Approximately 21% of the lands classified as private open space in Chelmsford are permanently protected. Of the 565.97 acres of private open space, agriculture comprises approximately 352.76 acres or approximately 62% of private open space lands. Other private open spaces lands include forest land, passive and active recreation, and cemeteries.



### Chapter 61A - Agricultural Lands

In order to qualify for and retain classification as agricultural or horticultural land under Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) Chapter 61A, property must consist of five (5) plus contiguous acres of land, under the same ownership, actively devoted to agricultural or horticultural uses. Properties enrolled in Chapter 61A are taxed based on the property's current use (i.e., the productive potential of the land for growing agricultural products), instead of the fair market or development value. According to the Chelmsford Assessor's records, approximately 166.8 acres of private land is classified as Chapter 61A agricultural land. The table below details those parcels within Chapter 61A:

Table 20: Chelmsford Private Agricultural Lands in Chapter 61A

Private Agricultural Lands in Chapter 61A				
Parcel	Address	Ownership	Parcel Acres	Total Acres in Chapter 61A
19-59-5	Princeton St.	Mahoney Group LLC	23.02	23.02
19-59-12	Richardson Rd.	Mahoney Group LLC	1.99	1.99
20-59-1	165 Princeton St.	Mahoney Group LLC	4.26	4.26
41-140-13	25 Clinton Ave.	Manville, Claire R	6.67	6.67
59-276-14	242 Westford St.	Lupien Jr Albert J Tr	11.87	11.87
60-206-31	30 Lantern Ln.	Sanborn, Jeffrey S.	7.93	7.93
81-316-7	Pine Hill Rd.	Parlee, Henry G Jr.	0.05	0.05
81-316-8	Pine Hill Rd.	Parlee, Henry G Jr.	1.89	1.89
81-321-17	Pine Hill Rd.	Parlee, Henry G Jr.	8.19	8.19
81-321-35	135 Pine Hill Rd.	Parlee, Henry G Jr.	15.00	15.00
81-321-44	Pine Hill Rd.	Parlee, Henry G Jr.	3.37	3.37
81-321-45	Pine Hill Rd.	Parlee, Henry G Jr.	0.12	0.12

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Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

<b>Private Agricultural Lands in Chapter 61A</b>				
<b>Parcel</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Parcel Acres</b>	<b>Total Acres in Chapter 61A</b>
81-321-46	Pine Hill Rd.	Parlee, Henry G Jr.	2.77	2.77
91-321-2	Pine Hill Rd.	Parlee, Henry G Jr.	2.33	2.33
104-387-48	54 Chase Tr.	Chase, John S. & Marion L. TRS	18.08	18.08
117-443-1	Acton Rd.	Parlee, Charles A.	5.00	5.00
117-443-14	4 Proctor Rd.	Parlee Charlene A Tr.	20.67	20.67
117-443-30	20 Proctor Rd.	Parlee Charles A	0.53	0.53
117-443-31	Proctor Rd.	Parlee, Charles A.	1.06	1.06
119-450-4	Concord Rd. Off	Visniewski , Mark Tr &	7.20	7.20
119-450-10	Concord Rd. Off	Visniewski , Mark Tr &	0.52	0.52
126-449-2	Proctor Rd.	Wojtas, Frank	11.85	11.85
126-449-3	Proctor Rd.	Wojtas, Frank	12.50	12.50
<b>Total</b>			<b>166.87</b>	<b>166.87</b>

**Chapter 61 - Forested Lands**

M.G.L. c. 61, also known as the Forestland Taxation Act, is a program that provides property tax reductions to landowners who commit to keeping their land undeveloped and managing it for forest products. The program is designed to help landowners realize the value of their land's current use. Approximately 107 acres of private land is classified as forest land according to the Chelmsford Assessor's records in Chapter 61 program. The table below details those parcels within Chapter 61:

Table 21: Chelmsford Private Forest Lands in Chapter 61

<b>Private Forest Lands in Chapter 61</b>				
<b>Parcel</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Parcel Acres</b>	<b>Total Acres in Chapter 61</b>
7-4-33	Ledge Rd. Off	Guilmette Earl J &	19.44	19.44
7-4-40	Glendale Rd.	Lowell Sportsmen Club	4.36	4.16
7-4-41	Dunstable Rd. Rear	Lowell Sportsmen Club	7.50	7.50
7-4-43	Dunstable Rd. Rear	Lowell Sportsmen Club	1.12	0.38
7-4-44	Dunstable Rd. Rear	Lowell Sportsmen Club	1.95	0.31
8-4-26	Swain Rd. Off	Lowell Sportsmen Club	1.14	0.07
8-4-29	Swain Rd.	Lowell Sportsmen Club	0.30	0.30
11-4-2	Swain Rd.	Lowell Sportsmensclub Inc	41.39	41.16
12-4-2	Swain Rd.	Lowell Sportsmensclub Inc	2.51	2.51
72-320-14	Bridge St.	Bridge St Realty Trust	13.75	13.75
119-450-8	120 Concord Rd.	Visniewski, Mark Tr.	17.26	17.26
<b>Total</b>			<b>110.72</b>	<b>106.84</b>

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

**Conservation Restriction (CR) Lands**

Approximately 67 acres of private land is classified as Less-than-fee-interests according to the Chelmsford Assessor’s records. Less-than-fee-interests are those properties encumbered by a Conservation Restriction (CR) that are permanently protected. These do not include public properties or nonprofit properties that are protected by a CR, which are listed in following section. The table below details private parcels protected by a CR:

Table 22: Chelmsford Less Than Fee Interests (CR) Land

LESS-THAN-FEE-INTERESTS (CR) LAND				
Parcel	Address	Ownership	CR Type	Total Acres
25-98-2	Lamplighter Ln	Lamplighter Green Home Owner Assoc. Inc	Local	1.26
37-130-2	Old Farm Way	Sack Robert Trs Etal	State	3.54
37-130-6	Old Farm Way	Sack Robert Trs Etal	State	8.63
49-206-36	Talbot Ln.	Talbot Estates Homeowners	State	4.60
106-391-3	Mill Rd.	Lyons II Elmer H. TR	State	4.59
111-412-26	Brittany Ln.	Kayla Estates Trust Trustees	Local	5.41
112-425-7	Arthur Ave. Off	Wojtas Charles Trustee	State	14.88
118-449-1	Farley Brook Rd.	Dorobiala Lee M Etals Trs	Local	8.79
127-450-15	Trailside Dr. Off	Flaherty, Joseph Tr	Local	9.86
138-484-26	Arrowhead Cr.	Wyndridge Trust	Local	5.88
<b>Total</b>				<b>67.44</b>
20-74-1 Pending	255 Princeton Street	255 Princeton Realty Holdings LLC	Local	6

**Private Recreation Lands**

Private recreation land includes nonprofit organizations that own and maintain outdoor active recreation facilities. Chapter 61B recreation land classification program is designed to encourage the preservation of the Commonwealth's open space and promote recreational land use. It offers significant property tax benefits to owners willing to make use of outdoor activities. To qualify the property must meet the following criteria:

- Be at least five contiguous acres under the same ownership;
- Be used for certain recreational purposes, such as hiking, camping, boating, or hunting;
- Be open to the public or members of a non-profit organization; and
- Be maintained in a natural, wild, or open condition, or landscaped to preserve wildlife and natural resources.

The table below details those parcels within Chapter 61B:

Table 23: Chelmsford Private Recreation Lands in Chapter 61B

Private Recreation Lands in Chapter 61B				
Parcel	Address	Site Name	Ownership	Acres
57-215-9	Spaulding Rd.	Chamberlain Road Conservation Area	Sudbury Valley Trustees Inc	0.93
108-393-1	133 Robin Hill Rd.	Chelmsford Swimming and Tennis Club	Chelmsford Swim & Tennis	17.37
113-397-7	160 Mill Rd.	Russell Mill Swim and Tennis Club	S Chlmsfrd Gun & Rod Club Inc	8.22
			<b>Total:</b>	<b>26.51</b>

### Estates

Estates in Chelmsford include developable private parcels of land that are 25 acres or larger and either vacant or containing only one (1) single-family home. Only one (1) parcel of 31.0 acres qualifies as estates is identified as tax assessor’s parcel 138-484-34, on Elm Street.

### Private Landfills

There is one (1) private inactive and capped landfill known as the Glenview site, which is under private ownership by Sandbanks LLC located at 152 Stedman Street. The Glenview site was a 31.6-acre legacy Brownfield site with a capped 17-acre landfill, in the highly visible Drum Hill Road area, densely populated and heavily traveled retail / residential corridor town.

## Public and Nonprofit Lands

Chelmsford’s publicly owned open space totals 2,112.45 acres and nonprofit organizations dedicated to protecting publicly accessible open space own an additional 114.67 acres, as shown in Table 1 of this section. Public open space lands can be divided into two categories: conservation land and open space; and active recreation areas. Within these categories, open space is further subdivided by management agency.

### Public-Owned Open Space Land Management

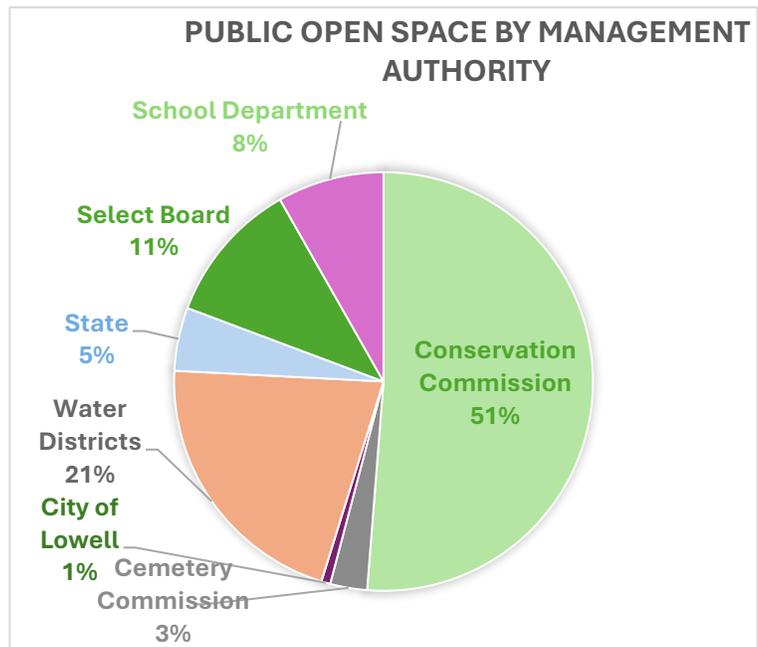
Although approximately half of the public open space in Chelmsford is managed by the Conservation Commission, the three (3) water districts, Select Board, and School Committee also manage many acres of open space. The Cemetery Commission, City of Lowell, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts also manage other public open space lands.

