

# Drafting a Brochure for a Town to Foster Collective

## Action for The Environment

*Done for the Town of West Bridgewater, MA*

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## **SUMMARY**

In order to foster a sense of community around conservation and preservation in the town of West Bridgewater, MA, I propose the town develop an informational brochure surrounding conservation and sustainability to serve as a resource for residents. The town has a number of conservation efforts in place currently, from their comprehensive town plan known as the Master Plan of 2001 to the Open Space and Recreation Committee.

Although there are a number of efforts in place, the consensus following interviews with residents was that 1) information on conservation and sustainability is difficult to locate and 2) the local environment holds a lot of value, but there is little incentive to be involved. In order to understand the disconnect between information and residential involvement, I reached out to Town Planner Tracy Altrich.

After speaking with Altrich, we agreed that an informational brochure would be best suited to address some of the deterrents to residential engagement in the local environment. As the town has a majority of an older population, and since most town information is posted online or on social media, a segment of the population is not being informed, and written material could help bridge that gap. Through my own findings with residents, the brochure is also anticipated to spread information that wouldn't normally be sought out by residents themselves i.e., Master Plan of 2001.

The brochure aims to address issues and goals associated with the conservation and preservation of the local town. The hopes are that a written form of communication would allow a greater majority of residents to be informed, which would in turn raise engagement and serve as a call to action for specific issues that have been ignored.

## **TOWN INTRODUCTION**

Located only 30 miles south of Boston lies the town of West Bridgewater (WB), Massachusetts. Its township was officially recognized in 1822 following the separation from Bridgewater, however its roots date back to the mid 1600s with settlement by the first colonists (Britannica, T). The town is roughly 15.3 square miles and is home to an estimated 7,625 residents as of July 2022 (U.S. Census Bureau). In addition to the other 2 Bridgewaters, WB

borders the towns of Easton and Raynham, as well as the City of Brockton, and lies at the junction of the busy Routes 24 and 106 (West Bridgewater Town Page).

Despite its close proximity to larger cities and major routes like 106 and 24, the town possesses a rural charm thanks to the numerous farms and open land areas sprawled around the town. Depending on where you are in town, you can find farms of all sizes that sell different types of items, from the jams at Vineyard Farm to the bacon from Daddy's Homegrown.

Open spaces such as War Memorial Park serve as a popular destination for all ages, whether it be to have a picnic, visit a loved one's memorial, or walk their dog. The park also holds a large historical and cultural significance as it once served as an industrial site consisting of several mills and an iron forge. This iron forge was created by Captain John Ames, who is typically credited with the invention of the first iron shovel (National Archives Catalog). Vestiges of this iron forge and the mills that worked alongside it can be seen all throughout the park as the waterpower system weaves with the river's curves.

It wasn't until recently that residents have become more aware of the rise in development around town. With house prices nearing the millions and less land being left untouched, I became interested in what the town is doing to protect our local environment from rampant development, and what can be done to improve the preservation of the environment.

### **CURRENT CONSERVATION EFFORTS**

To begin with, I first learned of the Master Plan developed in 2001. The Master Plan served as a comprehensive town development plan, where the focus was to inspire planned development while protecting the natural resources and environment of the town ("Master Plan 2001"). The Master Plan was created by a board of members from town, as well as multiple private partners, including SEA Consultants, Bluestone Planning Group, and Larry Koff & Associates, and assisted by the Old Colony Planning Council's Open Space Committee. Despite being partially conducted by a group of private partners, there are many similarities between the Master Plan and the community build out analyses that were being done in the early 2000s by the then Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) in coordination with town planning groups (CMRPC). There are 8 sections outlined in the Master Plan, covering all areas of town from housing to transportation. Section 4 covers natural resources and open spaces,

and is set out to address several needs and issues including habitat protection, water resources protection, and open space planning. A number of suggestions were included in section 4, most notably the suggestion to establish a Habitat Resource Protection Overlay, create a clearinghouse, also known as an agency to spread information and educate citizens on open space and conservation issues. After some investigative research, I was able to conclude that the Habitat Resource Protection Overlay was not established, but there has been one established for water resources. There has also been no official creation of a clearinghouse for preservation and conservation information, unless one were to count the Conservation Commission.

