

Fitchburg Open Space Preservation Planning

In 1970, the City of Fitchburg had over 18,880 acres of rural and agricultural land. In 2000, that acreage had been reduced to about 12,000 acres. As Fitchburg develops, it becomes increasingly critical to plan for the preservation of its open space and natural areas. There is an opportunity, as the community grows, to preserve parcels of land that contain significant environmental and historical/cultural features. By linking these features through environmental corridors, we can create a greenway system of parks, open space, and preserved land that will further protect and enhance the natural areas of Fitchburg for future generations. We can protect wildlife corridors and groundwater recharge areas, and at the same time, provide diverse recreational opportunities for the community.

To identify these areas of environmental and cultural importance, the City of Fitchburg's Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department has collected and mapped all known relevant features. Environmental features that have been considered include wetlands, water features (streams, open water, drainage ways, springs), woodlots, rare plant habitat, groundwater recharge areas, steep topography, and public lands. Many heritage oak trees, estimated to be at least 200 years old, have also been inventoried.

Fitchburg also has a rich cultural heritage and many historic buildings still remain. The Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department has also identified these features. They include five places on the National Register of Historic Places and other historic places, buildings, and schoolhouses. There is also evidence of past Native American activity in the area with the identification of various trails, camps, and mounds. In addition, Fitchburg has a significant industrial and agricultural history that includes lead mining, stone quarrying, and farming.

All of these aforementioned features have been compiled and mapped so that the Parks, Recreation & Forestry and Planning & Zoning Departments can work together to determine the areas most critical for protection outside of Fitchburg's urban service area. The City staff has shared these findings with the Park Commission and Resource Conservation Commission and will be presenting to the Plan Commission and Committee of the Whole in the future. The City staff is also planning to offer a public forum in the coming weeks.

There are a few ways that any interested individuals can get involved. The Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department is conducting a scenic resource inventory. We are looking for the public to submit photographs of the places they find most aesthetically pleasing within the city limits. Photographs are to be submitted by Nov. 30th. For further instruction, please refer to the Parks & Forestry home page (http://www.city.fitchburg.wi.us/parks_forestry/) or contact Dana Dentice at 270-4287 or dana.dentice@city.fitchburg.wi.us. Another opportunity to learn about Fitchburg's environmental and cultural features is to attend a public information meeting at the Land Use Element Open House on December 12th. For further information, please refer to the City website (<http://www.city.fitchburg.wi.us/>).