

The Hanover Greenway Project

Initial Plan of the Hanover Open Space Committee

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1 Goal

This project is undertaken to establish a continuous walking trail which maximizes recreation potential, public access and linkage of existing town land.

2 Overview

Would you enjoy a safe bikepath route along the old railroad bed from Pembroke to Rockland with a stop for a picnic lunch along the water in Luddam's Ford park? Can you picture relaxing with a leisurely walk from the High School to Ellis field along a secluded woodlands trail? Would you appreciate a continuous path that extended more than ten miles, winding through the most beautiful open space in town. While this might seem unattainable, it is actually already in the works.

The central charm of Hanover has always come from its fairly rural character. However, this comfortable style, coupled with ease of access to Boston, has been the major attraction that led to heavy development. As Hanover residents are showing renewed commitment to the preservation of the town's image, the Open Space Committee is leading efforts to protect new property and improve recreational access to existing conservation land. With the support of the residents, far more through volunteerism than dollars, the Hanover Greenway project can be a reality.

We are quite fortunate to be the beneficiaries of strong land preservation efforts by numerous townspeople in the 1960s and 1970s. Through purchases and some generous donations, the town amassed more than 900 acres of land that is permanently protected as conservation property. The town also has many large parcels that are owned by the School Department, Water Department and Parks and Recreation Department. This land totals more than 700 acres. With an additional 140 acres of property held by the private land trusts of the South Shore Natural Science Center and the Wildlands Trust, a total of 1760 acres of land is available for public recreation.

However, most of these properties stand alone, unlinked, their potential not fully realized. The Hanover Greenway Project can transform these isolated oases into a network of nature trails. When completed, the greenway will be a showpiece that preserves our rural character and joins our community.

The Hanover Greenway Project seeks to link numerous town, state and privately owned properties throughout Hanover to create a long, continuous walking trail. While the town has experienced significant development, strong potential for such a trail still exists. This plan sets forth a prioritized task list including studies, acquisitions, conservation restrictions, trail improvement, trail cutting and bridge building which can ultimately lead

to a Hanover Greenway. Where possible, the plan seeks to link existing town land and to maximize the natural setting of the trail. In limited areas, where other options are not available, the trail may run briefly along low traffic public roads. In all cases, it will be the active involvement of individuals and civic organizations that will be necessary to create our greenway.

The plan is presented in three phases to permit attainable goal setting and valuable interim progress milestones. Various spur linkages will also be pursued as part of this work. The main phases include:

- Phase I: Linking the Hanover High School to Ellis Field
- Phase II: Linking Ellis Field to Winter Street through Factory Pond
- Phase III: Complete Linkage from Hanover High School to Luddam's Ford

The complete proposed greenway is shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

3 Overall Planning Approach

The Greenway phases will generally be pursued sequentially, as discussed. However, it should be recognized that the status of properties important to later phases should be tracked to ensure that opportunities for their acquisition are not missed. It should further be noted that this initial plan makes many assumptions, which should be viewed as preliminary as discussed in more detail in Section 5.

Several general efforts are required to realize this plan, maximize community involvement and minimize adverse impacts and cost. Specific action items will include the following:

- Property and trail mapping – Building on the new open space map developed by the Conservation Commission, all existing and new trails and properties should be incorporated to assist public access.
- Trail Guides – Beyond the maps, written trail guides which discuss access, trail lengths, points of interest and local history should be created. Local naturalists and civic organizations should be involved to provide the most informative and interesting guides.
- Access Improvement – The properties making up the Greenway should be studied to assess and improve access. Most importantly, a strong effort is required to ensure safe parking and handicapped access.
- Public participation/outreach - A plan should be developed which includes identification of civic organizations that can assist and action items which will require coordination of multiple groups and/or departments. This plan should include promotion and publicizing of Greenway benefits so as to increase community participation in its construction.
- Grant opportunities – Funding opportunities should be researched for any and all action items. Opportunities other than acquisition, such as easements and conservation restrictions, must also be considered.

This plan is intended as a working document which will evolve as tasks are completed and additional information becomes available.



Figure 1: Hanover Greenway Project



Figure 2: Hanover Greenway Project (cont.)

4 Greenway Phases

4.1 Phase I: Linking the Hanover High School to Ellis Field

The first phase of the greenway project is to provide a continuous walking trail from Hanover High School to Ellis Field. This trail is outlined in Figure 3, with the main trail shown in the bold line and feeder trails shown in dashed lines. The total length of this proposed trail will be approximately 2.5 miles.