### Conservation Commission Lands

The Chelmsford Conservation Commission manages thirteen (13) reservations and holds several other properties dedicated to conservation uses. Conservation reservations are designated holdings with significant potential for public access or passive recreation use. A total of 798.40 acres of the 1,082.64 acres managed by the Conservation Commission are managed as Conservation Reservations, as shown in Table 3 below.

According to the Assessor’s records, 105 parcels ranging in size from an approximately a tenth of an acre to 24 acres are also managed by the Conservation Commission. These parcels total 284.24 acres and are typically power line easements, pump houses, isolated parcels, or parcels that are primarily wetlands.

Past reservation management plans were completed for Wright Reservation in 1970, Crooked Spring in 1972, and Red Wing Farm in 2003. The Conservation Commission was tasked in the 2017 OSRP to create more reservation management plans.



Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Table 24: Chelmsford Conservation Commission Managed Lands

<b>Conservation Commission Managed Lands</b>							
<b>Name</b>	<b>Address(es)</b>	<b># of Parcel (s)</b>	<b>Total Area of OS (acres)</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Recreation Amenities</b>	<b>Recreation Potential</b>	<b>Public Access</b>
Crooked Spring Brook Reservation	79 Crooked Spring Rd	1	37.44	Good	Trails, Kiosk, Parking	Benches	Open to all
Lime Quarry Reservation	151 Littleton Rd	7	67.83	Good	Trails, Kiosk, Parking	Benches	Open to all
George B.B. Wright Reservation	120 Parker Rd, Acton Rd,	41	119.93	Good	Trails, Kiosk, Parking	Benches	Open to all
Robin Hill Reservation	Acton Rd, Summit Av,	5	32.96	Fair	Trails	Parking, Benches	Open to all
Deep Brook Reservation	214 Dunstable Rd	1	15.67	Good	Trails, Kiosk, Parking	Benches	Open to all
Redwing Farm	17 Maple Rd	1	12.56	Good	Trails, Kiosk, Parking, Picnic tables, Pollinator Garden	Benches	Open to all
Cranberry Bog Reservation	60 Elm St	2	181.15	Good	Trails, Kiosk, Parking	Benches	Open to all
Russell Mill Pond and Town Forest Reservation / Murphy Field	105 Mill Rd	1	132.00	Good	Walking Trails, Mountain Bike Trails, Soccer Fields, Kiosk, Parking	Benches, Kayak/canoe launch, Picnic Tables, Improved trail accessibility	Open to all
Thanksgiving Ground Forest	40 Janet Rd, Concord Rd	6	45.74	Good	Picnic Tables, Pollinator Garden, Trails, Kiosk, Parking	Benches	Open to all
Bobby Greenwood Wildlife Reserve	Concord Rd	2	17.57	Unknown	n/a	Benches	Limited (mostly isolated access)
Black Brook Wildlife Refuge	Smith St	5	15.85	Good	n/a	Benches	Limited (mostly wetlands)
Oak Hill Reservation	40 Swain Rd	1	66.37	Good	Trails, Kiosk, Parking	Benches	Open to all
Warren Pohl Reservation	95 Boston Rd	1	53.33	Good	Trails, Kiosk, Parking	Benches	Open to all
<b>Reservation Subtotal</b>		<b>74</b>	<b>798.4</b>				
<b>Smaller Non-Reservation Parcels</b>		<b>105</b>	<b>284.24</b>				
<b>Totals</b>		<b>179</b>	<b>1,082.64</b>				

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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**Cemetery Commission Lands**

Public cemeteries are part of the cultural/historical open space within Town.

Table 25: Chelmsford Cemetery Lands

CEMETERY LANDS			
Parcel	Name	Address	Total Acres
14-19-23	Riverside Cemetery	Middlesex St	3.84
18-56-21	Fairview Cemetery	Main St	14.17
36-125-23	Strawberry Hill	Strawberry Hill Rd	1.81
36-145-1	West Chelmsford Cemetery	Strawberry Hill Rd	1.48
73-320-2	Forefathers Burying Ground	Littleton Rd	5.00
74-291-1	Pine Ridge Cemetery	130 Billerica Rd	27.00
75-291-20	Pine Ridge Cemetery	Riverneck Rd	0.29
75-291-27	Pine Ridge Cemetery	Riverneck Rd	0.12
75-291-30	Pine Ridge Cemetery	Riverneck Rd	0.18
75-291-33	Pine Ridge Cemetery	Lexington St	0.06
116-437-12	Heart Pond Cemetery	Parkerville Rd	3.86
<b>Total</b>			<b>57.81</b>

**Town Owned Recreation and Conservation Lands**

Chelmsford maintains a diverse and extensive network of town-owned open space and recreation properties that support a wide range of community uses, from active sports and playgrounds to passive conservation and school-based facilities. The inventory includes small commons like the Town Common and Vinal Square North Common, larger community assets such as Roberts Field and the Southwell Field Complex, and popular recreation destinations like Heart Pond Beach and Varney Playground. Many of these sites are equipped with amenities such as baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, playgrounds, walking trails, pavilions, and courts for basketball, tennis, and pickleball. School-affiliated properties, including Byam, Center, Harrington, McCarthy, Parker, and Chelmsford High School, add significant acreage and recreational capacity with open fields, athletic facilities, and multipurpose playgrounds. Several properties, such as Heart Pond and Southwell Field, have benefited from public grant funding including the Community Preservation Act, Urban Self-Help, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

This broad range of recreational lands not only enhances community wellness and livability but also reflects Chelmsford’s long-standing investment in public access to quality open spaces. [Table 26](#) provides a detailed look at the parcel level for Town owned parcels with conservation or recreational interests.

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Table 26: Town Owned Recreation and Conservation Lands

Town Owned Recreation and Conservation Lands									
Site Name	Site Address	Lot Size	Category	Current Use	Public Access	Condition	Recreation Amenities	Recreation Potential	Public Grant
Town Common	NORTH RD & WESTFORD ST	1.00	Town-Protected Land (not Cons. Comm.)	Common	Open to all	Good	Benches	Small public events	None
Vinal Square North Common	PRINCETON/MIDDLESEX	0.40	Town-Protected Land (not Cons. Comm.)	Common	Open to all	Excellent	Benches, Gazebo	Small public events	None
Heart Pond Beach	POND ST	1.82	Town-Protected Recreation Land	Park	Open to all	Good	Playground, Rail Trail, Kiosk, Porta-potty (seasonal)	None	Community Preservation Act
Heart Pond Beach	5 POND ST	0.31	Town-Protected Recreation Land	Conservation	Open to all	Good	Beach	ADA Canoe Launch, ADA beach access	Community Preservation Act
110 Baseball Fields	75 CHELMSFORD ST	6.15	Town Recreation Land	Athletic Fields	Open to all	Fair	Lighted Baseball Fields, Picnic Tables, Restrooms (seasonal), Concession Stand	ADA improvements	None
Chelmsford Public Garden	7 NORTH RD	0.25	Town Recreation Land	Community Garden	Open to all	Excellent	Community Garden, Benches, Picnic Tables	None	None
Harmony Park (East School)	64 CARLISLE ST	2.53	Town Recreation Land	Park	Open to all	Good	Pavilion, Softball Field, Playground, Basketball Court	Small Public Events	None
Highland Field	11-15 JAMES ST & JOHN ST	0.76	Town Recreation Land	Park	Open to all	Good	Playground	Playground expansion	None
Highland Park	PRINCETON ST	3.03	Town Recreation Land	Athletic Fields	Open to all	Fair	Soccer Field, Basketball Court	Small Public Events	None
McFarlin Fields	50 BILLERICA RD	8.69	Town Recreation Land	Town Facility	Open to all	Good	Baseball Fields, Softball Field, Outdoor Gym, Porta-Potty (seasonal)	Add Lighting, Small Public Events	None
Roberts Field	260 OLD WESTFORD RD	20.65	Town Recreation Land	Park	Open to all	Excellent	Pavilion, Softball Field, Playground, Soccer Field, Trail, ADA walking track, Benches	Small Public Events	None
Southwell Field Complex and Nature Trail	200 WOTTON ST	26.00	Town Recreation Land	Park	Open to all	Fair	Softball Fields, Playground, Trails, Boat Ramp, Restrooms, Concession Stand, Fishing areas	Add lighting, ADA Improvements	Urban Self Help, LWCF
Strawberry Hill Field	JORDAN ST	1.50	Town Recreation Land	Athletic Fields	Open to all	Fair	Baseball Field	Softball Field	None

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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Town Owned Recreation and Conservation Lands									
Site Name	Site Address	Lot Size	Category	Current Use	Public Access	Condition	Recreation Amenities	Recreation Potential	Public Grant
Varney Playground	45 ADAMS ST	6.79	Town Recreation Land	Park	Open to all	Excellent	Baseball Field, Basketball Court, Beach, Pickleball Court, Tennis Court, Playground	ADA Enhancements	Urban Self-Help, CPA, National Park Service Grant
Varney Playground	SHERMAN ST	0.06	Town Recreation Land	Park	Open to all	Excellent	None	None	Urban Self-Help, CPA, National Park Service Grant
Byam School (woods)	MAPLE RD OFF	3.63	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	Park	Open to all	Good	Open Fields, Playground	Trail, School Park Extension	None
Byam School Athletic Fields	25 MAPLE RD	26.14	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Good	Open Fields, Playground	Trail, School Park Extension	None
Center School	BILLERICA RD	3.30	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	Athletic Fields	Open to all	Excellent	Ball Field, Playground	None	CPA
Center School	BILLERICA RD	8.10	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	Park	Open to all	Good	Trail	None	CPA
Center School	84 BILLERICA RD	6.30	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Excellent	Playground	None	CPA
Chelmsford Community Education Center Fields (Westlands)	170 DALTON RD	6.03	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Fair	Gazebo, Benches, Ball Field, Basketball Court	Small Public Events	None
Chelmsford High School	120 RICHARDSON RD	16.29	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Excellent	Wooded Exercise area, Picnic Tables, Gazebo, Benches	Wooded Park	None
Chelmsford High School Athletic Fields	200 RICHARDSON RD	18.11	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	Athletic Fields	Open to all	Excellent	Football Stadium, Concession Stand, Basketball Court, Tennis Courts	Small Public Events	None
Chelmsford High School Athletic Fields	OLD WESTFORD RD	34.42	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Excellent	Running Track, Ball Fields, Trails	Small Public Events	None
Chelmsford High School Athletic Fields	23 GRANITEVILLE RD	23.88	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	Athletic Fields	Open to all	Good	Ball Fields, Cross-country trails	Small Public Events	None
Chelmsford High School Athletic Fields	GRANITEVILLE RD	3.61	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Good	Disc Golf	Small Public Events	None
Harrington Elementary School Playground	120 RICHARDSON RD	13.86	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Good	Playground, Soccer Fields	Needs Improved Access to Soccer Fields	None
Harrington School	RICHARDSON RD	0.34	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	Vacant Land	Open to all	Good	Path	Trails	None

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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Town Owned Recreation and Conservation Lands									
Site Name	Site Address	Lot Size	Category	Current Use	Public Access	Condition	Recreation Amenities	Recreation Potential	Public Grant
McCarthy Middle School Athletic Fields	230-250 NORTH RD	38.26	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Excellent	Track, Tennis Courts, Deck hockey, Pickleball courts, Football Field, Open Fields, Skateboard Park, Playground, Cross-Country Track, Nature Park, Concession stand, Rest Rooms	ADA Improvements	None
Parker Middle School Athletic Fields	75 GRANITEVILLE RD	27.80	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Excellent	Open Field, Playground, Softball Fields, Football Field	ADA Improvements	None
School St 46-199-4	SCHOOL ST OFF	0.29	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	Vacant Land	No Access	Unknown	None	None	None
South Row Elementary School Fields	250 BOSTON RD	13.20	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	School	Open to all	Fair	Basketball and Tennis Courts Soccer Fields Porta-potty (Seasonal)	Basketball and Tennis, Court Resurfacing	None
South Row Elementary School Fields	BOSTON RD	5.64	Town Recreation Land (School Dept.)	Athletic Fields	Open to all	Good	Soccer Fields	Improvements to Fields	None

## Non-Profit Owned Open Space Land Management

### Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust (CLCT)

The Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust. is a non-profit land trust that owns and maintains approximately 80 acres of conservation land as private property open to all citizens of Chelmsford. CLCT’s primary mission is to preserve open space. It advocates for land conservation “in our backyard” and will work to encourage interest in Chelmsford’s natural history and heritage.

