

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN



FULLER BROOK PARK

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Preservation Master Plan | Executive summary

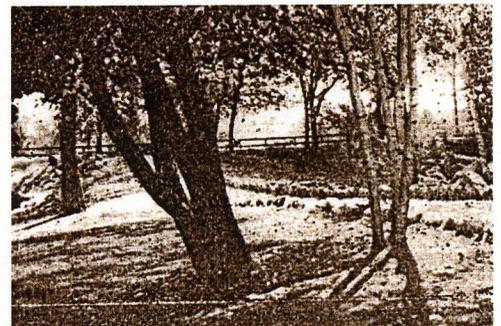
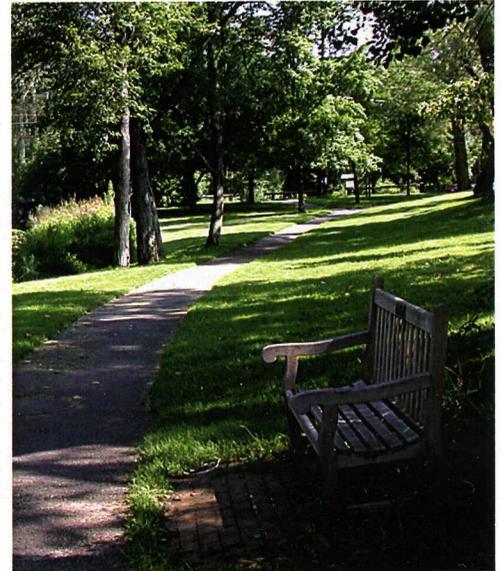
The goal of this Plan is to bring new life to Fuller Brook Park, Wellesley's premier historic open space treasure. A green corridor running parallel to Washington Street, the two-and-a-half mile park is a beautiful, natural oasis, whose hundred-year history has witnessed many changes. Today, the park is a greatly beloved by its many users — *but* its path network is crumbling, its vegetation is in critical condition, its flood control capacity substantially diminished. The brook's banks are eroding and full of invasive plants.

Recognizing this, Wellesley's Natural Resources Commission commissioned a "Preservation Master Plan" — a document that defines the park's historical significance, analyzes its current needs, and identifies the public's concerns about the park and its future.

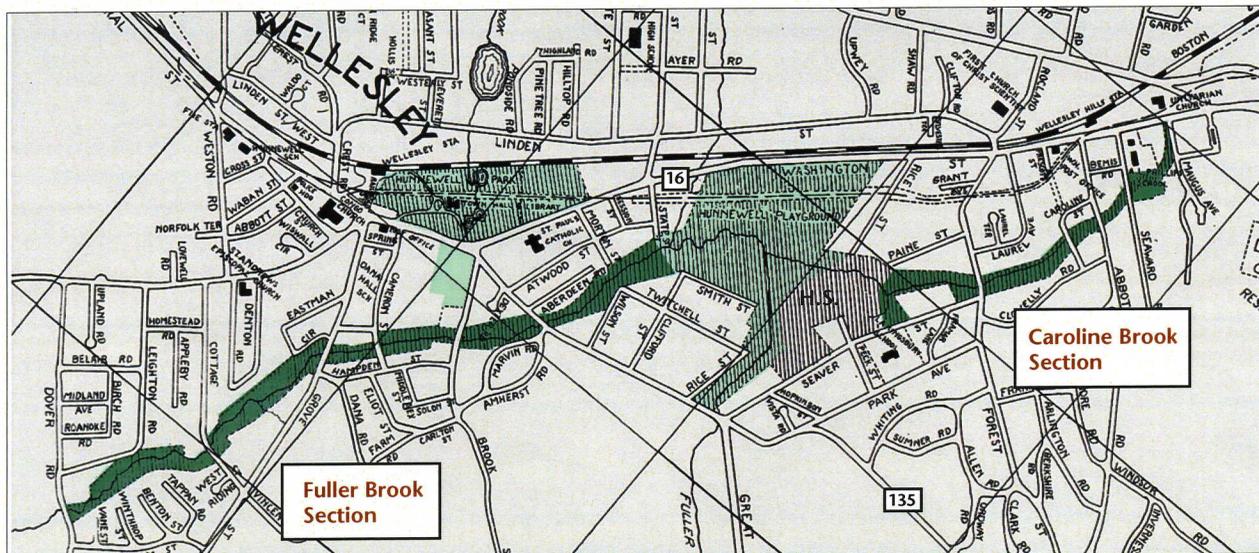
Most importantly, the plan sets forth newly-articulated guiding principles and goals for the park's preservation, management and public use. Within this policy context, a program of improvements is recommended. These improvements are essential to preserve the park from further deterioration and destruction and to make extraordinary repairs that preserve the park's function for its intended use.