Speaking of this, the Conservation Commission (CC) is the second effort I found in town, and has been active since 2014 according to town documents (“Conservation Commission”). The CC is made up of 6 individuals, including the Chairman, Vice Chairman, 2 members, and the 1st alternate. The last position, Conservation Agent, was recently added as a full-time position and has been held by Tim Hay since 2022. Hay also contributes in town as the MS4/Stormwater Management Coordinator. The CC meets on average twice a month and its meetings are open to the public, either in person or through Zoom. The CC’s main goals are “protecting our wetlands and waterways...in balance with planned development” (“Conservation Commission”). They do so by enforcing local wetland bylaws and regulations, regulating development near vulnerable areas, and informing residents of changes to the local environment. The CC also aims to foster a community surrounding the local environment by hosting events i.e., River Walk, in collaboration with other related groups, such as the Open Space and Recreation Committee.

As mentioned, the Open Space and Recreation Committee (OSRC) is directly related to both the Master Plan and CC, and has been active since at least 2011. The OSRC consists of 8 filled positions in addition to 1 vacant position. The most notable job of the OSRC is maintaining compliance with the Open Space and Recreation Plan in order for the town to continue to be eligible for state grants from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) (“Open Space & Recreation”). The main goals of the OSRC are to support the lifestyle of residents through updating and maintaining open spaces around town.

## **CONVERGING ON THE PROBLEM**

Following my initial investigation into the town's conservation efforts, I realized how unaware I was of environmentally-related work in my own hometown. I began to think of how unaware other residents must be, and the problem became clear to me: residents are in need of a form of conservation and sustainability information in order to be interested and involved in this work, and therefore apply pressure to town officials to address older issues and needs. In order to converge on the problem, I decided to gain insight from both Town Planner Tracy Altrich and local residents.

I surveyed 3 local residents of varying ages, some of whom have been living in the town for at least 20-30+ years. I found through my interviews that residents place a large amount of value around the open spaces and natural landscapes of town. One interviewee mentioned their appreciation of the open fields and farms that are scattered throughout town, most notably the open field located closest to their home, serving as a sunset viewing spot on summer nights. Another appreciated War Memorial Park, mainly due to its accessibility, seating areas, and sprawling town river that runs end to end. A resident who grew up in town reminisced on an open field once in town, which is no longer there as it has been replaced by the Tiffany Circle neighborhood.

Of the open spaces mentioned by the interviewees, many were recreational areas as opposed to open spaces. Areas that I expected to be brought up but were not included the WB State Forest and Hockomock Swamp, indicating that residents are uninformed about the open spaces that define the biodiversity of our town.

Altrich was able to provide me with a lot of information surrounding the Master Plan and other efforts in town. Through our conversation, I learned that the town is planning on a revision of the Master Plan, as it does not address new thinking in regards to climate change and the environment. In addition to this, the town has been designated a municipal vulnerability preparedness (MVP) community, and hopes to work with the state soon to conduct an MVP plan. I learned that the town does not receive grant funding often as some of the grants are searching for communities with greater economic disadvantages first. However, a full time grant writer position was hired within the past year, and has already landed the town a grant to construct a fish ladder in the town river.

The town has been prioritizing stormwater management and wetland bylaws in line with the rising development. Altrich has mentioned that the Open Space and Recreation Committee places a strong emphasis on collecting data on open spaces in order to determine which ones are the most valuable to residents and hosting events to connect residents with these open spaces.

When speaking on resident engagement and involvement, the fact that most town information is spread online or on Facebook creates a barrier to full resident engagement. According to Altrich, there is a segment of the population that misses out on certain news and events due to the lack of information spread outside of these platforms.

When looking at both my interviews and conversation with Altrich, as well as reflecting upon my own time researching, I found that the problem was more specific: residents are uninformed and disengaged with the local environment and conservation efforts because the information is difficult to locate and understand. Residents are in need of a one-stop shop for all information on conservation and sustainability, but in a way that relates to them.

## **PROPOSAL**

Under the guidance of Altrich, I developed a brochure to address the lack of information circulating amongst residents. This mock brochure, titled The Wildcat Green Chat, aims to serve as a guideline for the town, and if they are to move forward with the idea, this mockup can serve as the “test run” brochure.

The brochure was designed as a trifold brochure, with the front/back side containing the front cover, a business spotlight on the back, and a “ways to get involved” section that would fold in under the front cover. The business spotlight was selected as the back cover so that the brochures can serve as a small advertisement, and hopefully serve as an incentive for businesses to be highlighted. Businesses’ to be included in the spotlight should be reached out prior to the publishing, and if able to, write part of their description to be included on the brochure to allow them to tell their story.