Since 1961, the Chelmsford Land Trust Conservation Trust has been accepting donations of open land to preserve Chelmsford's natural history and rural heritage. This allows the donor to leave a lasting legacy to the residents of Chelmsford. Donating to the trust is an alternative to giving the land to the government, where the future land may be re-purposed in a way inconsistent with the owner’s intentions.

Table 27: Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust Managed Lands

Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust Managed Lands		
Name	Address(es)	Total Area of Open Space (acres)
Archer Meadowbrook Preserve	East Putnam Avenue	12.74
Bartlett Park	Acton & Adams Road	3.25
Bartlett Woodlot	Acton Road	10.47
Miriam E. Warren Wetlands Preserve	Littleton Road	3.93
Lt. Edward-Hope Bovey Woodlot	High Street & Ray Hill Road	8.88
Bovey Woodlots	High Street & Ray Hill Road	1.86
McDermott Woodlots	High Street & Ray Hill Road	0.93
Kroll, Calder, Larder Pasture	Proctor Road	14.12
Warren Wildlife Sanctuary	Janet Road	24.00
Burbank Gardens	116 Riverneck Road	0.26
<b>Total</b>		<b>80.44</b>

CLCT also holds and monitors the Conservation or Agricultural Restriction for several properties in town. This gives CLCT legal authority to compel the town to adhere to the restrictions on the properties. Land trust members monitor these properties according to Massachusetts Audubon best practices and work with the town to keep these properties conforming to Sections 31-33 of Chapter 184 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

Table 28: Restrictions Held by Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust

Restrictions Held by Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust				
Name	Address	Type of Restriction	Year Restriction Signed	Total Area of Open Space (acres)
Sunny Meadow Farm	Robin Hill Road	Conservation	2016	23.47
Heart Pond Beach	Pond Street	Conservation	2014	2.13
Sheehan Farm	Pine Hill Road	Agricultural	2015	30
Warren-Pohl Reservation	Billerica Road	Conservation	Est 2025	53.33
<b>Total</b>				<b>108.93</b>

**Historic Millstream Foundation**

The Millstream Foundation owns, maintains, and operates the Russell Mill Pond Dam, the site of the first sawmill in Chelmsford. The dam was originally constructed in 1656 by a grant from the King of England to Captain Samuel Adams. The Foundation uses the dam to maintain the pond's water level, supporting the 84-acre wetland corridor that connects Great Brook Farm, the Warren Wildlife Sanctuary, Thanksgiving Forest, and Russel Mill Town Forest to the River Meadow Brook corridor. Millstream also proactively operates the dam flood gates to manage stormwater flow during extreme weather events.

Table 29: Chelmsford Land Open Space Dependent on Russell Mill Dam

<b>Chelmsford Land Open Space Dependent on Russell Mill Dam</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Address(es)</b>	<b>Total Area of Open Space (acres)</b>
Warren Wildlife Sanctuary	Janet Road	24.00
Russell Mill Pond and Town Forest Reservation / Murphy Field	105 Mill Rd	132
Thanksgiving Ground Forest	40 Janet Rd, Concord Rd	45.6
Russell Mill Pond Conservation Area	Cambridge St, Rear	
<b>Totals</b>		

## Groups and Organizations

**Private Organizations Utilizing Public Lands for Recreation**

*Chelmsford Youth Baseball (CYB)*

The main CYB complex on Chelmsford Street/Route 110 is on grounds that are owned by the Town of Chelmsford and used exclusively by CYB through a lease agreement. The field improvements and buildings at the complex are owned and maintained by CYB.

Additionally, other fields around Town that are used by the CYB are owned by various Town of Chelmsford entities, including the School Department and the Select Board. Maintenance in those fields is provided by various town agencies, with significant contributions in time and money by CYB. The baseball fields at the Chelmsford Street/Route 110 CYB complex are scheduled by and used exclusively by CYB. The fields are locked when not used by the CYB. Other fields used are Strawberry Hill and Roberts Field.

*Chelmsford Youth Soccer (CYSA)*

The CYSA used fields owned by the Chelmsford School Department or Conservation Commission. Use of the fields by other groups is not permitted without the permission of CYSA. When not in use by CYSA programs, the soccer fields are available for limited use by other organizations. CYSA reserves the right to limit the type and duration of activities to preserve the quality and safety of the playing surfaces. Fields include Harrington, Highland, Murphy Fields (located at Russell Mill Reservation) and South Row.

*Chelmsford Girls Softball League*

The Chelmsford Girls Softball League utilizes the field at the Wotton Street property which is owned by the Town. They also utilize the McFarlin Field on 110.

#### *New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA)*

NEMBA utilizes the trails at the Russell Mill Conservation Reservation. Other passive recreation on the trails is not restricted due to NEMBA's usage. NEMBA assists with maintenance of the trails and periodically make improvements to the trails. One of the latest additions was the pump track (separate from the main trails). The pump track attracts many mountain bike enthusiasts to the area. With NEMBA hosting events and the CYSA using the fields, Russell Mill is one of the most used reservations in Town.

#### *Chelmsford Pop Warner Football (CPW)*

CPW conducts their practices on the field at Parker Middle School. CPW plays its home games and hosts other teams at the football field located at McCarthy Middle School. The organization also maintains, insures and pays for utilities, pursuant to an exclusive use agreement with the Town for the snack shack located at the McCarthy Middle School field. The sprinkler system on the field at Parker Middle School, lining of the field and general maintenance of the field are all provided by CPW. The field at McCarthy Middle School is also maintained during the season by CPW. This includes trash pick-up and weeding/trimming the landscaping around the snack shack. The Town receives payment from CPW every time the field is used for practices/games.

#### *Chelmsford Youth Lacrosse (CYL)*

CYL uses fields owned by the Chelmsford School Department. The organization uses fields in the spring, summer and fall seasons. Teams, clinics and summer programs are put together for both boys and girls in grades 1 through 8. CYL uses fields at Chelmsford High School (Stadium and Graniteville Fields), McCarthy School (turf and grass fields), Parker Middle School (grass fields) and Roberts Field. The fields are permitted through Chelmsford Public Schools and are reserved for the times and dates of permits in each season.

### **Private Non-Profit Organizations**

#### *Chelmsford Swim & Tennis*

Chelmsford Swim & Tennis (CST) is a non-profit member owned and operated organization with one outdoor in-ground pool and six tennis courts. Membership is limited to 215 families and pool facilities are open Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day, the tennis courts are open early spring to mid fall. CST was established in 1965 by a group of residents who pooled their resources and obtained loans to purchase 18 acres of land at 133 Robin Hill Road. This site abuts the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

#### *Russell Mill Swim & Tennis Club*

Founded in 1948, as the South Chelmsford Gun and Rod Club, Inc., the member-run, non-profit organization changed its name in 2006 to the Russell Mill Swim & Tennis Club (RMSTC). The RMSTC owns one pool, four lighted tennis courts, and a half-court basketball area on 10 acres located at 160 Mill Road.

#### *Lowell Sportsmen's Club*

The Lowell Sportsmen's Club (LSC) was first formed in 1913 and moved to Chelmsford in the late 1930's. The LSC owns facilities consisting of several ranges and buildings on approximately 70 acres of land located at 50 Swain Road that include: 4 trap fields, skeet field, 50 ft outdoor small-bore range with 3 ambidextrous benches, 50 ft indoor range with 6 stations, 25 yd outdoor range with 3 ambidextrous benches, 100 yd outdoor range with 5 ambidextrous benches, archery range and fishing pond. This site abuts Deep Brook Reservation and Oak Hill Reservation.

#### *Lighthouse School*

Since 1967, Lighthouse School, Inc. has been a private, not-for-profit human service corporation serving the needs of students having a broad range of disabling conditions. The school owns a basketball court, baseball field, small soccer or multi-use field, and a playground located at 25 Wellman Avenue. Enrolled students reside in many of the cities and towns of eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire and are transported to and from Lighthouse School daily. This site abuts Southwell Park.

#### *The Paul Center for Learning*

Established in 1968 and located on Concord Road, The Paul Center is dedicated to assisting individuals with disabilities in developing their maximum potential and independence. They accomplish this goal by providing services to the individual as well as to the family. The Board of Directors and staff of The Paul Center believe that through consistent quality programming they can and do provide an optimal educational and recreational experience needed by their students.

#### **Public Organizations Providing Recreational Programming**

##### *Chelmsford Community Education*

Chelmsford Community Education is a division of the Chelmsford Public Schools. It offers a wide range of programs, activities, and services to support lifelong learning and enrichment for community members of all ages. Chelmsford Community Education typically aims to enhance the quality of life for residents by offering affordable, accessible opportunities to learn new skills, pursue hobbies, and engage with others.

The programs often include adult education classes, with courses on various topics such as fitness, art, technology, finance, and language learning; youth programming, providing enrichment opportunities for children and teens, including STEM, art, music, summer camps, and recreational activities; before and after school care programs, designed to provide safe, structured care for children outside regular school hours; and community events and workshops programs, providing classes and events that promote engagement and skill-building in the local community.

#### **Other Town Committees or Commissions with Interests in Open Space and Recreation**

See Appendix O for a table summarizing current Committee or Commission entities and their interactions with open space and recreation interests.

## Section 6: Community Vision

### Introduction

The updated Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) builds upon the successes of the 2017 plan through a collaborative process. NMCOG led the planning effort in partnership with the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee. This diverse group included town staff, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, the Select Board, and community members. The OSRPC guided strategic direction and ensured an extensive and inclusive community engagement process, reflecting the Town's needs and aspirations and making participants feel involved and valued. The results and input from the outreach discussed in this section were incorporated with Chelmsford's existing conditions in Section 5, Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest, to develop Section 7, Analysis of Needs, and ultimately, Section 8, Goals and Objectives.