A slice of Wellesley's history

Fuller Brook Park had its beginnings in the early days of the community, as Town leaders sought to define the kind of town that Wellesley would be. Following advice received from the prominent landscape architecture firm, Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot, the Park Commission set out to create a series of new parks for the Town, including, in 1899, Fuller Brook Park. *(For details, see Chapter Three / History.)*



Park view in 1934, from the Townsman.



A dual purpose park

From its beginning, the park has had two roles: *drainage* and *parkland*.

Drainage. The streams along which the park was created — Fuller Brook and its tributary Caroline Brook — play a crucial role in flood control by collecting water from storm drains in almost half of the Town's neighborhoods and conveying it safely to Waban Brook and the Charles River.

Parkland. Since its birth in 1899, the park has been maintained as a lovely linear park, beloved by Wellesley's citizens. It is used today for a variety of activities, including: strolling, walking to and from school, cycling, enjoying the scenery, exercise and nature appreciation.



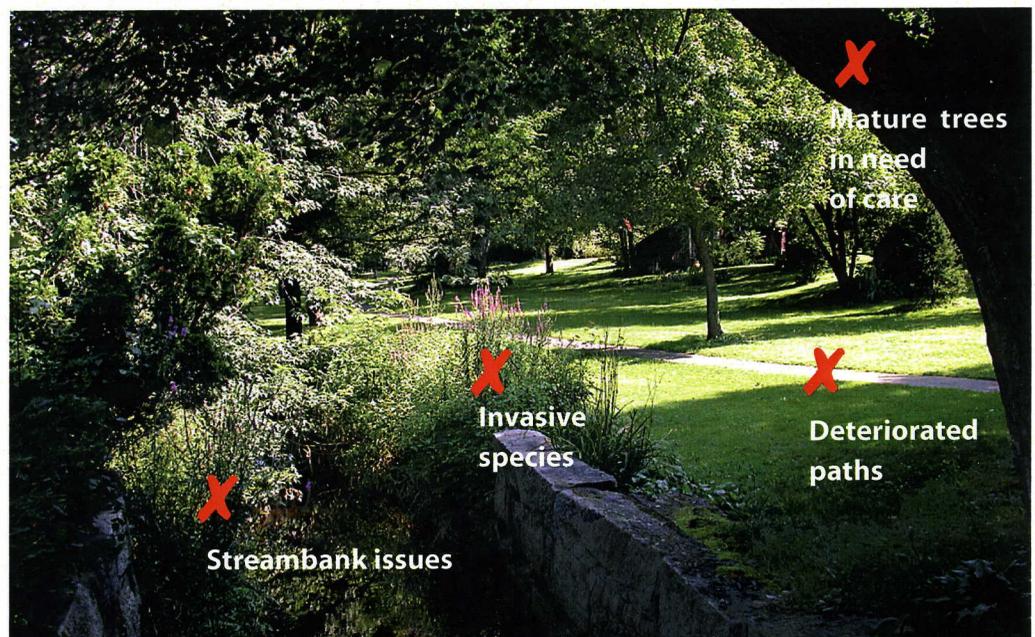
The need for a **preservation master plan**

As Fuller Brook Park moves into its second century, it is clearly showing its age. The path system is greatly deteriorated. The brook and its banks are seriously degraded. Many mature trees are in poor shape, and in many locations, invasive vegetation has taken over.

It was for these reasons that the Natural Resources Commission of Wellesley commissioned a **Preservation Master Plan for Fuller Brook Park**. The purpose of the project was to document the natural, historic and aesthetic values of the park and to make recommendations for preserving and revitalizing it "in the spirit of its original creators."

To carry out the Master Plan project, the Town engaged a consultant team led by the landscape architecture firm, Halvorson Design Partnership, Inc., of Boston, in association with Shary Page Berg, landscape historian, and Tree Specialists, Inc. of Holliston, arborists.