On the inside would cover various policies, organizations, and programs that residents may not be aware of in town. For the mockup brochure, I based the inside sections on my interviews with residents in order to address their largest pain points. Since none of my interviewees were aware of the Master Plan of 2001, I dedicated a section to it which included a

historical background, issues surrounding it, and its current standings. Since updating the Master Plan is a large priority of the town's future strategic planning, I included a point of contact for residents interested in getting involved in the revitalization.

As mentioned earlier, the town has yet to develop an invasive species management plan, leaving residents fairly uneducated on invasives in the area that may be damaging their gardens, yards, or open spaces. Therefore one of the sections covers 2 invasive species that have been confirmed within our town, the common reed and oriental bittersweet. By offering the names, photos of the invasives, and methods of eradication, residents would be able to take invasive species management into their own hands and not rely on the town to do so.

As my last section, I wanted to include a program I found both interesting and heavily unknown to most residents, including myself. By including a program like Adopt a Catch Basin, which utilizes resident's helping their local neighborhood, and can help further the sense of community behind environmentally related issues such as clogged storm drains following storm surges.

Other ideas for the informational sections could include: waste management, composting instructions, local organizations to join i.e., Old Colony Planning Council, upcoming events or meetings, highlighting open spaces in town, etc.

The brochure should be in paper form in order to serve residents who do not search for information digitally or are involved in social media. However, depending on how large this number is, the brochure could take the form of both an online publication and printed format - having either a system for printed format membership or including them around town in public buildings such as the Town Hall, Council on Aging Center, or Market Basket.

### **ANTICIPATED BENEFITS**

Should the town of West Bridgewater implement an informational brochure on all topics related to conservation and sustainability, benefits are expected to be seen both at the town level and residential level. By having a written form of information, residents of all ages and technology capabilities can be informed without facing barriers to entry. The inclusion of a business spotlight can encourage buying from local businesses, which both stimulates the local

economy and supports sustainability in many ways i.e., cutting out emissions associated with transportation, reducing packaging waste, and supporting the land use of the local environment.

The “ways to get involved” section will hopefully raise resident involvement in committees and/or events and meetings with groups in or around town. To get the best engagement out of this section, initiatives that most residents can partake in should be included - essentially there should be no barriers to participation. If there are barriers to participation i.e., an online-only survey, the town should work towards creating alternative ways to participate, such as an in-person option to complete the survey.

The informational sections included on the inside should increase engagement amongst residents as they continue to learn more. As residents become more informed, a greater interest in local landscapes and an increased use of open spaces should be expected.

## **TIMELINE**

In order for the town to successfully launch The Wildcat Green Chat, there is some work to be done following this initial project:

*Presentation:* Following the creation of my mockup, the Conservation Commission, along with any other interested town hall members, should review my mockup and discuss revisions.

*Find Volunteers:* Once an official template has been finalized by town hall members, a search should be started to develop a team to manage the creation of recurring editions, communication with future businesses to highlight, and publishing of the editions. The search should include general residents, members of local related organizations, and teachers and students involved in the environmental club at the WB Middle-Senior High School. Students could be incentivized by exchanging work for service hours.

*Advertise:* With a team in place, use their skills and connections to spread the word to residents and gauge interest. The team should also speak to local businesses and create a collection of businesses to be highlighted in the future.



*Get the Ball Rolling:* Host a community-wide event to premiere the brochure and raise excitement and engagement. Take feedback into consideration before the official release.

*Launch:* Release the finalized brochure and monitor reader's engagement and feedback for possible improvements. Determine level of interest between online publication and printed format, and methods to how the printed format would get to residents.

## **CONCLUSION**

The town of West Bridgewater has certainly done its part in protecting the natural environment that defines it, however there is much more work to be done, and in order for the work to best serve the community, residents must be involved and informed. With the help of resident interviews and discussion with Altrich, the idea of an informational brochure was developed. The brochure sets out to inform residents, increase engagement amongst residents and local organizations and initiatives, as well as address issues that have been put on the backburner for now. Whether or not the town goes forward with the creation of the brochure, this project should serve as motivation and inspiration for the town to prioritize their conservation efforts as well as involve residents into their plans and considerations.