### Documents Reviewed

Key plans and reports informed this OSRP, ensuring alignment with ongoing efforts across Chelmsford and the region. Summaries of these documents include:

- 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP): Focused on reducing vulnerability to flooding, severe storms, and heat events. Recommendations included structural projects (e.g., culvert replacements), enhanced emergency access, and updated dam response plans.
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Report (2019): Highlighted Chelmsford's climate-related risks, such as flooding and extreme heat. Prioritized projects included invasive species management, stormwater improvements, and open space conservation.
- Stormwater Management Master Plan (2020): Addressed stormwater runoff challenges with solutions like green infrastructure (rain gardens, bioswales) and watershed protection measures to improve water quality and mitigate flooding.
- Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan (2023): Focused on protecting farmland, increasing equitable access, and enhancing farm viability. Recommendations include land preservation, support for farmers, climate adaptation, and enhancing local food production.
- Chelmsford 2021 Master Plan Update: Comprehensive land use, sustainability, and resilience guidance. The plan emphasized protecting natural resources, enhancing greenways, and incorporating climate adaptation measures into development.
- Regional Strategic Plan for Greater Lowell (2010): Provided a framework for sustainable growth, focusing on open space preservation, water resource protection, and climate resilience at a regional scale.

### Description of the Process

Guided by NMCOG, the OSRPC implemented an extensive outreach strategy to ensure broad and meaningful input from the Chelmsford community. The process included:

- Identifying key stakeholders and EJ populations.
- Hosting community events and forums.
- Conducting targeted focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

# Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035

## Section 6 – Community Vision

### Community Engagement Strategy

The OSRP engagement strategy prioritized inclusion, using tools such as public forums, surveys, and focus groups to capture diverse perspectives. Outreach included targeted marketing, events at high-visibility locations, and materials in EJ neighborhoods. Chelmsford distributed QR-coded seed packets and incentivized participation with prizes. Flyers were posted at over 140 locations, many within EJ areas.

Outreach methods included:

- Surveys (411 responses collected).
- Public forums (e.g., senior center, community social events, virtual).
- Focus groups at Chelmsford Housing Authority and High School.
- Semi-structured interviews with community leaders and EJ representatives.

### Environmental Justice

The approach followed state guidelines for incorporating Environmental Justice, ensuring equitable representation and access to the planning process. In Massachusetts, EJ populations are defined by neighborhoods that meet the following income-based criterion and one or more additional factors, as outlined by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA):

1. Income Criterion:
  - The annual median household income of the neighborhood must not exceed 65% of the statewide annual median household income.
2. Additional Factors:
  - Minority Composition: At least 40% of the population identifies as a racial or ethnic minority.
  - Language Isolation: At least 25% of households lack English language proficiency.
  - Income and Minority Combination: At least 25% of the population identifies as a racial or ethnic minority, and the municipality's median household income does not exceed 150% of the statewide median.
  - Designated by the Secretary: Specific areas may be designated as EJ neighborhoods based on environmental, health, and demographic data.

**This definition ensures that EJ populations are prioritized in policies addressing environmental inequalities, promoting meaningful involvement in planning, equitable access to benefits, and protection from environmental burdens<sup>28</sup>.**

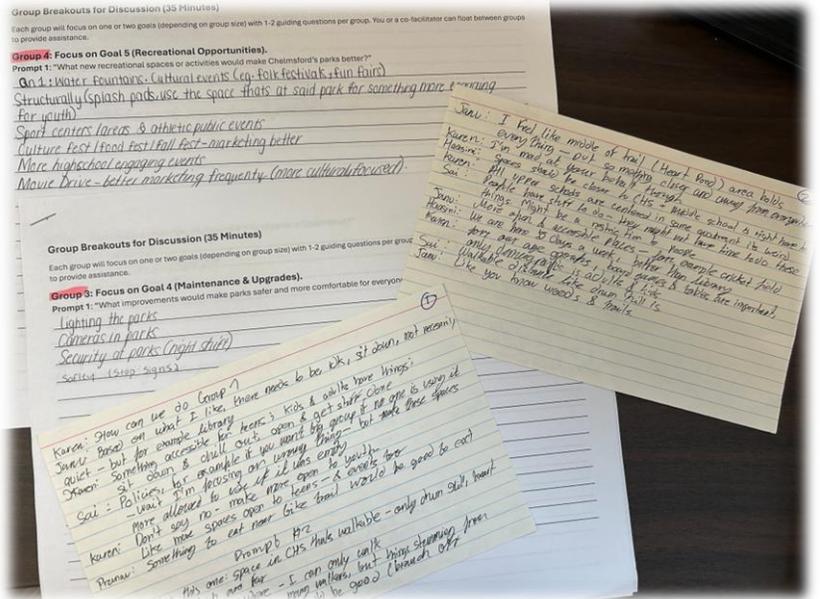


Image: 20 High School Outreach Event Notes – Credit Meghan Tenhoff

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-releases-first-ever-environmental-justice-strategy-for-massachusetts>. Retrieved on October 28, 2024.

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 6 – Community Vision

*Community Outreach Activities*

The following table summarizes the key community engagement activities conducted as part of the Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) process, including details on when and where they occurred, the participants involved, and the key findings from each method.

Table 30: Community Outreach Activities Summary

Engagement Method	When/ Where	Participants	Details/ Key Findings
<b>Farmer’s Market, Market on the Common</b>	Saturday, June 1 & 8, 2024	Approx. 300	Launch the survey, gather feedback on open space and recreation, asked people to identify on a map their favorite places in Chelmsford to play.
<b>Online Survey via Survey Monkey (paper copies at the Library and Senior Center)</b>	June 1 - August 31, 2024	411	<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 92% praised the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.</li> <li>- 58% valued playground variety and trail maintenance.</li> <li>- 48% approved of recreation programming.</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunities for Improvement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 58% sought more preserved green space.</li> <li>- 41% prioritized climate change solutions.</li> <li>- 38% identified inadequate amenities (e.g., benches, restrooms).</li> </ul>
<b>Public Forum 1</b>	June 20, 2024, Chelmsford Senior Center	Approx. 45	<p><b>Format:</b> Drop-in event with tabletop displays and presentations.</p> <p><b>Key Takeaways:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interest in sharing surveys widely.</li> <li>- Suggestions for climate-adaptive features, community gardens, and flexible park spaces.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Forum 2</b>	September 18, 2024, Chelmsford Elk Lodge	Approx. 75	<p><b>Format:</b> Ice Cream Social with rock painting and family activities.</p> <p><b>Goals:</b> Gather feedback on themes: accessibility, resilience, engagement, and equity.</p> <p><b>Priorities Identified:</b> Open space preservation, drainage updates, and community pool facilities.</p>
<b>Public Forum 3</b>	January 9, 2025, Zoom	12	<p><b>Format:</b> Virtual meeting with registration</p> <p><b>Key Takeaways:</b> strong interest in establishing a Recreation Department, improving accessibility to community meetings, and fostering greater collaboration among Town boards and committees.</p>

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 6 – Community Vision

Engagement Method	When/ Where	Participants	Details/ Key Findings
<b>Chelmsford Housing Authority Focus Group</b>	September 11, 2024, Chelmsford Woods Residences	8 residents (compensated)	<b>Challenges:</b> Transportation, safety, and lack of amenities. <b>Suggestions:</b> Connected sidewalks, ADA-compliant facilities, and more shaded gathering spaces.
<b>Chelmsford High School Focus Group</b>	October 3, 2024, Chelmsford High School	16 Minority high school students	<b>Engagement:</b> Desire for youth-centric programming and events. <b>Accessibility:</b> Improved communication about resources and physical access. <b>Resilience:</b> Interest in shaded areas and water features for heat relief.
<b>Semi-Structured Interviews</b>	1. Best Western Family Shelter (CTI) (July 31, 2024) and 2. Community Leaders (August 12, 2024)	1. 4 CTI employees and 2. Two community members identified via the MVP 2.0 Planning process	Best Western Family Shelter: Identified gaps in park access and recommended multilingual materials and inclusive spaces.  Community Leaders: Suggested public transit to parks, splash pads, and expanded community programming.

**Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals**

Chelmsford envisions an open space and recreation system that fosters community connections, ensures equitable access for all residents, supports environmental resilience, and enhances the quality of life across the town. Through strategic investments, sustainable practices, and community engagement, the town seeks to maintain and improve its open spaces while addressing the diverse needs of its population.

**1. Increase Engagement**

Chelmsford aims to connect residents with its open spaces by promoting awareness, providing inclusive programming, and enhancing opportunities for outdoor recreation. Expanding community participation in stewardship and decision-making processes ensures that the town’s open spaces reflect shared values and priorities.

**2. Enhance Accessibility and Promote Equity**

Chelmsford is committed to creating an open space system that serves all residents, regardless of location, ability, or socioeconomic status. The town will prioritize investments in underserved neighborhoods, improve physical access, and remove barriers to ensure everyone can enjoy Chelmsford’s natural and recreational resources.

**3. Improve Climate Resilience**

Chelmsford recognizes the critical role open spaces play in mitigating climate change impacts. By conserving flood-prone areas, expanding tree canopies, and implementing

green infrastructure, the town aims to strengthen its resilience to flooding, heat, and other climate-related challenges while protecting biodiversity and ecosystem health. Additionally, parks and open spaces serve as vital social infrastructure, fostering community connections and providing gathering spaces that enhance social cohesion—essential to building community-wide climate resilience.

**4. Maintain, Upgrade, and Steward Open Spaces**

Chelmsford is dedicated to preserving and enhancing its open spaces and recreational facilities. Regular maintenance, upgrades to meet safety and accessibility standards, and community-driven stewardship will ensure these spaces continue to serve future generations.

**5. Expand Recreational Opportunities and Facilities**

Chelmsford seeks to offer diverse recreational opportunities to meet its residents' evolving needs. The Town will support a vibrant, active community by developing flexible, multi-use spaces, enhancing existing facilities, and prioritizing areas for new recreation.

The Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan embodies the community's vision for a connected, equitable, and resilient future. Through inclusive and intentional outreach, the planning process captured diverse perspectives, ensuring that the plan reflects the town's collective priorities. Focusing on Environmental Justice and broad community engagement, the OSRP lays the groundwork for accessible, sustainable, and vibrant open spaces. This vision emphasizes fostering stronger community connections, enhancing recreational opportunities, and preparing for future challenges, guiding Chelmsford toward a thriving network of open spaces that meet the needs of all residents.



*Image: 21 Kids Soccer Practice - Credit: Christine Clancy*

## Section 7: Analysis of Needs

This section identifies Chelmsford's critical resource protection, community, and management needs, drawing from community input, survey data, and public outreach. Findings emphasize improving recreational equity, climate resilience, and accessibility, while ensuring long-term sustainability of open spaces. Community needs were informed by diverse engagement methods, including a high school focus group, a senior forum, targeted Environmental Justice outreach, and a family shelter interview. This section evaluates what was heard and how those perspectives led to the recommendations presented in later sections of the plan.