The park planning team coordinated its work with the Town's "Stormwater Management Plan Update," completed by the Department of Public Works consultant. This comprehensive, state-mandated study of Wellesley's drainage systems provided engineering findings regarding stormwater control and culvert conditions, and made recommendations for improvement.



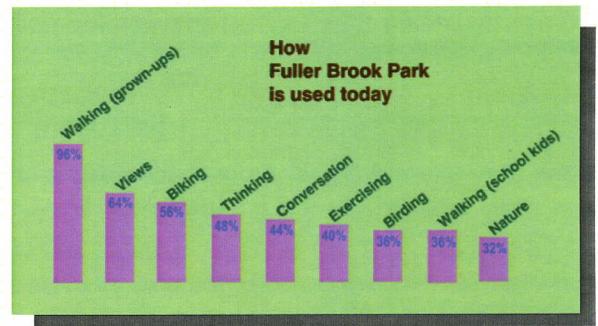
Public participation

An extensive public outreach process conducted by the Natural Resources Commission revealed a large and committed constituency for Fuller Brook Park. (For details, see Chapter Two / Planning Process.)

Public Use Survey. The Commission mailed a questionnaire regarding park use and concerns to residents living within the abutting neighborhoods. It revealed that the park continues to serve primarily as passive, green open space, with a large variety of users and uses. The responses were presented at the second public hearing, and among the attendees, there was consensus that the survey findings reflect current park use.

Public Hearing I. At the first hearing, the planning team presented its historic research findings and a visual character analysis of the park, and a statement of guiding principles and goals was discussed and approved. There was considerable testimony about the ways that people use the park, what they particularly like about it and issues of concern.

Public Hearing II. At the second hearing, a detailed analysis of problems with the path system and vegetation in the park was presented, together with recommended remedial actions. There was active discussion of the recommendations, and the Natural Resources Commission modified the final recommendations in response.



Use analysis of Fuller Brook Park users



Cycling and walking are among the most popular uses of the park.

Guiding principles for the Master Plan

The public participation process led to the adoption of a set of "guiding principles and goals" for preservation, care and management of Fuller Brook Park in the years and decades to come. They define the park in seven ways:

- **A park for the public**
- **A beautiful park**
- **A park that honors history**
- **A window on nature**
- **A park for passive recreation**
- **A park linked to larger systems**
- **A multi-purpose park**

These principles and goals provide the underlying framework for the Preservation Master Plan, and are printed in full on the back of this Summary.

Study findings | What the park needs today

Six major areas of concern exist: deteriorated paths, vegetation, preservation, park identity, maintenance policy and streambeds/streambanks. (For details on needs, see the Plan, Chapter Four/ Existing Conditions. For recommendations, See Chapter Six.)

Streamcourse | existing conditions

Fuller Brook is a heavily altered waterway that has been and continues to be returning to a more natural ecological state. The Brook has functional and aesthetic problems stemming from the major physical alterations made to it in the 1950s and from several decades of deferred maintenance.

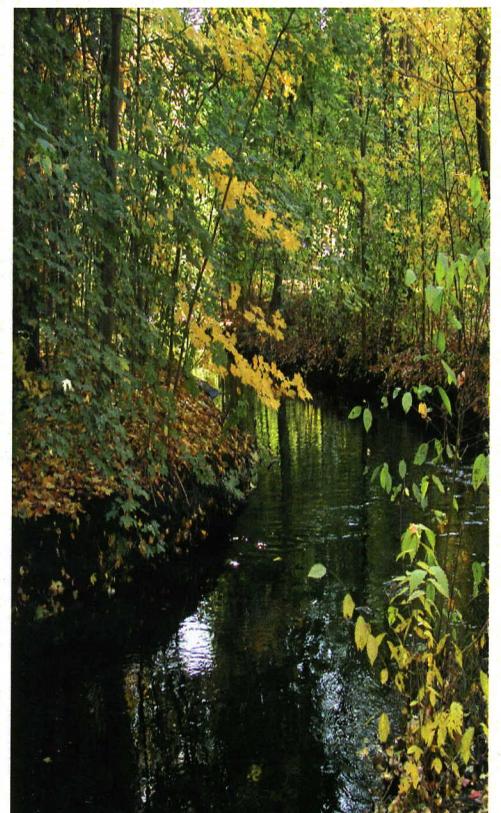
These problems consist primarily of bank erosion and stabilization issues, water channelization, invasive plant infestations and a lack of visual character. These issues are impacting the Brook's ability to treat and convey stormwater, act as a major flood control mechanism, provide viable wildlife habitat and serve as an interesting scenic resource.

