

### APPENDIX 3

## **Wellesley Natural Resources Commission Report on the North 40 "NRC Justification for Town Acquisition and Use of the North 40 Property"** (Originally Presented July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014 to the North 40 Steering Committee)

January 2015 (revised)

To Whom It May Concern,

The NRC has worked with the Wellesley Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department to create a new Open Space Map to more clearly represent the categories of open space in town, and to show how much acreage is associated with each category of open space.

The percentage of open space has changed slightly since our July 2014 report: 62 percent of the open space in Wellesley is not owned by the Town, up from 60 percent in our earlier report. Only 10 percent of our entire town is protected as conservation or parkland under MA Article 97. Article 97 was enacted to protect the right of citizens in Massachusetts to clean air; water; freedom from excessive noise; and natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic qualities of the environment. Any land subject to Article 97 may not be used for other purposes, sold, or removed from protected status without the town undergoing a municipal and state legislative process, which includes approval by two-thirds of the Massachusetts legislature.

It is the mission of the NRC to maintain Wellesley's public open spaces and to acquire additional land when opportunities arise. Given the small fraction of protected open space in town, it is the position of the NRC that the Town of Wellesley needs more protected parkland. The Town's acquisition of the North 40 would provide an extraordinary opportunity to increase the land available for protection.

#### **Here is a brief break down of the land in Town (see diagram below also):**

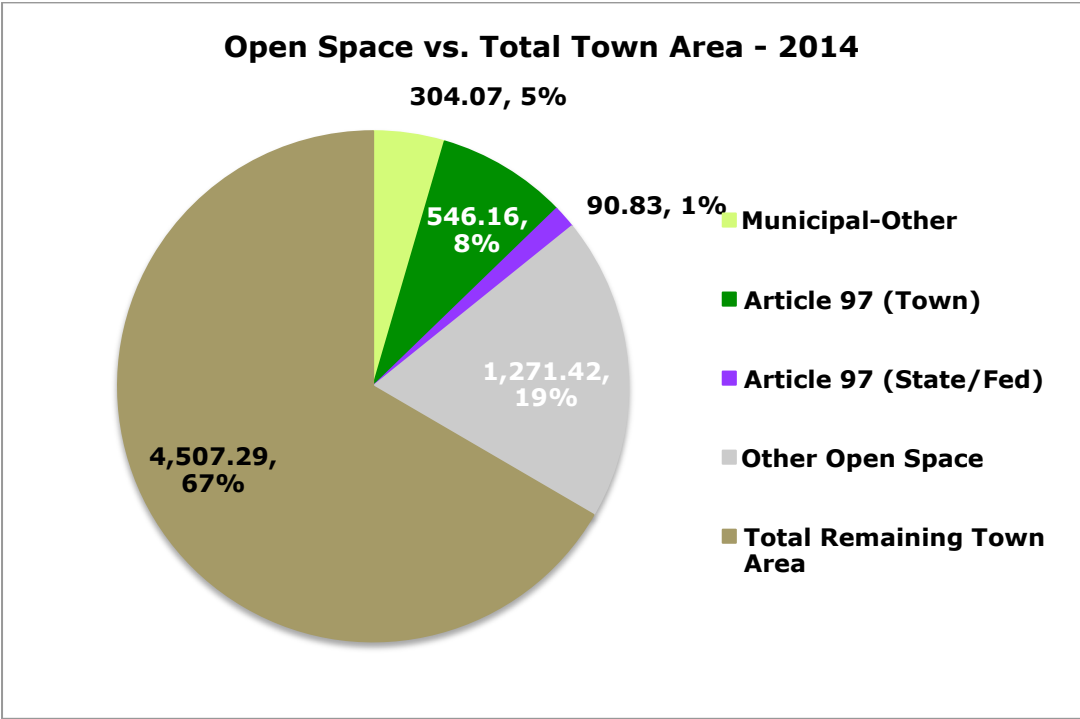
Wellesley is made up of approximately 10.5 square miles or 6,720 acres of land in total. Open space makes up about 33 percent (2212 acres) of that total, and the remaining 67 percent (4507.29 acres) is considered developed land.

The portion of the Town that is open space is comprised of

- 304 acres of town-owned municipal lands;
- 546 acres of town-owned land protected under Article 97;
- 90 acres of state/federal land protected under Article 97;
- 1271 acres of "other open space."