### Summary of Resource Protection Needs

Chelmsford's natural resources support ecological health, passive and active recreation, and climate resilience. However, flooding, invasive species, and rising temperatures threaten these assets. Residents voiced a desire to preserve existing open space, restore degraded areas, and integrate nature-based solutions into parks. These insights informed recommendations to acquire flood-prone land, increase tree canopy, and incorporate sustainable stormwater infrastructure.

### Summary of Community's Needs

Chelmsford residents consistently expressed the need for more flexible, accessible, and inclusive public spaces. Survey and forum participants described fragmented trail systems, underutilized parkland, and a mismatch between amenities and user needs. In particular, outreach to high school students and older adults revealed distinct recreational gaps.

Teen participants in a facilitated high school focus group reported feeling overlooked in Chelmsford's open space system. They shared that most parks prioritize younger children or organized sports, leaving few informal or creative places for teens. Students advocated for shaded seating, gathering spaces, and more welcoming, multi-purpose areas where they could meet friends or spend time outdoors after school. One student noted, "There's nowhere for us to just be together—it's like we're not supposed to be outside."

Senior residents highlighted accessibility and comfort as primary barriers to park use. Many attendees at the Senior Center public forum cited concerns about uneven trails, lack of benches, and minimal shade. They recommended looped walking trails with regular seating, shaded rest areas, and restrooms. Accessibility upgrades, especially ADA-compliant features, were strongly supported as necessary to expand use among older adults and those with mobility limitations.

Families living at the local shelter shared similar concerns about walkability, comfort, and basic amenities. Parents described difficulty accessing safe, shaded areas for children to play and relax. Their feedback reinforced the need for more benches, shade structures, and gathering places across Chelmsford's park network, particularly in underserved areas.

Taken together, these voices underscored the need for a more equitable open space system—one that includes features for passive enjoyment, social connection, and intergenerational use. These insights directly shaped the proposed goals and strategies that follow in this plan.

### Management Needs and Potential Change of Use

Sustainable management of Chelmsford's open spaces is essential to adapt to the community's evolving needs while ensuring long-term preservation and usability. Effective planning, maintenance, and thoughtful repurposing will maximize the value of these spaces for residents and address current challenges. Key priorities for management and potential changes in use include:

## Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035

### Section 7 – Analysis of Needs

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#### *1. Open Space Management Plans*

Developing effective management plans is critical to preserving Chelmsford's open space resources. These plans should include:

- Establishing regular maintenance schedules for parks, trails, and facilities.
- Incorporating sustainability practices, such as native plantings and energy-efficient designs, to enhance resilience and reduce environmental impact.
- Engaging the community through stewardship initiatives like tree planting and habitat restoration programs.

#### *2. Upgrades and Maintenance*

Targeted upgrades and consistent maintenance are vital to improving the usability and safety of recreational facilities:

- Develop detailed maintenance schedules for all recreational facilities and open spaces.
- Prioritize updates to aging infrastructure at key locations, such as Southwell Field and McCarthy Track and Field.

#### *3. Community Stewardship*

Strengthening community involvement is key to fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring the long-term care of open spaces:

- Expand volunteer programs to involve residents actively in maintaining and enhancing open spaces.
- Partner with local organizations to promote environmental education and stewardship activities.

#### *4. Sustainable Funding*

Securing diverse funding sources will support the ongoing maintenance and development of Chelmsford's open spaces:

- Explore opportunities for grants and public-private partnerships to supplement CPA funds and ensure financial sustainability.

#### *5. Land Use Evaluation*

Regular assessment of underutilized parcels can help identify opportunities for repurposing:

- Evaluate these areas for potential conversion into active or passive recreational spaces to meet community needs better.
- By addressing these priorities, Chelmsford can ensure its open spaces remain vibrant, accessible, and adaptable to future needs.

### **Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**

The 2023 Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was created by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). This plan evaluates the recreational resources available across the state and what residents need for outdoor activities.

## Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035

### Section 7 – Analysis of Needs

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It helps Massachusetts meet goals set by the National Park Service and ensures the state remains eligible for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding.

In Massachusetts, the EEA manages LWCF grants available to communities with approved Open Space and Recreation Plans. These grants can address outdoor recreation and conservation needs, like buying land for parks or improving existing recreational areas. To develop the SCORP, the EEA conducted extensive outreach, including surveys of residents and groups like municipalities and land trusts that provide recreation opportunities.

Through an intensive public engagement process, the SCORP identified four (4) goals for outdoor recreation in the Commonwealth:

1. Improve access to the beach and other water-based activities;
2. Support trail projects;
3. Create and renovate neighborhood parks, especially to benefit the underserved; and
4. Create opportunities to enjoy protected natural areas, especially for the underserved.

The findings from the Massachusetts SCORP closely align with the results of Chelmsford's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) planning process. Both emphasize the importance of improved access to swimming areas and water-based activities, with passive recreation opportunities, trail connectivity, and neighborhood parks identified as key priorities at both the state and local levels.

SCORP's statewide goals align with Chelmsford's needs, including:

- Improving access to water-based recreation.
- Supporting trail connectivity and enhancement projects.
- Creating neighborhood parks to serve underserved populations.
- Expanding opportunities for passive recreation.

By aligning its strategies with these goals, Chelmsford ensures its continued eligibility for federal and state funding to support open space and recreation initiatives.

#### **Open Space Equity Analysis**

The Open Space Equity Analysis focuses on addressing disparities in recreational access and ensuring resources are distributed equitably across Chelmsford. By prioritizing underserved areas and EJ populations, the analysis aims to create an inclusive and accessible open space system that benefits all residents. Key considerations include:

**Geographic Access:** Ensure all neighborhoods, particularly EJ areas, have walkable access to parks and recreational facilities.

**Equity in Amenities:** Provide quality amenities, such as ADA-compliant features, shaded areas, and multilingual signage, in underserved parks.

**Inclusive Programming:** Expand recreational programming to address Chelmsford's diverse cultural, age, and ability needs.

Chelmsford's open spaces and recreational resources are integral to the Town's character, quality of life, and environmental resilience. Addressing the identified resource protection needs, community priorities, and management strategies will ensure these spaces remain accessible, sustainable, and

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### Section 7 – Analysis of Needs

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adaptable to future challenges. By focusing on equity, connectivity, and stewardship, Chelmsford can create a dynamic open space network benefiting all residents.

Building on this analysis, the next steps in the plan include defining strategic goals and actions in Section 8, Goals and Objectives, and outlining a detailed strategy in Section 9, the Ten-Year Action Plan. The goals will establish the vision for Chelmsford’s open spaces, focusing on increased community engagement, enhanced accessibility, climate resilience, sustainable stewardship, and expanded recreational opportunities. The action plan will provide a clear roadmap for implementation, including specific actions, timelines, and responsibilities to bring these goals to life. This framework ensures Chelmsford can meet today’s needs while preparing for a resilient and vibrant future.



*Image: 22 Varney Playground - Credit: Christine Clancey*

## Section 8: Goal and Objectives

Section 8 outlines the vision, goals, and objectives that guide the future of Chelmsford’s open spaces and recreational resources. Drawing on the comprehensive vision articulated in Section 6 and the data analysis from Section 7, this section identifies actionable steps to enhance community engagement, accessibility, climate resilience, stewardship, and recreational opportunities. These goals reflect the Town’s commitment to balancing conservation with active and passive recreation, fostering equity, and addressing the needs of Environmental Justice communities.

The development of these goals considered the current conditions of the Town, including existing open space assets, community demographics, and environmental challenges, while incorporating institutional knowledge and community priorities. This balanced approach ensures that Chelmsford’s open space planning supports the evolving needs of residents, protects critical natural resources, and aligns with the long-term vision for a sustainable and inclusive community.

### Goal 1: Increase Community Engagement with Open Spaces

#### *Objective 1.1: Enhance communication about the Town’s resources and activities*

- **Action 1:** Enhance Signage at key town-owned open spaces. Improve visibility and encourage public engagement by installing updated signage at Town-owned open spaces and key locations with public access. Incorporate QR codes into the signage to provide links to real-time site information and updates.
  - Phase 1 Initial Locations for Enhanced Signage may include:
    - Heart Pond
    - Robert’s Field
    - Southwell Field
    - Varney Park
    - South Row Soccer Fields
    - Harrington Soccer Fields
    - Murphy Soccer Fields
  - Phase 2: Additional locations to consider:
    - McCarthy Track and Field/Lacrosse
    - Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
    - Warren-Pohl Property
    - Koulas Farm
- **Action 2:** Ensure vegetation does not impede view of the signage.
- **Action 3:** Develop and publish regular newsletters utilizing existing Town Manager’s Newsletter and social media avenues.
- **Action 4:** Publish updated trail maps for Conservation Commission maintained trails to the Town website and other opensource public platforms utilized for hiking and recreation purposes.
- **Interaction:** This will support Goal 4 (Maintenance and Stewardship) by encouraging community involvement and knowledge-sharing about open spaces.

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*Objective 1.2: Expand public education programs on environmental, historical, and recreation topics*

- **Action:** Inventory existing educational programs to understand current offerings. Explore the demand for developing and hosting educational programs to increase awareness and understanding of environmental topics and local natural resources. Work with the Chelmsford Public Library and other Town entities to partner with and expand the Town's existing educational programming.
- *Additional Focus:* Assess demand for offering culturally relevant and appropriate events and activities, like local history tours and environmental stewardship workshops, promoting inclusivity in learning for EJ communities.
- **Interaction:** *These programs will support Goal 3 (Climate Resilience) by educating the community about the role of open spaces in climate adaptation. EJ communities will benefit from both educational and recreational opportunities.*

*Objective 1.3: Improve information access*

- **Action:** Develop a communications plan to increase awareness of open spaces and recreation opportunities in town utilizing the existing Town Manager's newsletter and the conservation commission website framework.
  - *Example:* Develop an online and on-site master list of recreation opportunities, trails and open spaces, cross-referencing available activities (e.g., playgrounds, hiking, birdwatching, biking).
- **Interaction:** *By making this information easily accessible, the Town can increase awareness and usage of lesser-known open space and recreational opportunities. This ties into Goal 2 (Accessibility), ensuring that trails and amenities are highlighted for accessibility by EJ communities and youth.*

*Objective 1.4: Engage youth through environmental programs*

- **Action:** Investigate potential partnerships with local schools and youth organizations to involve students in environmental programs like tree planting, habitat restoration, and educational workshops.
- **Interaction:** *Youth involvement supports Goal 4 (Stewardship), as younger generations are encouraged to participate in the long-term care and maintenance of Chelmsford's open spaces.*

*Objective 1.5: Strengthen partnerships and relationships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) engaged in open space and recreation efforts*

- **Action:** Strengthen partnerships with NGOs and other entities working in open space to identify best practices and funding opportunities we might bring to Town.