The trail will begin at the high school, where abundant parking is available. Numerous trails are already in place throughout this large property which includes the Hanover High School, Cedar Elementary School, Hanover Middle School and the Wildlands Trust's Melzer Hatch Reservation. Further, potential exists to work with the Wildlands Trust to extend this trail through the reservation and out to the new Gilman Farm development. This could potentially yield a connection to the large Hell Swamp property. It is recommended that the Open Space committee solicit mapping of these trails by a civic organization in town.

The main trail will run from the high school along the existing cross country trails to the middle school. Continuing down the driveway of the middle school, the route will cross Whiting Street and proceed either into the newly acquired Colby conservation property located between #30 and #88 Whiting Street or along the conservation land access to the south of #30 Whiting St. An existing trail will be improved running roughly along the Drinkwater River and then turning to join the main trail of the large Colby-Phillips conservation land. Most of this beautiful trail already exists but is used minimally, if at all.

The Colby-Phillips parcel is abutted to the east by the large Melody Woods property owned by the South Shore Natural Science Center. It is important to coordinate the trail networks in the two properties for mutual benefit. Further, as the Science Center is a prominent local environmental organization, their input will be solicited on the proper location of new trails to minimize impact and maximize recreation and education potential.

An important feeder trail could join this new trail. Three lots on Schoolhouse Lane are currently listed as unbuildable. These lots all abut the Colby-Phillips conservation property. A trail through any part of these lots would connect the Anderson Farm development to the Hanover Greenway Project.