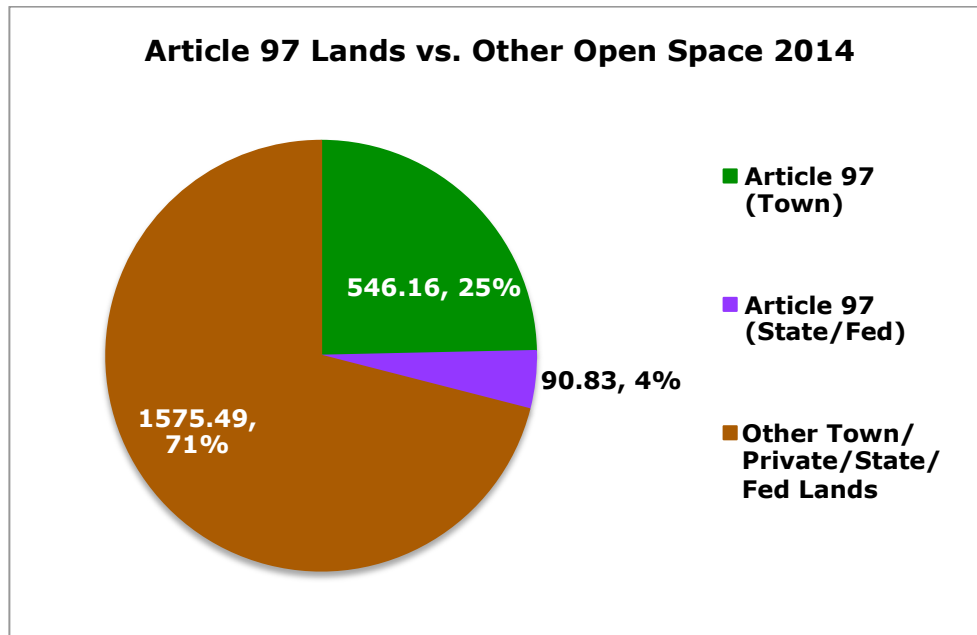
The 1271 acres of "other open space" are not protected under Article 97. This land includes state and federally owned lands such as Mass Bay Community College and other educational institutions; the Sudbury Aqueduct; and the National Guard; cemeteries; land trusts; lands that benefit from Chapter 61 tax relief such as conservation easements; and golf courses.

It is important to note that of the 2212 acres of open space in town, significantly less than half are protected.



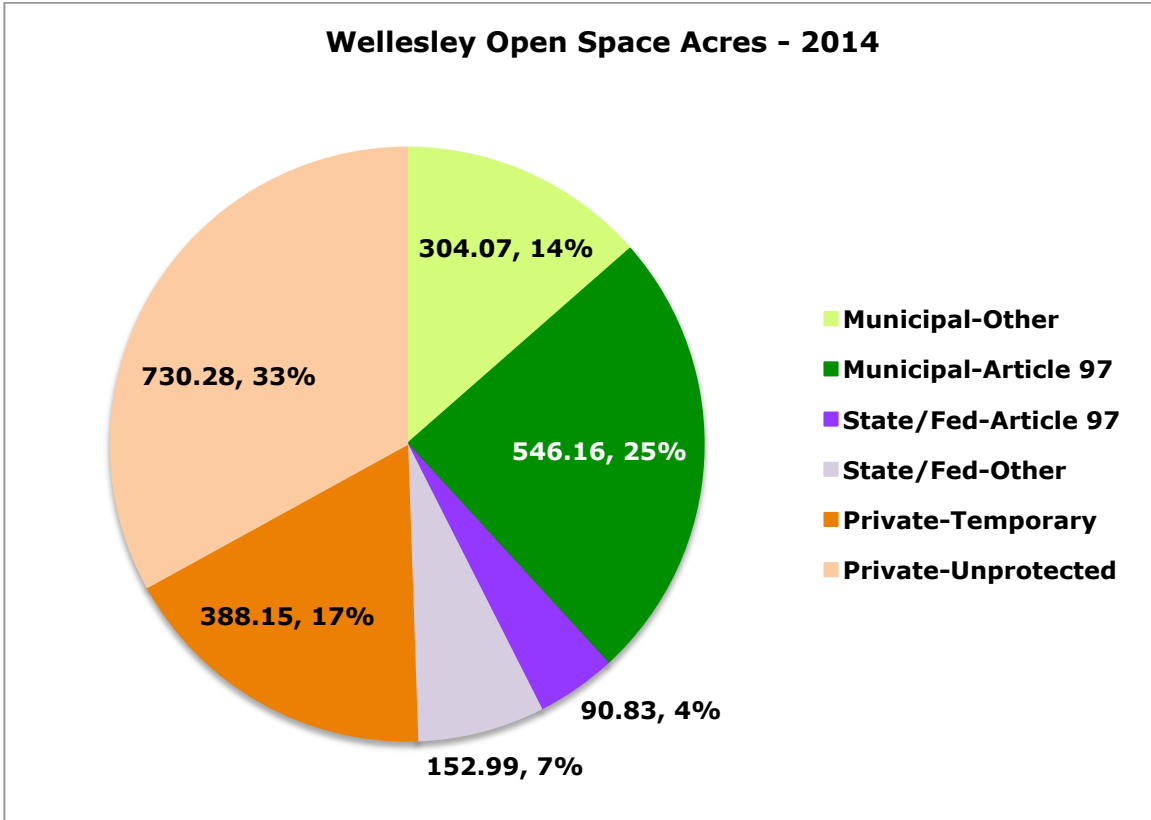
Open Space vs. Total Town Area -2014			
Category	Protection	Acres	Percentage
Town	Municipal-Other	304.07	4.52%
Article 97 Lands	Municipal-Article 97	546.16	8.13%
	State/Fed-Article 97	90.83	1.35%
Other Open Space	State/Fed-Other	1,271.42	19.19%
	Private-Temporary		
	Private-Unprotected		
Total Remaining Town Area		4,507.29	67.07%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6,720</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Only 29 percent—637 acres—of the total open space in Wellesley is protected under Article 97. Of these 637 acres, the Town owns only 546.16 (25 percent); the remaining 90.83 (4 percent) are owned by the state.