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**Goal 2: Enhance Accessibility and Promote Equity in Open Spaces**

*Objective 2.1: Expand accessible trails and safety features*

- **Action:** Where reasonable, construct plans and/or advocate for various improvements to enhance the accessibility and safety of Town trails and pathways, which may include lighting, resurfacing, and signage where appropriate.
- *Additional Focus:* Develop a plan to increase the number of public conservation and recreation lands trails that are ADA-accessible and provide clear signage for non-English speakers.
- **Interaction:** *This contributes to Goal 4 (Maintenance) by ensuring that open spaces remain safe, accessible, and well-maintained for everyone.*

*Objective 2.2: Improve physical access through sidewalks and trail connections*

- **Action:** As part of the Department of Public Work’s annual budget cycle, review the Sidewalk Master Plan and advance sidewalk maintenance and connectivity priorities, including bike paths and trail networks, to improve the interconnectivity of conservation and recreational lands.
- *Additional Focus:* Prioritize EJ communities and areas near schools for these upgrades, focusing on creating safe walking and biking routes for youth and underserved residents.
- **Interaction:** *This action also promotes engagement and regular usage of Town open space and recreational opportunities, supporting Goal 1 (Engagement) and safe non-motorized access to commuter rail stations, supporting Goal 3 (Climate Resilience).*

*Objective 2.3: Focus investments in under-served neighborhoods*

- **Action:** Identify neighborhoods that lack open space and recreation neighborhood-appropriate amenities and prioritize these areas for new acquisitions or improvements.
- *Additional Focus:* Prioritize investments in EJ communities to improve access and ensure equity in the distribution of recreational spaces.
- **Interaction:** *This aligns with Goal 5 (Recreation), ensuring EJ communities can access new recreational facilities.*

**Goal 3: Improved Climate Resilience through Strategic Land Uses**

*Objective 3.1: Prioritize land conservation in climate-vulnerable areas*

- **Action:** Compile a list of flood-prone and/or environmentally sensitive areas to inform land acquisition and conservation efforts to enhance biodiversity and protect against climate impacts. Utilize the watershed analysis, MVP plan, and DPW’s stormwater data to identify and prioritize these areas.
- *Additional Focus:* Engage EJ communities in land conservation efforts by involving them in discussions around climate impacts on their neighborhoods.
- **Interaction:** *This supports Goal 1 (Engagement) by providing educational opportunities for residents to learn about the role of open spaces in climate resilience.*

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*Objective 3.2: Protect Drinking Water Quality*

- **Action:** Identify opportunities to protect drinking water. Collaborate with local and regional stakeholders to assess vulnerabilities, enhance protective measures, and promote sustainable water use practices.
- **Interaction:** *These improvements align with Goal 2 (Accessibility) by ensuring that clean water is accessible to all residents.*

*Objective 3.3: Adapt open spaces for climate change*

- **Action:** Research, assess, and incorporate climate-adaptive features into public spaces to enhance resiliency and address climate vulnerabilities such as extreme heat and winter storms.
- **Interaction:** *These improvements align with Goal 2 (Accessibility) by ensuring that adaptive features are available to all residents, promoting both equity and engagement.*

*Objective 3.4: Identify Opportunities for Local Food Production*

- **Action 1:** Assess existing community gardens for expansion.
- **Action 2:** Connect with the local farming community to determine how to support remaining farmers
- **Additional Focus:** Engage youth and EJ communities in these sustainable food production programs to foster awareness of environmental stewardship and food security.
- **Interaction:** *These initiatives support Goal 1 (Engagement) and Goal 4 (Stewardship) by encouraging residents to participate in sustainable practices.*

*Objective 3.5: Increase public awareness of open space benefits*

- **Action:** Explore opportunities to develop educational programs that highlight the ecological and community value of open spaces, particularly their role in flood management, fire danger reduction, carbon sequestration, reduction in urban heat island effect, and biodiversity.
- **Interaction:** *Public awareness campaigns will align with Goal 1(Engagement) and can be incorporated into interpretive signage, school programs, and guided tours, fostering stewardship and long-term engagement.*

**Goal 4: Maintain, Upgrade, and Steward Community Spaces for High-Quality Conservation, Recreation, Ecological, and Agricultural Uses.**

*Objective 4.1: Develop comprehensive land management and maintenance plans*

- **Action 1:** Develop comprehensive land management plans for all Conservation Commission-managed reservation areas with a focus on recreation and community values including habitat, biodiversity, ground water protection, and climate adaptation.
- **Action 2:** Assess the need for and create detailed operation and maintenance plans for all Town open space and recreational spaces, focusing on safety, lighting, accessibility improvements, and ongoing community engagement.
- **Interaction:** *Maintenance plans will support Goal 2 by ensuring that trails and sidewalks are well-maintained and accessible where feasible, including EJ communities, youth, and elders.*

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
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*Objective 4.2: Explore opportunities to upgrade facilities for improved safety and comfort for active and passive recreation.*

- **Action:** Use developed land management plans to identify opportunities for new lighting, restrooms, benches, trash cans, and shelters to make Town open spaces and recreational spaces more comfortable and accessible.
- *Additional Focus:* Ensure these upgrades are prioritized in parks within EJ communities, where safety and comfort may be lacking.
- **Interaction:** *This aligns with Goal 2 (Safety and Accessibility) and Goal 1 (Engagement), encouraging higher usage of open spaces.*

*Objective 4.3: Foster community stewardship*

- **Action 1:** Revisit and strengthen community involvement through volunteer programs and foster a sense of ownership among residents and businesses by including them in upkeep and maintenance decisions and capital plans.
- **Action 2:** Create an OSRP implementation committee tasked with overseeing the implementation of the OSRP Ten-Year Action Plan.
- **Action 3:** Revisit and strengthen land stewardship program as part of the land management plan.
- *Additional Focus:* Create specific volunteer opportunities for youth and EJ communities, such as park clean-ups and community garden maintenance.
- **Interaction:** *These programs align with Goal 3 (Climate Resilience) by engaging the community in sustainable land use practices.*

*Objective 4.4: Identify farmlands of local importance and protect them to limit loss*

- **Action 1:** Create a comprehensive list of valuable lands for crop production that do not meet the criteria for prime, unique, or farmland of statewide importance. Include additional factors such as soil quality, historical use for farming, irrigation potential, and proximity to markets or food distribution systems. This inventory will support planning decisions prioritizing agricultural use for local food production over traditional conservation purposes.
- **Action 2:** Prioritize acquisition and farmland preservation to maintain or restart production.
- **Action 3:** When acquiring farmland or land with agricultural potential, collaborate with farmland trusts, conservation organizations, and local stakeholders to identify strategic opportunities. Work in partnership to ensure the land is preserved for agricultural use, prioritizing projects that align with local food production goals and support sustainable farming practices.
- **Interaction:** *This aligns with Goal 3 (Climate Resilience) by supporting climate resilience through strategic land use.*

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**Goal 5: Expand Recreational Opportunities and Facilities**

*Objective 5.1: Investigate the development of flexible, multi-use open spaces to serve a broad range of community recreation needs.*

- **Action 1:** Increase awareness of how to get permission to use and reserve Town, School Department, and Conservation Commission open spaces and recreational spaces via the Town, schools, and Conservation Commission.
- **Action 2:** Assess current and future needs of community facilities:
  - Inventory current capacity: Compile data from surveys and outreach efforts to create an inventory of existing indoor and outdoor activity spaces. Include an assessment of how well these spaces meet the needs of all age groups, from youth to seniors.
  - Identify gaps and opportunities: Evaluate the inventory to determine where additional spaces are needed or where opportunities exist to expand current offerings.
  - Conduct research into feasibility and demand research: Assess the feasibility and community demand for new indoor and outdoor facilities. These facilities should support a variety of activities, such as sports, fitness programs, and community events.
- **Interaction:** *Multi-use spaces can host community events that support Goal 1 (Engagement) while also enhancing Goal 3 (Climate Resilience), ensuring that open spaces meet the community's evolving needs.*

*Objective 5.2: Explore cost and potential for development of new playgrounds, amenities and recreational facilities to meet community and neighborhood needs.*

- **Action:** Expand recreational opportunities by engaging the community to assess the demand for new facilities in underserved areas, prioritizing EJ communities, and developing strategies to enhance access to existing open spaces and recreational amenities.
- **Interaction:** *This action interacts with Goal 2 (Accessibility) by ensuring these facilities are available in under-served neighborhoods, contributing to both equity and engagement goals.*

*Objective 5.3: Explore the potential amenities that meet the needs of the community*

- **Action:** Conduct a feasibility study to add amenities, including seasonally and tied to community programming, such as restrooms (permanent and temporary), outdoor furniture, and wayfinding signage.
- **Interaction:** *Supporting amenities contribute to both Goal 4 (Maintenance) and Goal 5 (Flexible Spaces), providing the infrastructure necessary for safe and enjoyable recreation.*

*Objective 5.4: Provide additional recreational programming to serve residents of all ages within the community.*

- **Action 1:** Enhance coordination of existing staff and committees working to improve recreational opportunities and access in the community for youth to seniors.
- **Action 2:** Inventory and explore the need, demand, and cost to create a new staff position to manage and provide recreational programming opportunities.

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 8 – Goals and Objectives

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- **Action 3:** Work with Chelmsford Community Education to determine current capacity and future strategic expansion opportunities while providing additional community programming.
- **Interaction:** *Supporting additional recreational programming also contributes to Goals 1 (Engagement) and 2 (Accessibility).*

## Conclusion

Each goal's objectives and actionable steps demonstrate Chelmsford's commitment to maintaining and expanding open space and recreational resources. This framework addresses current needs while preparing the Town for long-term success in improving accessibility, fostering inclusivity, and advancing sustainability. These strategies ensure Chelmsford's open spaces continue to benefit all residents, building a vibrant and resilient community. The following section, Section 9: Ten-Year Action Plan, outlines year-by-year priorities, funding opportunities, and responsible parties to achieve these goals and objectives.