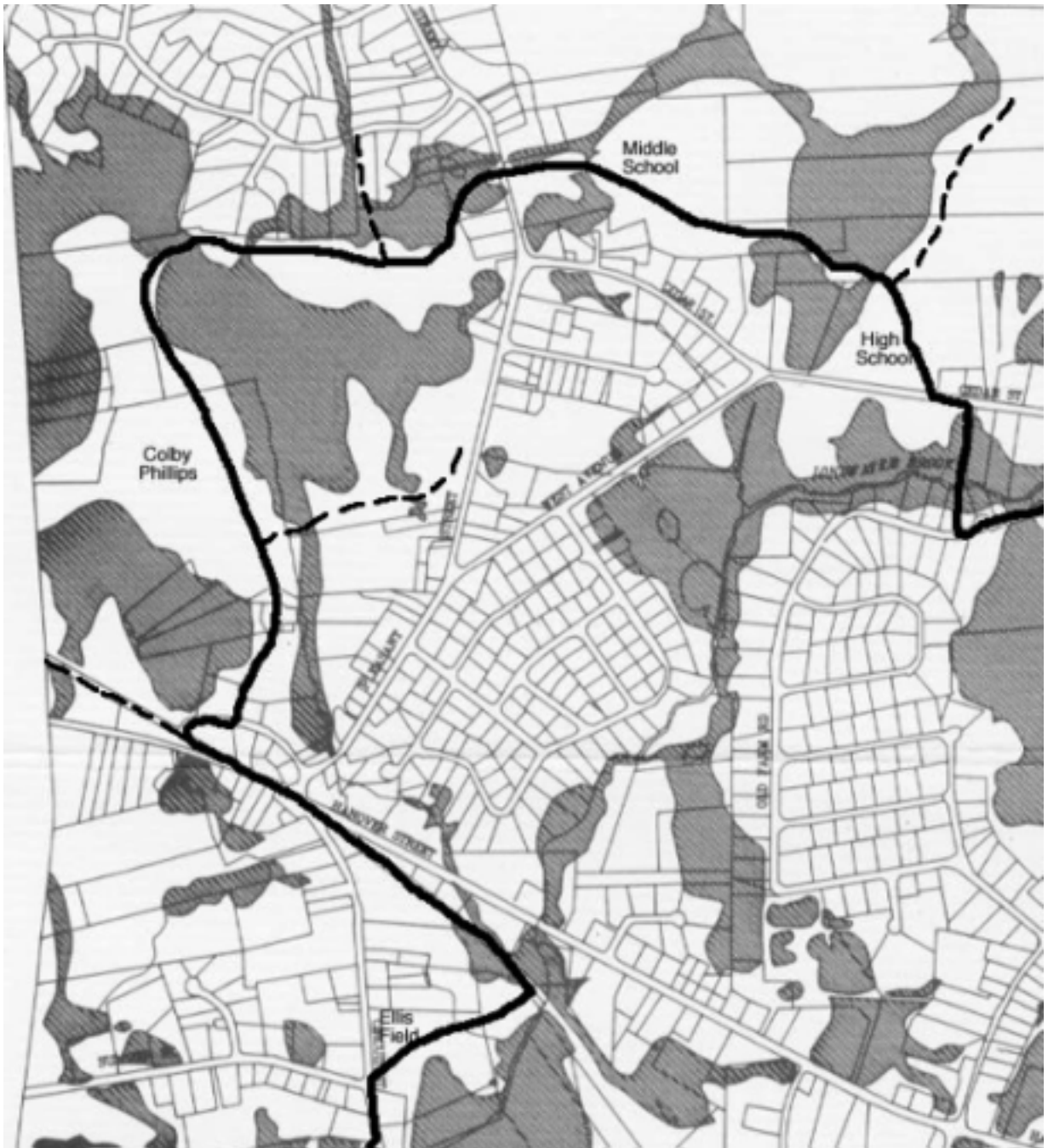


Figure 3: Phase I: Hanover High School to Ellis Field

The key impediment to a continuous trail in this area is Cushing Brook. From early summer through the fall in most years, the stream can be crossed on stepping stones by agile walkers. However, this crossing is difficult in higher water and wholly inadequate for full public access. The largest project of this phase will be the design and construction of a footbridge across this stream. A study should soon be undertaken to evaluate the bridge size and location and to determine the steps necessary to receive approval from the Conservation Commission and other required town boards.

After crossing Cushing Brook, the main trail of the Colby-Phillips conservation property is a high quality cart path extending out to the dead end section of Circuit Street, ending as a dirt driveway between #959 and #969. Turning right on Circuit Street, a short walk is required to reach the cul-de-sac. At this point, the trail will continue east along the right-of-way (ROW) for the former Hanover Branch Railroad. This ROW has high potential for eventual conversion to a bikepath into Rockland and partially into Hanover.

The ROW soon crosses the intersection of Route 139 and Circuit Street and proceeds into the industrial park on Mayflower Drive off of Circuit Street. Prior to this industrial park, the tracks cross a bridge over the Drinkwater River which opens into a small down stream pond. About fifty feet before this bridge, a path leaves the tracks to the right, passing through property recently purchased by Graphic Developments, Inc. from Clyco Realty Corporation. This path leads into the rear of the Ellis Field property providing public access and parking at this end of the Phase I trail.

Action Items:

1. Create a map of the existing trails on the schools and Melzer Hatch properties.
2. Plan and re-establish the trail into the Colby-Phillips property across from the middle school.
3. Plan, design and construct a foot bridge over Cushing Brook to join the newly re-established trail to the main trail of the Colby-Phillips property.
4. Work with the South Shore Natural Science Center to join trails on their property abutting Colby-Phillips.
5. Work with the owners of the unbuildable lots on Schoolhouse Lane to establish a feeder trail either through land acquisition or conservation restriction.
6. Acquire the former Hanover Branch Railroad right-of-way from the Rockland line to Mayflower Drive from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.
7. Clean up the right-of-way and facilitate access from the dead end section of Circuit Street.
8. Acquire or obtain a conservation restriction or easement on all or part of the intervening property between the railroad and the rear of Ellis Field from Graphic Developments, Inc.
9. Provide Greenway markers along the complete trail.

10. Provide maps of the complete trail at the Town Hall, Curtis Library and on the Hanovermass.com website.

4.2 Phase II: Linking Ellis Field to Winter Street through Factory Pond

The Summer Street conservation property is a 102 acre parcel bordered by Summer and Circuit Streets and the Rockland town line. It encompasses significant wetlands including the Drinkwater River from Circuit Street to Forge Pond, French's Stream from Summer Street to the Drinkwater River, the northern portion of Forge Pond and a substantial amount of swamp. The Phase I trail, which ends at Ellis field, could be continued into this property by crossing Circuit Street and entering the land on either side of #676 Circuit Street or, less desirably, by proceeding along Summer Street and entering nearer the Rockland town line. The potential Phase II trail is shown in Figure 4. It will extend the Phase I trail to result in a continuous greenway approximately 4.3 miles long with an additional mile of trails in the Factory Pond property.