## APPENDIX

### A.

#### Interview 1: Morgan Duquette

- a. List as many open spaces and recreational areas in town as possible off the top of your head
  - i. West Meadows
  - ii. War Memorial Park
  - iii. Town River
  - iv. River Street Farms
  - v. Open field on East Street
- b. How aware are you of conservation efforts in town? Can you name any?
  - i. Very little and no
- c. How much do you value natural landscapes in town?
  - i. A lot. Although I don't use them as much as I wish. I love seeing and passing the farms and open land.
- d. What is your favorite/most cherished open space/natural landscape in town?
  - i. The farms on River Street because I love seeing the cows grazing
- e. Do you believe residents could benefit from an informational brochure on the local environment and conservation?
  - i. Yes

#### Interview 2: Brooke Winkler

- a. List as many open spaces and recreational areas in town as possible off the top of your head
  - i. West Meadows
  - ii. War Memorial Park
  - iii. Howard School playground
  - iv. Rose L Macdonald playground and trail
  - v. Rail trail
- b. How aware are you of conservation efforts in town? Can you name any?
  - i. Not at all and unfortunately I can not name any
- c. How much do you value natural landscapes in town?

- i. Very much - however I think people only have War Memorial Park to go to since its accessible, has parking, and has seating and tables
- d. What is your favorite/most cherished open space/natural landscape in town?
  - i. War Memorial Park
- e. Do you believe residents could benefit from an informational brochure on the local environment and conservation?
  - i. Yes - having them around the library, dentist offices and other buildings people visit a lot could be useful, since young kids won't be as interested someone should host story times relating to environmental topics at the library and parents would be involved too

Survey 3: Susan Bates

- a. List as many open spaces and recreational areas in town as possible off the top of your head.
  - i. Town park (War Memorial), West Meadows, Rail Trail
- b. How aware are you of conservation efforts in town? Can you name any?
  - i. I don't know of any. Paul may. I do know when they wanted to build on Scotland street, people were talking about turtles
- c. How much do you value natural landscapes in town?
  - i. Very much!!! I grew up here so the majority of the town was open space. I spent most of my days in the field and woods where Tiffany circle<sup>1</sup> is now.
- d. What is your favorite/most cherished open space/natural landscape in town?
  - i. I suppose the only true "open" space Is the town park.
- e. Do you believe residents could benefit from an informational brochure on the local environment and conservation?
  - i. Yes I do. I think people are tired of all the building and tearing down of trees. So many people are talking about coyotes and bears, but where do they expect those animals to live if we keep tearing apart their homes?

**B.**

Conversation with Tracy Altrich:

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<sup>1</sup> A local neighborhood in the same area as West Meadows and the Rail Trail.

**I:** I am focused on the Master Plan and how effective it is, however I have been looking into conservation efforts now...I know the town of Bridgewater participated in the Municipal Vulnerability Plan...I wanted to know if WB looked into participating in the MVP?

**T:** WB is currently designated as a municipal vulnerable preparedness community...so the same program...and the MVP is in place...when we seek grant opportunities they typically look into how we have tried to demonstrate the town is committed to the related grant...we just hired a grant writer over the past year so we have looked into a lot more grants...however as a community we do not have the economic disadvantaged groups that the economic grants seem to seek out...we also look at economic components of how a community can sustain itself...

**I:** How has the Master Plan been utilized and any successes you have had?

**T:** There are certain things such as zoning bylaws and how they have changed over the past 20 years...a lot of concepts in the Master Plan and how to implement them come with regulation changes so we have been updating it accordingly...we have made the Conservation Agent position full time...a lot of effort to create stormwater regulation and wetland bylaws with development around town...one of the goals in the zoning bylaws was to update the districts which we have been refining the water resource protection district...the grant program has been focused on finding environmental opportunities...municipal aggregation program was introduced and offers a green energy components...

**I:** Why did the town choose to conduct the Master Plan with private partners as opposed to the EOEA?

**T:** I know today there are grants available for helping develop a Master Plan...that's the way it happens now but I can't speak of the past...a lot of the members of the Master Plan Committee are still residents in town and officials...

**I:** In what ways has the town tried to educate the residents on the "meandering greenbelt" from the Master Plan?

**T:** If you're speaking of open spaces in general, the Open Space and Recreation Committee is really active and looking to collect data on what residents are using in terms of open

space...looking into what is considered open space whether it's protected or not...priority on open spaces that are valuable to residents...

**I:** I know that I wasn't aware of these issues and policies and neither were my parents, would you suggest some type of informational brochure to inform residents about related information?

**T:** I think that would hit a segment of the population that isn't on social media or tech savvy...a lot of our information is spread through the town website or Facebook...the written would serve this portion of the community...it could be combined with the newsletter West Bridgewater Living which recently has been published...because its new and people get it and its different...can be done cost effectively this way...