## Section 9 – Ten-Year Action Plan

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Action Item Initiation Priority				Potential Funding Sources
				Ongoing	Short-term 2025 -2027	Mid-term 2028 - 2030	Long-term 2031 - 2035	
<b>Goal 1: Increase Community Engagement with Open Spaces – High Priority 1</b>								
1	<b>Objective 1.1:</b> Enhance communication about the Town’s resources and activities  <b>High Priority</b>	<b>Action 1:</b> Enhance signage at key town-owned open spaces. Improve visibility and encourage public engagement by installing updated signage at Town-owned open spaces and key locations with public access. Incorporate QR codes into the signage to provide links to real-time site information and updates.  Phase 1 Initial locations for enhanced signage may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heart Pond</li> <li>• Robert’s Field</li> <li>• Southwell Field</li> <li>• Varney Park</li> <li>• South Row Soccer Fields</li> <li>• Harrington Soccer Fields</li> <li>• Murphy Soccer Fields</li> </ul> Phase 2: Additional locations to consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McCarthy Track and Field/Lacrosse</li> <li>• Bruce Freeman Rail Trail</li> <li>• Warren-Pohl Property</li> <li>• Koulas Farm</li> </ul>	Conservation Commission*, DPW*  *Ownership dependent	X				Community Preservation Act (CPA), Town
		<b>Action 2:</b> Ensure vegetation does not impede view of the signage.	Conservation Commission*, DPW*  *Ownership dependent	X				Town, Private
		<b>Action 3:</b> Develop and publish regular communications using existing town platforms.	Conservation Commission, Town Manager, School Department		X			Town
		<b>Action 4:</b> Publish updated trail maps for Conservation Commission maintained trails to the Town website and other opensource public platforms utilized for hiking and recreation purposes.	Conservation Commission		X			Town

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-20235  
Section 9 – Ten Year Action Plan

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Action Item Initiation Priority				Potential Funding Sources
				Ongoing	Short-term 2025 -2027	Mid-term 2028 - 2030	Long-term 2031 - 2035	
1	<b>Objective 1.2:</b> Expand public education programs on environmental, historical, and recreation topics <b>High Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Inventory existing educational programs to understand current offerings. Explore the demand for developing and hosting educational programs to increase awareness and understanding of environmental topics and local natural resources. Work with the Chelmsford Public Library and other Town entities to partner with and expand the Town’s existing educational programming. <i>Additional Focus see Section 8</i>	Conservation Commission, OSRP Implementation Committee, Schools, Community Education, Library		X			Town
1	<b>Objective 1.3:</b> Improve information access <b>High Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Develop a communications plan to increase awareness of open spaces and recreation opportunities in town utilizing the existing Town Manager’s newsletter and the conservation commission website framework.	Conservation Commission, Town Manager		X			Town
1	<b>Objective 1.4:</b> Engage youth through environmental programs <b>High Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Investigate potential partnerships with local schools and youth organizations to involve students in environmental programs like tree planting, habitat restoration, vernal pools and educational workshops.	Conservation Commission, OSRP Implementation Committee, Tree Committee		X			Town, School Department, MassWildlife Habitat Management Program
1	<b>Objective 1.5:</b> Strengthen partnerships and relationships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) engaged in open space and recreation efforts <b>High Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Strengthen partnerships with NGOs and other entities working in open space to identify best practices and funding opportunities we might bring to town	Conservation Commission, OSRP Implementation Committee, Town Manager		X			Town

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-20235  
Section 9 – Ten Year Action Plan

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Action Item Initiation Priority				Potential Funding Sources
				Ongoing	Short-term 2025 -2027	Mid-term 2028 - 2030	Long-term 2031 - 2035	
<b>Goal 2: Enhance Accessibility and Promote Equity in Open Spaces - High Priority 2</b>								
2	<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Expand accessible trails and safety features  <b>High Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Where reasonable, construct plans and/or advocate for various improvements to enhance the accessibility and safety of Town trails and pathways, which may include lighting, resurfacing, and signage where appropriate. <i>Additional Focus see Section 8.</i>	Conservation Commission*, DPW*, School Dept*  *ownership/management dependent			X		Town, School Department, CPA, MassTrails Grant Program, Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program, Safe Routes to School Program
2	<b>Objective 2.2:</b> Improve physical access through sidewalks and trail connections  <b>High Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> As part of the Department of Public Work’s annual budget cycle, review the Sidewalk Master Plan and advance sidewalk maintenance and connectivity priorities, including trail networks, to improve the interconnectivity of conservation and recreational lands. <i>Additional Focus see Section 8</i>	DPW		X			Town
2	<b>Objective 2.3:</b> Focus investments in under-served neighborhoods  <b>High Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Identify neighborhoods ( <i>Map: 12 Chelmsford Open Space and Recreational Lands Equity Map</i> ) that lack open space and recreation neighborhood-appropriate amenities and prioritize these areas for new acquisitions or improvements. <i>Additional Focus see Section 8</i>	OSRP Implementation Committee, DPW, Community Development Department		X			Town, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) - Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Program, EEA Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-20235  
Section 9 – Ten Year Action Plan

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Action Item Initiation Priority				Potential Funding Sources
				Ongoing	Short-term 2025 -2027	Mid-term 2028 - 2030	Long-term 2031 - 2035	
<b>Goal 3: Improve Climate Resilience through Strategic Land Uses Mid Priority 3</b>								
3	<b>Objective 3.1:</b> Prioritize land conservation in climate-vulnerable areas  <b>Medium Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Compile a list of flood-prone and/or environmentally sensitive areas to inform land acquisition and conservation efforts to enhance biodiversity and protect against climate impacts. Utilize the watershed analysis, MVP plan, and DPW’s stormwater data to identify and prioritize these areas. <i>Additional Focus see Section 8</i>	Conservation Commission, DPW, Community Development Department, OSRP Implementation Committee, Tree Committee			X		EEA - MVP Action Grant, LAND, PARC
3	<b>Objective 3.2:</b> Protect drinking water quality  <b>Medium Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Identify opportunities to protect drinking water. Collaborate with local and regional stakeholders to assess vulnerabilities, enhance protective measures, and promote sustainable water use practices.	Water Districts, Conservation Commission, DPW, Board of Health	X Gap analysis phase		X		EEA - Drinking Water Supply Protection Program
3	<b>Objective 3.3:</b> Adapt open spaces for climate change  <b>Medium Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Research, assess, and incorporate climate-adaptive features into public spaces to enhance resiliency and address climate vulnerabilities.	Potential Consultant, DPW, OSRP Implementation Committee, Conservation Commission	X Pilot project		X		PARC, MVP Action Grant
3	<b>Objective 3.4:</b> Identify opportunities for local food production  <b>Low Priority</b>	<b>Action 1:</b> Assess existing community gardens for expansion.	Community Garden Committee, Agricultural Commission		X			Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) – Food Security Infrastructure Program
		<b>Action 2:</b> Connect with the local farming community to determine community-supported agriculture and food production options. <i>Additional Focus see Section 8</i>	DPW, Agricultural Commission, Community Garden Committee		X			Food Security Infrastructure Program
3	<b>Objective 3.5:</b> Increase public awareness of open space benefits  <b>Medium Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Explore opportunities to develop educational programs that highlight the ecological and community value of open spaces, particularly their role in flood management, fire danger reduction, carbon sequestration, reduction in urban heat island effect and biodiversity.	Conservation Commission, Floodplain Manager, DPW Stormwater, Fire Dept.			X		Town

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-20235  
Section 9 – Ten Year Action Plan

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Action Item Initiation Priority				Potential Funding Sources
				Ongoing	Short-term 2025 -2027	Mid-term 2028 - 2030	Long-term 2031 - 2035	
<b>Goal 4: Maintain, Upgrade, and Steward Community Spaces for High-Quality Conservation, Recreation, Ecological, and Agricultural Uses. Mid Priority 4</b>								
4	<b>Objective 4.1:</b> Develop comprehensive land management and maintenance plans  <b>Medium Priority</b>	<b>Action 1:</b> Develop comprehensive land management plans for all Conservation Commission-managed reservation areas with a focus on recreation and community values including habitat, biodiversity, ground water protection, and climate adaptation.	Conservation Commission, Consultant		X			Town CPA
		<b>Action 2:</b> Assess the need for and create detailed operation and maintenance plans for Town open space and recreational spaces, focusing on safety, lighting, accessibility improvements, and ongoing community engagement.	OSRP Implementation, Town Manager, DPW, School Department, Commission on Disabilities		X			Town CPA
4	<b>Objective 4.2:</b> Explore opportunities to upgrade facilities for improved safety and comfort for active and passive recreation.  <b>Low Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Use developed land management plans to identify opportunities for new lighting, restrooms, benches, trash cans, and shelters to make Town open spaces and recreational spaces more comfortable and accessible.	Conservation Commission, OSRP Implementation, Town Manager, DPW, School Department, Commission on Disabilities			X		Town, CPA, ADA Municipal Improvement Grant
4	<b>Objective 4.3:</b> Foster community stewardship  <b>Medium Priority</b>	<b>Action 1:</b> Revisit and strengthen community involvement through volunteer programs and foster a sense of ownership among residents and businesses by engaging them in upkeep and maintenance decisions and capital plans. <i>Additional Focus see Section 8</i>	Conservation Commission, DPW, OSRP Implementation	X		X		Town
		<b>Action 2:</b> Create an OSRP implementation committee tasked with overseeing the implementation of this Ten-Year Action Plan.	Town Manager, Conservation Commission,		X			Town
		<b>Action 3:</b> Revisit and strengthen land stewardship program as part of the land management plan. <i>Additional Focus see Section 8</i>	Conservation Commission		X			Town

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-20235  
Section 9 – Ten Year Action Plan

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Action Item Initiation Priority				Potential Funding Sources
				Ongoing	Short-term 2025 -2027	Mid-term 2028 - 2030	Long-term 2031 - 2035	
4	<b>Objective 4.4:</b> Identify farmlands of local importance and protect them to limit loss  <b>Low Priority</b>	<b>Action 1:</b> Create a comprehensive list of valuable lands for crop production that do not meet the criteria for prime, unique, or farmland of statewide importance. Include additional factors such as soil quality, historical use for farming, irrigation potential, and proximity to markets or food distribution systems. This inventory will support planning decisions prioritizing agricultural use for local food production over traditional conservation purposes.	Agricultural Commission, OSRP Implementation			X		DAR – Agricultural Restriction Improvement Program, CPA, Private
		<b>Action 2:</b> Prioritize acquisition and farmland preservation to maintain or restart production.	Agricultural Commission, OSRP Implementation			X		CPA
		<b>Action 3:</b> When acquiring farmland or land with agricultural potential, collaborate with farmland trusts, conservation organizations, and local stakeholders to identify strategic opportunities. Work in partnership to ensure the land is preserved for agricultural use, prioritizing projects that align with local food production goals and support sustainable farming practices.	Agricultural Commission				X	CPA Private

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-20235  
Section 9 – Ten Year Action Plan