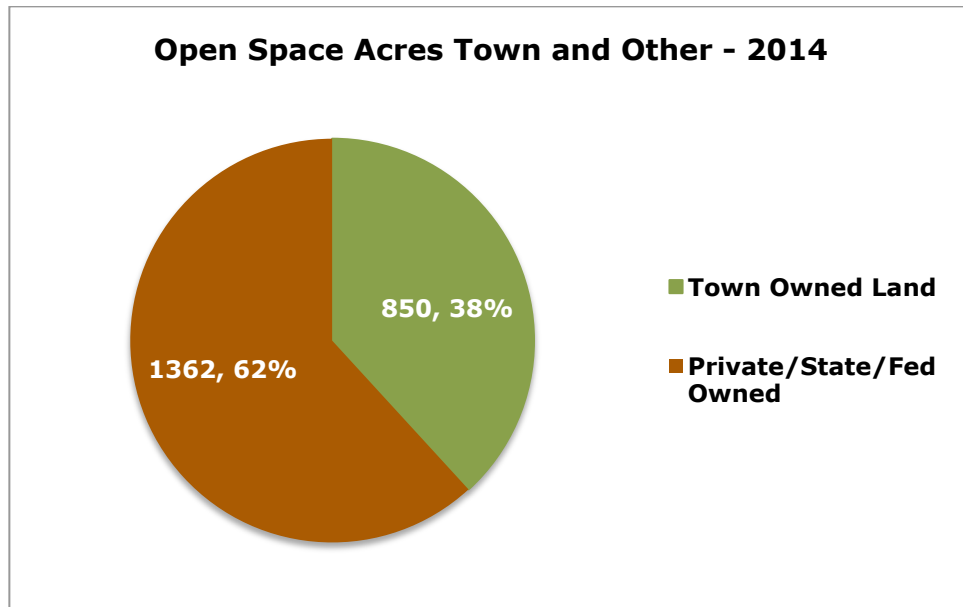
Article 97 Lands vs. Other Open Space -2014				
	Protection	Acres		
Article 97 Lands	Municipal-Article 97	637	546.16	29.00%
	State/Fed-Article 97		90.83	
Other Open Space	Municipal-Other	1,575.49	304.07	71.00%
	State/Fed-Other		152.99	
	Private-Temporary		388.15	
	Private-Unprotected		730.28	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,212.49</b>		<b>100%</b>

Fourteen percent (304 acres) of the total open space in Wellesley is Town-owned municipal land used for schools, playing fields, the Recycle and Disposal Facility, the Morses Pond Waterworks, the Cochituate Aqueduct, etc.