Caroline Brook, like Fuller Brook, was heavily altered in the 1950s. Its course was straightened and channel widened. General lack of adequate maintenance, including the removal of large quantities of sediment from the Brook has directly contributed to its functional and aesthetic problems.

Today Caroline Brook suffers from functional and aesthetic problems associated with sedimentation of the stream channel, bank erosion and stabilization issues, invasive plant infestations, a lack of public access and lack of visual character. These issues are impacting Caroline Brook's ability to treat and convey stormwater, act as a major flood control mechanism, provide viable wildlife habitat and serve as an interesting scenic resource.

Streamcourse | Recommendations / proposed solutions

- Stabilize the banks of both brooks;
- Repair and improve stormwater outfalls;
- Dredge accumulated sediment from the length of the watercourse within the Park;
- Remove and manage invasive plants;
- Improve views and access to the Brook where appropriate;
- Construct a boardwalk through the wetland area adjacent to the High School to improve pedestrian access and circulation;
- Educate park users about the brooks via signage and interpretive programs.



Paths | existing conditions

The path system has substantially deteriorated. It exhibits areas of poor drainage (especially after a rain), unstable surfaces, and several areas where universal accessibility is hampered. These problems are illustrated below.

Path drainage issues



Compaction



Path pitched toward higher ground



High water table



Path lower than nearby ground (& compacted)



Runoff concentrated in the wrong place, eroding bridge abutment

Path access issues



Uneven transition



Dips in the path | steep slopes



Grade in excess of 5%



Informal path | no wheelchair access

Path visual issues



Undefined, inconsistent path width



Undefined edges



Paths running close to the park boundary and abutters property.



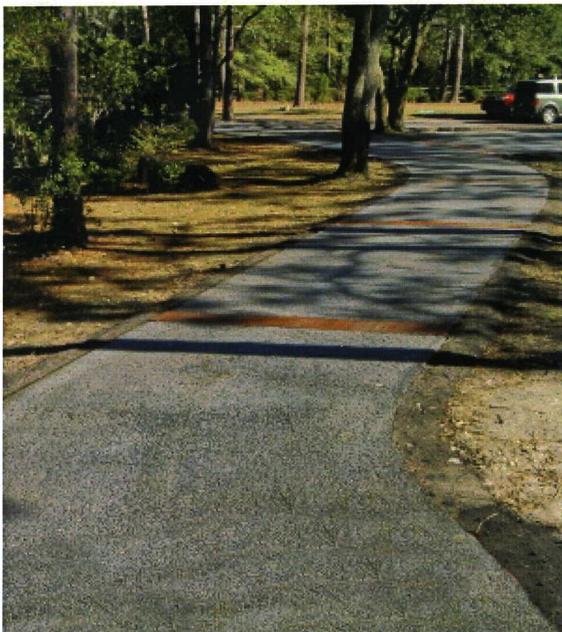
No curb where park meets road



Undefined path edges | dense shade



Undefined entry treatment



Porous asphalt path, Grant's Pass, Oregon

Paths | Recommendations / Proposed Solutions

Reconstruct entire path system to correct drainage problems, provide universal access, ensure year-round use and durable maintenance for years to come:

- Provide 10"- 12" gravel subbase, with trench drains
- Repave with porous asphalt, except in the vicinity of the wetland at the western end of the Caroline Brook section.
- Redesign sections to be less than 5% in grade, and away from the park edge, wherever possible.
- Width: 8'-0" to accommodate cyclists, mothers with strollers and school children safely.

Vegetation | existing conditions

The vegetation issues in Fuller Brook Park include: notable botanical specimens that need maintenance; mature trees, whose structural condition warrants detailed risk analysis; and presence of invasive species that require removal. Of particular concern are the thousands of Norway maple saplings that have sprouted over large areas, and which if not removed soon, will take over as a dense monoculture. These problems are illustrated here.