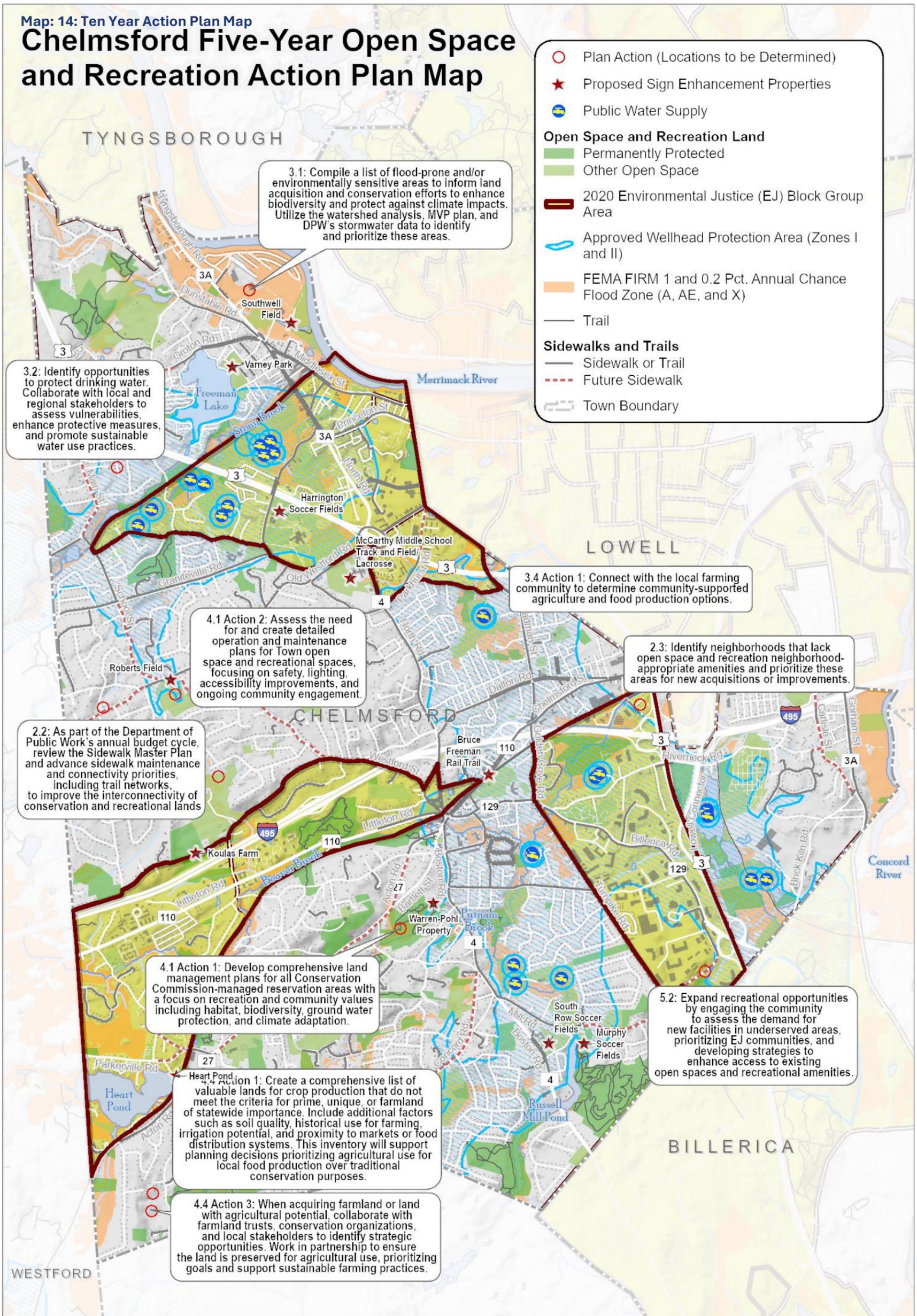
Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Action Item Initiation Priority				Potential Funding Sources
				Ongoing	Short-term 2025 -2027	Mid-term 2028 - 2030	Long-term 2031 - 2035	
<b>Goal 5: Expand Recreational Opportunities and Facilities - Low Priority 5</b>								
5	<b>Objective 5.1:</b> Investigate the development of flexible, multi-use open spaces to serve a broad range of community recreation needs.  <b>Low Priority</b>	<b>Action 1:</b> Increase awareness of how to get permission to use Town open spaces and recreational spaces.	Conservation Commission*, DPW*, School Dept*, Town Manager  *ownership/management dependent	X	X			Town Schools
		<b>Action 2:</b> Assess current and future needs of community facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inventory current capacity: Compile data from surveys and outreach efforts to create an inventory of existing indoor and outdoor activity spaces. Include an assessment of how well these spaces meet the needs of all age groups, from youth to seniors.</li> <li>Identify gaps and opportunities: Evaluate the inventory to determine where additional spaces are needed or where opportunities exist to expand current offerings.</li> <li>Conduct research into feasibility and demand research: Assess the feasibility and community demand for new indoor and outdoor facilities. These facilities should support a variety of activities, such as sports, fitness programs, and community events.</li> </ul>	Town Manager, DPW/facilities, Senior Center, Age-friendly Implementation Committee				X	Town CPA
5	<b>Objective 5.2:</b> Explore cost and potential for developing new playgrounds, amenities, and recreational facilities to meet underserved community and neighborhood needs.  <b>Low Priority</b>	<b>Action:</b> Expand recreational opportunities by engaging the community to assess the demand for new facilities in underserved areas, prioritizing EJ communities, and developing strategies to enhance access to existing open spaces and recreational amenities. ( <i>Map: 12 Chelmsford Open Space and Recreational Lands Equity Map</i> )	Community Development Department, OSRP Implementation Committee, Conservation Commission, DPW, School Dept				X	Town CPA

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-20235  
Section 9 – Ten Year Action Plan

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Action Item Initiation Priority				Potential Funding Sources
				Ongoing	Short-term 2025 -2027	Mid-term 2028 - 2030	Long-term 2031 - 2035	
5	<b>Objective 5.3:</b> Provide additional recreational programming to serve residents of all ages within the community.  <b>Low Priority</b>	<b>Action 1:</b> Enhance coordination of existing staff and committees working to improve recreational opportunities and access in the community for youth to seniors.	Age-friendly Implementation Committee, OSRP Implementation Committee, Managers of Town Recreation Facilities			X		Town
		<b>Action 2:</b> Inventory and explore the need, demand, and cost to create a new staff position to manage and provide recreational programming opportunities.	OSRP Implementation, Town Manager, DPW				X	Town
		<b>Action 3:</b> Work with Chelmsford Community Education to determine current capacity and future strategic expansion opportunities while providing additional community programming.	Town Manager, School Department, Library			X		Town Private

Map: 14: Ten Year Action Plan Map

# Chelmsford Five-Year Open Space and Recreation Action Plan Map



**Sources:**  
 Town of Chelmsford (municipal open space, sidewalks, trails); FEMA (flood hazard zones); MassGIS (shaded relief, 2020 environmental justice block groups); MassGIS/NMCOG (roads, town boundaries); MassDEP (2011 hydrography; water protection zones)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 1/17/2025

Chelmsford  
 MASSACHUSETTS

0 2,000 Feet



**Northern Middlesex Council of Governments**  
 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100  
 Lowell, Massachusetts 01854  
 (978) 454-8021 nmco.org

## **Section 10: Public Comments**

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 10 – Public Comments

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**SELECT BOARD**  
**Town Offices**  
**50 Billerica Road**  
**Chelmsford, MA 01824-2777**  
**(978) 250-5202**

Patricia Wojtas, Chair  
Erin Drew, Vice Chair  
Patrick J. Maloney, Clerk

George R. Dixon, Jr.  
Virginia Crocker Timmins

January 28, 2025

Melissa Cryan  
Grants Manager  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Town of Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Dear Melissa Cryan:

The Town of Chelmsford Select Board reviewed the Draft 2025 Open Space and Recreation Plan and discussed this subject at our meeting on January 27, 2025. The Plan is consistent with the community goals for the future. This thorough document provides the Town with specific guidance for next steps to protect, enhance, and adapt our open space and recreational areas.

This planning process featured a robust public outreach plan that tailored specific events and communication to the environmental justice neighborhoods of Chelmsford and resulted in more diverse public input into the plan. This final plan document is a result of significant work by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) and the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee along with David Koonce, the Town's Conservation Agent, and their collective efforts are very much appreciated.

By undertaking this planning effort, the Town has recognized that protection and stewardship of its conservation and recreation facilities and programs is essential to the quality of life for town residents, visitors, and workers.

Following presentation and discussion, at our meeting of January 27, 2025, the Board voted unanimously to support the future implementation of the Action Plan over the upcoming years.

Sincerely,

Pat Wojtas, Chair  
Chelmsford Select Board

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 10 – Public Comments

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**Chelmsford Planning Board**  
**Town Offices**  
**50 Billerica Road**

Melissa Cryan  
Grants Manager  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

January 22, 2025

Re: Town of Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Dear Ms. Cryan:

The Town of Chelmsford Planning Board reviewed the Draft 2025 Open Space and Recreation Plan and discussed such at their meeting on January 22, 2025. The Plan is consistent with the community goals for the future. This thorough document provides the town with specific guidance for next steps to protect and enhance our open space and recreation areas. This document is a result of significant work by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) and the Open Space and Recreation Committee along with David Koonce the Town Conservation Agent, and their collective efforts are very much appreciated.

By undertaking this planning effort, the Town has recognized that protection and stewardship of its conservation and recreation facilities and programs is essential to the quality of life for town residents, visitors, and workers. Following the presentation and discussion, at its meeting of January 22, 2025, the Board voted to support the future implementation of the Action Plan over the upcoming years.

Sincerely,

*Deirdre Connolly*

Chair- Chelmsford Planning Board

Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 10 – Public Comments

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Jennifer M. Raitt  
Executive Director



Stephen Themelis  
Chair

**Northern Middlesex Council of Governments**

A Multi-Disciplinary Regional Planning Agency Serving:  
Billerica – Chelmsford – Dracut – Dunstable – Lowell – Pepperell – Tewksbury – Tyngsborough – Westford

February 6, 2025

Melissa Cryan, Grant Programs Supervisor  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Review of and Support for the Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2029

Dear Ms. Cryan:

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) had the pleasure of working with the Town of Chelmsford on the preparation and completion of the locally adopted and endorsed *Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2029*. The Plan is comprehensive and meets all requirements based on the Division of Conservation Services' Open Space and Recreation Plan Workbook. Town decision-makers can utilize the plan for specific guidance to preserve, protect, and enhance open space and recreational opportunities. Specifically, local officials can use the plan to address the long-term needs of conservation and recreation facilities, improve communication and educational outreach to residents and businesses on the value of open space and recreation, and integrate green infrastructure into future projects for climate resilience.

NMCOG looks forward to supporting implementation of the plan with Town officials and through other regional planning initiatives. For example, Chelmsford participates in the Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative, a group of 11 municipalities working to comply with MS4 permit requirements and advance green infrastructure. The NMCOG is undertaking a watershed study this spring as a first step in addressing regional flood prevention and stormwater management – vital to open space and recreational assets across the region. NMCOG is also preparing a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan designed to understand opportunities to connect local and regional open space, recreational, and historic/ cultural assets. These plans will help bolster Chelmsford's local efforts implementing their OSRP.

We look forward to your review and approval of the plan. Should you have any questions regarding the plan or require further information, please contact me at [jraitt@nmcog.org](mailto:jraitt@nmcog.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Raitt", is written over a faint, larger version of the signature.

Jennifer Raitt  
Executive Director

cc: Paul E. Cohen, Town Manager  
Evan Belansky, Community Development Director  
David Koonce, Conservation Agent / Planner  
Chelmsford Select Board  
Chelmsford Planning Board  
Chelmsford Conservation Commission

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Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035  
Section 11 – References

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