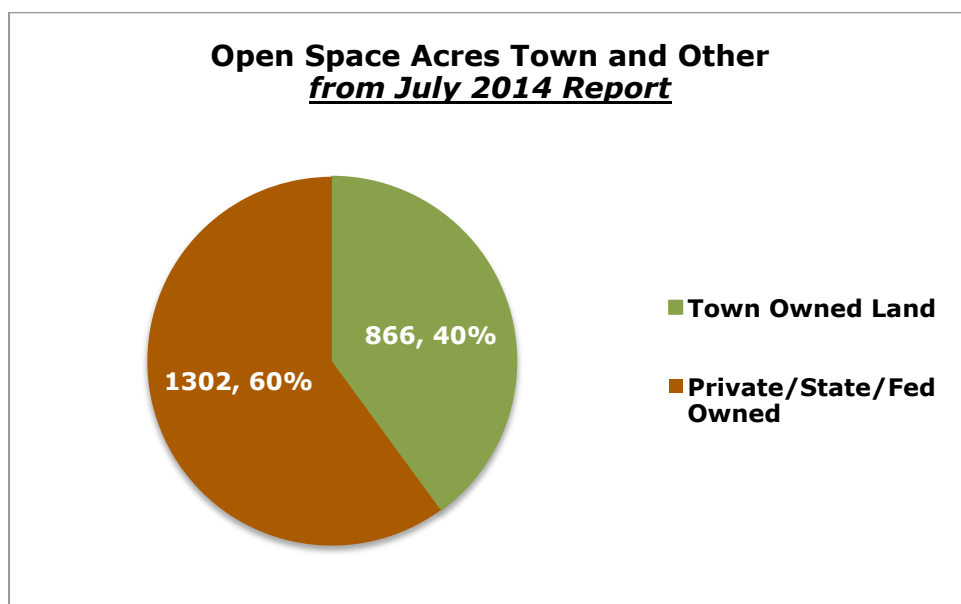
Wellesley Open Space Acres 2014	
Protection	Acres-2014
Municipal-Other	304.07
Municipal-Article 97	546.16
State/Fed-Article 97	90.83
State/Fed-Other	152.99
Private-Temporary	388.15
Private-Unprotected	730.28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,212.47</b>

Wellesley owns only 38 percent of the Town's open space; the remaining 62 percent is held either privately or by State/Federal agencies.