Given the amount of wetlands in this property, a fairly comprehensive walking survey is required to identify the most desirable trail locations. It is most likely that the trail will pass to the right of #676 Circuit Street, following the best land. At some point, a footbridge over French's stream will be required to reach the back portion of the land. Elevated walkways may also be necessary to traverse swampland in some areas. Ideally, the trail will track at or near the southwestern bank of Forge Pond.

The location of a continuous trail depends largely on the long term status of the Cervelli farm property on King Street. This property is, without exception, the premium piece of large open space remaining in the town of Hanover. Located on the west side of King Street, it encompasses most of the southern shore of Forge Pond. Approximately half of this nearly 70 acre property is high quality open farmland which would provide ample active recreation space. The back area is ideal for walking trails and would provide the connection between several large conservation properties creating nearly 300 acres of contiguous, town-owned open space.

If the Cervelli property is obtained by the town, it would, among many other passive and active recreation uses, permit the trail to continue along the southern bank of Forge Pond and reach King Street along the existing town owned access to the Clark property. Town ownership of the Cervelli property would permit a park along the pond, ample sports fields, and use of the many cart paths which traverse the rear of the property and extend into open space in Rockland. A feeder trail may also be possible through conservation land out to Clark Circle. Public parking would obviously be made available at such a site. If the town is unable to obtain the entire Cervelli property, it would still be possible to purchase a section of the back land to permit a trail connecting the Summer Street and Clark properties.