Specimen tree issues



Tree structural condition / deadwood



Tree decay



Tree cavity



Stream undercutting tree roots

Invasive species issues



Purple loosestrife



Norway maple saplings

Vegetation | Recommendations / Proposed Solutions

The Master Plan identifies more than 90 trees and groups of trees that require further specified assessment and/or treatment. These include:

- Risk analyses by qualified arborists;
- Tree removal and maintenance; planting of woody and herbaceous understory species;
- Treatment and/or removal of invasive species, particularly Norway maples, and replanting with non-invasive species;
- Replacement of turf grass with "wet meadow" species in areas of chronic dampness.

Park identity | existing conditions

One of the challenges at Fuller Brook Park is the lack of consistent identity among its varied landscapes, and its discontinuity at Hunnewell Field. There are limited identification signs in the park. The few that exist are inconsistent visually in identifying the park or portions of it (for example, Maugus Park, Caroline Path, Brook Path, Crosstown Trail, and Phillips Park).

Park identity | Recommendations / proposed solutions

- Install standard "Fuller Brook Park" signs at major entrances
- Install split face granite piers at key intersections/park entries



No park signs



Unmarked vehicular street crossing



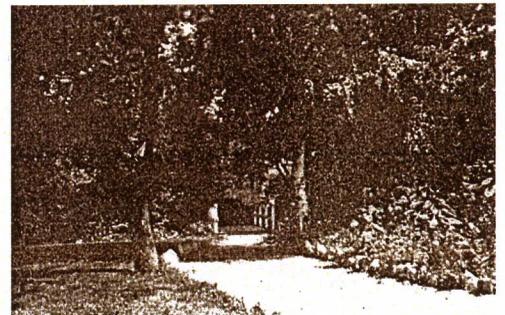
Inconsistent park signs

Preservation | existing conditions

The historic research conducted by the planning team identified several areas of further action for the Town to consider as it works to preserve and enhance the quality of Fuller Brook Park and related historic landscapes.

Preservation | Recommendations / Proposed Solutions

- Work with the Wellesley Historic Commission to conclude consultation with Massachusetts Historical Commission regarding nominating the Park to the National Register.
- Conduct a Cultural Landscape Inventory of other important historic landscapes in Town to enhance their preservation and document context of Fuller Brook.
- Update the 1976 National Register listing for Town Hall to include information about the landscape design of Town Hall Park.



Very few historic images of the park were found: this photo from the 1930s (and two like it) and two from the 1950s. More pictures of the park's early days will expand the understanding of its original design.

Maintenance | policy considerations

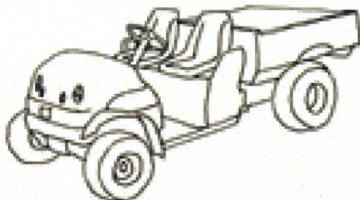
The preservation of Fuller Brook Park as recommended in this Master Plan will remedy many problems that have accumulated over decades. To protect this investment and to insure that the same problems do not begin to recur, the Town's maintenance capabilities for the park need to be enhanced.



Lawn damage from truck tires

Maintenance policy | Recommendations

- Limit maintenance access of large trucks
- To reduce necessity for large truck access, obtain a small "park utility vehicle" capable of transporting materials for path repair, leaf removal, tool transport, etc.
- Because the park stretches for 2-1/2 miles, with many types of landscape character, assign a single staff person for daily park responsibilities, to become familiar with all specialized maintenance needs.



Small "park utility vehicle" for dedicated use in Fuller Brook Park

Stormwater management

The master planning team coordinated with the Wellesley Department of Public Works whose "Stormwater Management Plan Update" project was simultaneously underway. That study's findings regarding culvert maintenance, capital improvement projects and water quality for Fuller and Caroline Brooks within the park complement the master plan.

Stormwater management | Recommendations

Selected recommendations of the Stormwater Management Plan Update for Fuller Brook Park are summarized here. Details may be obtained from Wellesley DPW.

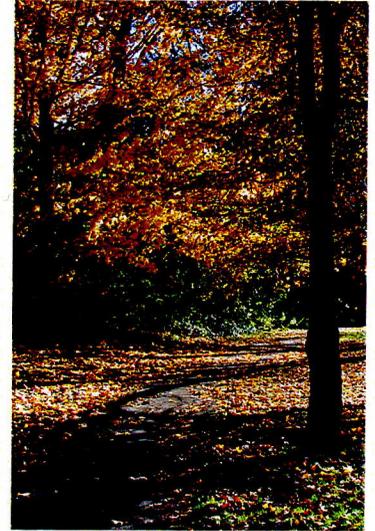
- Three maintenance projects within the park were identified (one "medium" and two "low priority"; two erosion repair and one outfall structure repair.)
- Capital project needs within the park include seven "street drainage pipe replacements," addition of new street catchbasins in two locations, and replacement of one undersized drain line.