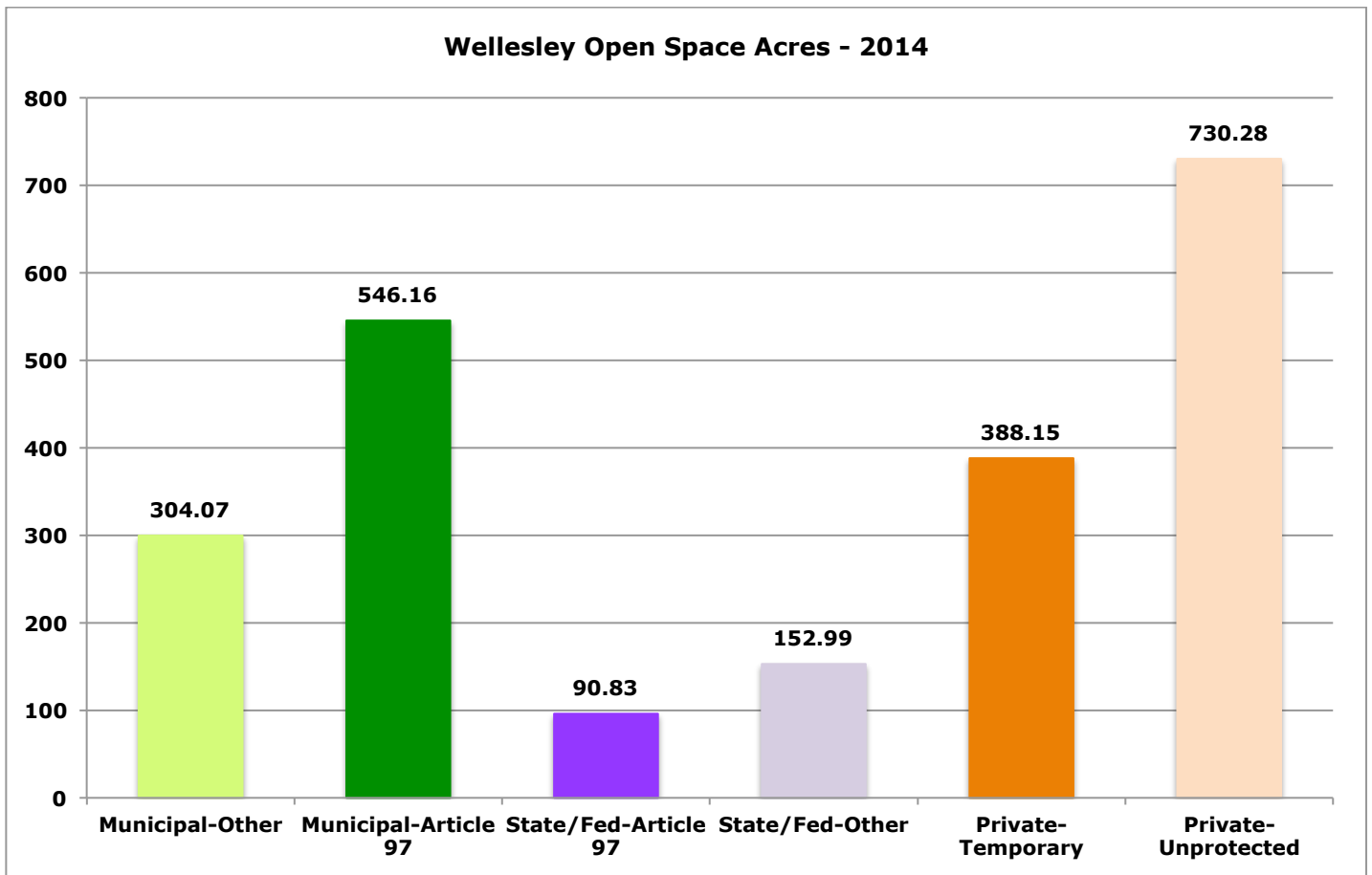


Open Space Acres Town and Other -2014				
	Protection	Acres		
Town Owned	Municipal-Other	850.23	304.07	38.4%
	Municipal-Article 97		546.16	
Non-Town Owned	State/Fed-Article 97	1,362.24	90.83	61.6%
	State/Fed-Other		152.99	
	Private-Temporary		388.15	
	Private-Unprotected		730.28	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,212.47</b>		<b>100%</b>

Finally, this is the breakdown from our original July 2014 report. The numbers were sourced from the 2010 Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreational Interest. For the new report we worked with GIS to come up with the most recent numbers. As you can see, there is a slight discrepancy in acreage between the 2010 and 2014 numbers due to refined calculation methods used since 2010.







## Conclusion

In making a recommendation on the prospective acquisition and use of the North 40, the members of the Natural Resources Commission have carefully considered many factors, including the current percentage of protected open space in Wellesley, the September 30, 2014 BETA Group Traffic Study for the North 40 Steering Committee, the Town's recent purchase of 900 Worcester Street for recreational uses, and the concerns expressed by many members of the community. We have concluded that the North 40 should be preserved as parkland with continued passive recreational uses through

- maintenance of the forested land;
- enhancements to the walking and hiking trails;
- continued use as community gardens;
- the addition of trial and demonstration gardens;
- creation of designated bike paths for recreation and as an alternative transportation route adjacent to Weston Road.

The land meets all *NRC Criteria for Open Space Acquisition* by providing

- wetlands protection,
- water and air quality protection,
- open space for passive recreation,
- unique wildlife habitat,
- links to the Town's trails system,
- open space near shopping and commercial areas,
- natural buffers for residential areas.

The North 40 is

- easily accessible to the community,
- extensively used by residents for a multitude of recreational purposes,
- contiguous to existing open space around Morses Pond (further augmenting its value as a conservation area).

The North 40 currently functions as a true natural resource by providing invaluable benefits to our Town. It is the goal of the NRC to protect this extraordinary asset for the benefit of Wellesley citizens for many generations to come.

In 1975 the Open Space Management Study Committee wrote: *Our community has changed in recent years. Open space has become more valuable than was dreamed of 22 years ago. Demands and pressures on open space have tremendously increased... Open space needs must be met by coordinated policymaking and planning...*

These words ring even truer today.

If additional information is desired, please contact us.

Heidi Kost-Gross, NRC Chair

Raina McManus, NRC Commissioner and Principal Author

Brandon Schmitt, NRC Director

\*Many thanks to Brian DuPont in the GIS Department for his time, skills, and creativity.