**I:** Did I miss anything that you would like to mention?

**T:** I think Open Space and Recreation does them but community events can be used to distribute material and used as a mechanism of getting it out...we were recently awarded grant funding for improving a fish ladder in War Memorial Park...we will be establishing a nature life fishway...

## **C.**

Brochure Mockup

## Ways to Get Involved

### OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN

The Old Colony Planning Council is looking for resident's input on the Open Space & Recreation (OSR) Plan in town! Visit [oldcolonyplanning.org/sustainability](http://oldcolonyplanning.org/sustainability) to take the survey. For further interests or concerns, contact the OSR Commission.



Are you an avid fisher? Have a love for fish? Even if you don't, you should consider joining the Town River Fisheries Committee (TRFC), comprised of volunteers from both West Bridgewater and Bridgewater. The TRFC concerns itself with restoring and managing select fish populations in the Town River and its tributaries. Keep an eye on the town calendar to see when the next TRFC meeting is!

## Business Spotlight

### DADDY'S HOME GROWN

201 Howard Street, West Bridgewater

Open Thursday and Friday 4:00pm-6:00pm  
Saturday and Sunday 8:00am-2:00pm



Run by Emily Anderson, Daddy's Homegrown is a local farm built on a love for agriculture and ethically raised animals. Daddy's Homegrown sells beef, pork, and chicken that are comparable to current grocery store prices, with bacon being \$8.50/lb and eggs being \$3.50/dozen. Buying locally raised animal products is good for both your community and the environment, as your dollars are being spent locally rather than with large corporations and less CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted. Feel good about what you eat and consider Daddy's Homegrown for your select animal products!

## The Wildcat Green Chat



Discover a more sustainable tomorrow with The Wildcat Green Chat!

A one stop shop for all information on sustainability and conservation in town

Tim Hay - Conservation Agent  
508-894-1200 ext. 7112  
[thay@wbridgewater.com](mailto:thay@wbridgewater.com)

## Master Plan of 2001

Developed in October of 2001, the West Bridgewater Master Plan (MP) was created with the intentions of addressing many areas of the town and the future development of them. The MP of 2001 is still in effect today, and covers areas such as land use, open space, and natural & recreation. Although the town still uses the MP as a guide, it lacks newer age thinking when it comes to the natural environment and resources.

### Town Center/Greenbelt Plan

LARRY KOFF & ASSOCIATES  
Community Planning

SEA CONSULTANTS  
Engineering and Transportation

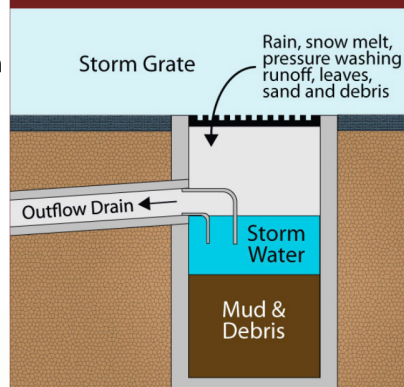
MARK BOBROWSKI, ESQUIRE  
Zoning

BLUESTONE PLANNING GROUP  
Design

Luckily, updating the MP is currently the top priority in the town's future strategic planning. You can contact Mallory Aronstein to volunteer to work on this goal, or any other goals!

## Adopt a Catch Basin

Catch basins, typically known as storm drains, collect rainwater runoff from streets and parking lots. In WB, there are over 1,000 catch basins scattered around.

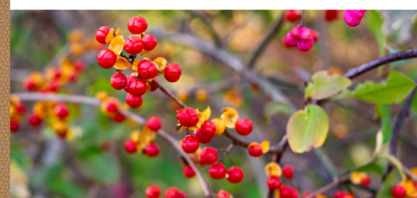


Although these basins are cleaned yearly, the DPW is unable to clean each one prior to and after storms. You can adopt a catch basin near you that lends you the responsibility of maintaining it. By adopting a catch basin, you can help your community decrease flooding and improve water quality.

## Invasive Species



Typically confused for other species, Common Reeds are an invasive species to the area and are present around town. If you see any on your property either - dig them up or apply a herbicide. Any dug up reeds can be composted!



The Oriental Bittersweet has become an issue in both the US and MA as it pushes out the native American Bittersweet through competition and crossbreeding. All bittersweet subtypes are poisonous to humans, and therefore residents should be able to identify these fruits. Be aware of this species and if seen, cut the base of the vine(s) and continue to treat any regrowth.

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