Frederick Law Olmsted's vision for Boston's Emerald Necklace in 1870 applies as well to Fuller Brook Park ...

"We want a ground to which people may go after their day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them . . . Practically what we most want is a simple, broad, open space of clean greensward, with sufficient play of surface and a sufficient number of trees about it to supply a variety of light and shade . . . We want a depth of wood enough about it not only for the comfort in hot weather, but to completely shut out the city from our landscapes."

A path to the future

The Preservation Master Plan serves two basic functions: (a) it highlights the major ideas for addressing the problems that have accumulated over many years; and (b) it documents the process and thinking that led to the recommendations. The report may be consulted for specifics about the planning process and evolution of the plan, the historical context of the Fuller Brook landscape, an analysis of the existing site conditions, and the detailed recommendations. Perhaps the most important element of the plan, which underlies all of the recommendations is the importance of balance among the park's functions. This balance will depend most on communication: all activities contemplated within Fuller Brook Park should be considered by all interested parties to ensure that nothing inadvertently causes harm to other aspects of the park's value.



To encourage such communication, and on-going interest in the park's future, the plan recommends creation of a Friends of Fuller Brook Park, that would advocate for the park and work with the town for its success.

Implementation

The recommendations in this plan may be understood as a multi-year effort to bring the park back to its glory and set it on a firm foundation for routine maintenance in the future. A broad spectrum of actors should be involved, including volunteers, Town personnel and outside contractors. The budget for this work is summarized below:

HARD COSTS	Paths	\$ 780,000	
	Invasive vegetation	\$ 115,000	
	Tree work	\$ 25,000	
	Re-planting	\$ 655,000	
	Amenities (benches, interpretive signs)	\$ 37,000	
	Wayfinding (granite piers/crossing markers)	\$ 24,000	
	Boundary markers	\$ 61,000	
	Streamcourse repair	\$ 142,070	
	Sub-total Hard Costs	\$ 1,814,000	
	<i>Contingency</i>	<i>\$ 272,000</i>	
	TOTAL HARD COSTS		\$ 2,086,000
SOFT COSTS	Design	\$ 178,000	
	Arborist treatment plan	\$ 30,000	
	Permitting	\$ 85,000	
	Maintenance Guidelines	\$ 10,000	
	Topo, utility + boundary survey	\$ 75,000	
	Project manager	\$ 250,000	
	Clerk-of-the-works	\$ 60,000	
	Porous pavement vacuum	\$ 75,000	
	Sub-total Soft Costs	\$ 763,000	
	<i>Contingency</i>	<i>\$ 114,000</i>	
	TOTAL SOFT COSTS		\$ 877,000
	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS		\$ 2,963,000

A park for the public

Maximize public awareness and understanding of Fuller Brook Park and ensure quality access

- Maintain and enhance visual and physical connections to the park
- Expand universal accessibility
- Ensure safety and security for park users

A beautiful park

Maintain and enhance the scenic quality of the park

- Improve appearance of degraded areas
- Reduce/ameliorate views that are not in harmony with the park landscape
- Create and maintain a consistent design "palette" for the park

A park that honors its history

Protect and enhance historic features and landscapes within the park

- Preserve the park landscape in the spirit of its original creators
- Preserve historic structures, such as bridges/culverts and flumes
- Provide public information about the park's unique history

A window on nature

Protect and enhance significant natural resources in the park

- Support biological diversity and ecological integrity in the park
- Provide public information about the ecology of the park

A park for passive recreation

Support compatible passive recreation use of the park

- Facilitate a wide variety of park uses that have a low impact on the park's natural, historic & aesthetic resources

A park linked to larger systems

Protect and enhance the function of Fuller Brook Park in its town-wide context

- Support use of the park as a continuous link in the town-wide trail network and a cross-town alternative to Washington Street
- Protect the park's critical role in the town's stormwater drainage system

A multi-purpose park

Carefully balance the park's conservation, recreation, aesthetics, historic preservation and stormwater management purposes

- Consider full range of park goals when making management, improvement and use decisions
- Seek to realize each goal for the park without significant negative impact on the other goals.