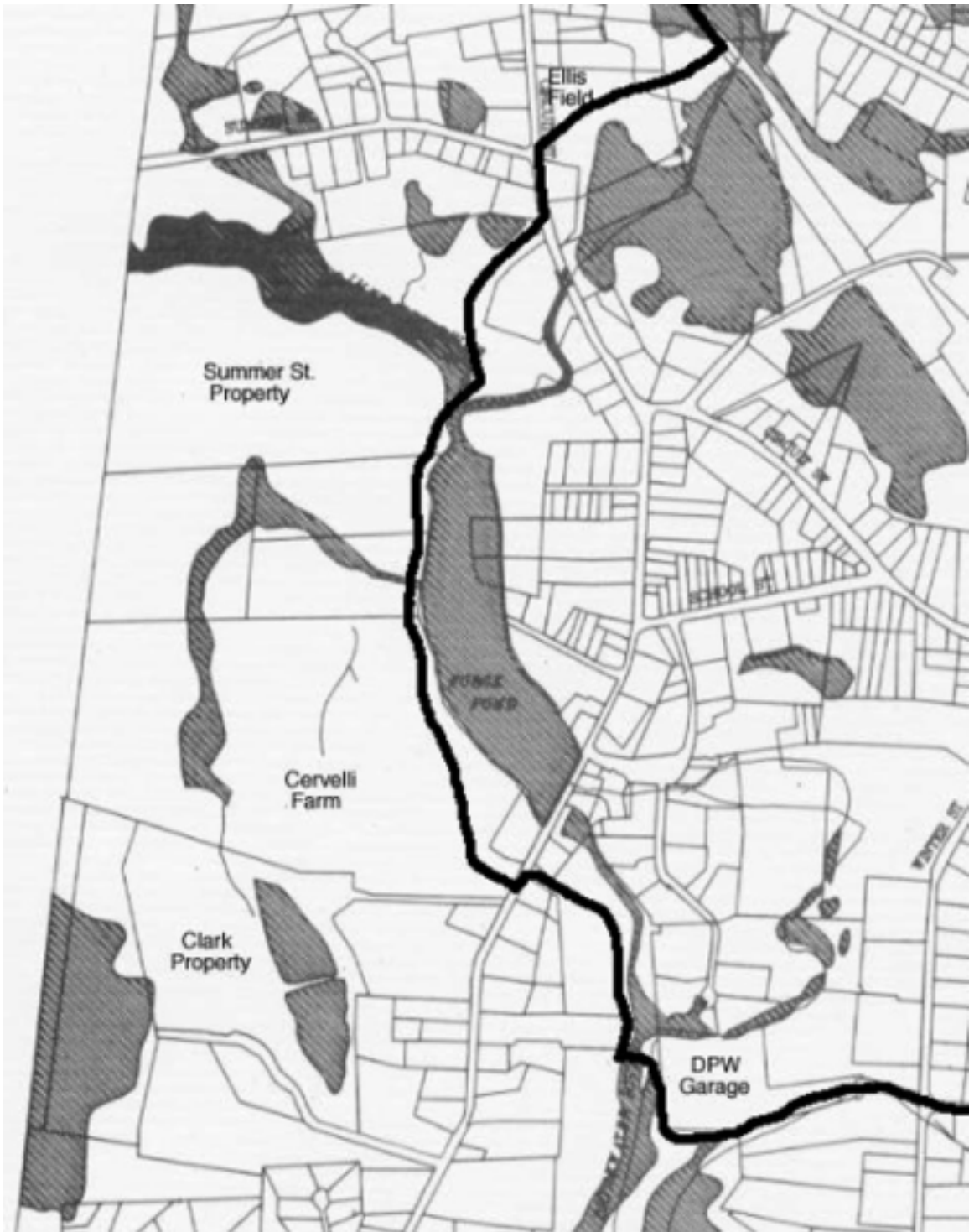


Figure 4: Phase II: Ellis Field to Winter Street

Crossing King Street, the Greenway trail would enter the Conservation Commission owned 130 acre Factory Pond property. Significant trails exist on both sides of the Drinkwater River and Factory Pond from King Street to the Hanson town line. It is expected that trail clearing work and marking will be required to facilitate public use of this area. Some small footbridges are also likely to be necessary. A study of this property will be required to determine the actual scope of the project.

Potential access points to the Factory Pond property include the tax title parcels at the end of Industrial Way and the Department of Public Works garage on Ames Way. It is highly desirable to establish a path around the DPW garage as parking would be available on Ames way and public access would be facilitated for residents on Winter Street and in the large development commonly known as Indian Head or the Airport.

Action Items:

1. Survey the Summer Street conservation property and identify the most desirable trail locations.
2. Plan, design and construct a footbridge over French's stream and elevated walkways as required through the Summer Street site.
3. Actively pursue acquisition of the Cervelli farm land property. Alternately, pursue acquisition of a walking trail connecting the Summer Street and Clark conservation properties through the back land of the Cervelli property.
4. Study the Factory Pond property to map trail locations, prioritize improvements and identify necessary stream crossings.
5. Re-establish the continuous walking trails through the Factory Pond property.
6. Establish a walking trail access beside the Ames Way DPW garage.
7. Evaluate access potential through the tax title properties at the end of Industrial Way.
8. Provide Greenway markers along the complete trail.
9. Provide maps of the complete trail at the Town Hall, Curtis Library and on the Hanovermass.com website.

4.3 Phase III: Complete Linkage from Hanover High School to Luddam's Ford

The Phase III trail will primarily consist of linking the existing greenway through to the Myrtle Street Field property and along the ROW of the former Hanover Branch Railroad to Luddam's Ford. This potential trail is shown in Figure 5. While this plan cites the end point of the Greenway at Luddam's Ford, it may be possible to continue along the railroad bed to Broad Oak Way. As a part of this phase, the project will also work to establish a short trail across from the high school through to Old Farm Rd. This would extend the greenway through to Bailey Rd. and in to the Plain Street conservation property via Aspen Drive. When complete, the continuous Greenway could extend more than ten miles from Plain Street to the intersection of Broadway and Columbia Ave. (Route 139/53).



Figure 5: Phase III: Winter Street to Luddam's Ford

Beginning from the Ames Way DPW garage, the Phase III route will cross Winter Street and enter the development (commonly known as Indian Head or the Airport) along Samoset Drive. Two options may be available for connection to Myrtle Field. The closest would be along the paper road shown on the assessor's maps between #67 and #83 Samoset Drive. This option is preferable to the greenway but may be unacceptably adverse to the abutters. The second option would require a longer walk along Samoset Drive and entering off the end of King Philip Lane. Preferably, both access points would be established.

From the large Myrtle street field property, the remainder of the main trail will follow the former Hanover Branch Railroad. For the purposes of this plan, presumptions of property ownership are made based on the extensive title search conducted by the North and South River Watershed Association in their 1995 report. It should also be noted that a feeder trail should be established through the rear of the Myrtle field property out to its frontage on Center street.

The rail bed is owned by the successors of the National Fireworks Company from Myrtle field to Center street. It is privately owned by Mr. Joseph Polsinello from Center street to the Tindale Bog conservation property. The town then owns to the intersection of Cross street and Broadway. From this intersection to Luddam's Ford, it is primarily owned by Mr. Polsinello, interrupted by a few short pieces of town owned conservation property and private properties on Water street. These will need to be bypassed by walking along the road side. Clearly the success of Phase III will depend heavily on establishing a working plan with Mr. Polsinello, who has expressed strong support of the project goal. Ideally, the entire Phase III section would ultimately be transformed into a paved bike path with support from the federal Rails to Trails program.

Three additional trails are also considered part of Phase III. First, as the Greenway crosses the intersection of Cross St. and Broadway, markers should indicate access to the Merry property and Morrill Allen Phillips Sanctuary. This conservation property provided a beautiful walk and a direct connection out to Alden Rd. Second, the Hanover Branch Railroad bed actually continues past Luddam's Ford, along property owned by Mr. Polsinello. This would provide a connection out to near the intersection of Broadway and Columbia Ave. (53/139) at Broad Oak Way.

Phase III will also include a short connecting trail at the opposite end of the greenway. Across from the Hanover High School is a large piece of open space, which was recently divided into six residential lots. Along the extreme easterly border, a path could be easily created directly opposite of the Cedar School entrance road. With a footbridge over Bailey Brook, this path would continue through a town-owned unbuildable lot. And enter Old Farm Road between #406 and #436. Such a trail would provide convenient access to the schools from this large development. The six lots are owned by a group of heirs. Thus,

securing this path is currently difficult although there is conceptual agreement from the lead representative of this group of heirs.

From the path through to Old Farm Road, the greenway route would pass through the end of the cul de sac and along a short path on to Bailey Road. Following Bailey Road, and turning right on Aspen Drive, the route would pass through the end of the cul de sac and into the Plain Street conservation property. This property already has excellent cart path trails. An additional trail could be cut out to Plain street through the town owned frontage to improve access. This would also permit connection to the trail network of the empty nester housing complex planned for the former Toth property across Plain street. The developers of this complex have expressed the desire to keep these trails open to the public.

Action Items:

1. Study potential connections from the Indian Head development through to the Myrtle Field property.
2. Resolve ownership of the railroad right-of-way from Myrtle St. to Center St.
3. Work closely with Mr. Joseph Polsinello to establish a walking trail and bike path along the ROW of the former Hanover Branch Railroad extending from the Myrtle Field property to Luddam's Ford.
4. Continue pursuit of a short trail across from the high school through to Old Farm Rd.
5. Track development of the empty nester housing complex to pursue connection to its trail system.
6. Provide Greenway markers along the complete trail.
7. Provide maps of the complete trail at the Town Hall, Curtis Library and on the Hanovermass.com website.

5 Greenway Impact

This plan is presented as an initial outline for development of a Hanover Greenway. As such, it contains a number of assumptions and speculative plans. The project has high potential for success, but it is important for residents to appreciate that specific trail locations are not finalized. The Open Space Committee welcomes any and all input to the project. At this planning stage, the following initial disclaimer is appropriate.

It is recognized and recommended that several detailed studies be undertaken to appropriately assess the trail potential as it is influenced by geographic features such as wetlands. The plan also discusses use of a number of parcels which are currently in private ownership. No assumptions should be made at this time as to whether or not the town will be able to acquire or use these parcels. Such a trail may also present concerns to abutters of currently under-utilized town land. Throughout the development and execution of this plan, the Open Space Committee will strive to make every effort to publicly discuss and mitigate any potential adverse impact. As this greenway is primarily

intended to join the community of Hanover, widespread support from the residents is essential to its construction and ultimate success.

It should further be noted that a separate subcommittee of the Hanover Open Space Committee will pursue a potential bike path along the former Hanover Branch Railroad right-of-way under the federal Rails to Trails program. This effort is not discussed in detail in this plan. In bike path locations, multi-use paths will be constructed to welcome bikes, roller blades, walking, cross country skiing and other forms of recreation.

6 Concluding Summary

There is strong potential for fully realizing the goal of the Hanover Greenway Project and establishing a continuous walking trail. The initial plan provided here is the first step in a multi-phase project that will require a committed group effort from numerous civic organizations and the citizens of Hanover as a whole. The resulting recreational network will be a major asset to the quality of life in our town.