



TOWN OF IPSWICH

IPSWICH, MASSACHUSETTS 01938

PLANNING BOARD

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PROPOSED OPEN SPACE May 1997

A Handout for Developers Considering Projects Under the Open Space Preservation Zoning Bylaw in the Town of Ipswich

The Planning Board, in order to grant a special permit for an open space preservation development under the cluster zoning bylaw, must find that the proposed design and layout of the development appears to succeed in preserving open space for conservation or recreation, and/or in preserving natural features of the land that are important to the character of the town.

In considering an open space preservation development, the Planning Board will give particular attention to, and will use as a basis for its decision, the criteria listed below as they apply to the land under consideration. The Board's decision will encompass both the approval or disapproval of the cluster development, and the location and function of the open space.

In doing this, the Board will consider the extent to which the proposed open space is not simply a strip of land offering a buffer from another property (unless that is the best possible use of the open space), but rather a significant portion of the land satisfying one or more of paragraphs 1-10 below. In addition, land already protected, such as wetlands, will not count toward the open space to be proposed in the plan.

1. Land protecting or providing a public water supply (ground or surface, present or potential);
2. Land adjacent to the Ipswich-Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), the salt marsh that provides spawning grounds for fish and shellfish;
3. Land bordering inland wetlands, rivers, streams, and floodplains, especially that bordering the Ipswich River;
4. Forest land, especially if contiguous to other forest land or providing wooded corridors between tracts of forest, since forest land is more valuable as wildlife habitat when it is contiguous rather than fragmented;
5. Habitat of threatened or endangered species, e.g., parcels so mapped by MDFW, or vernal pools whether or not certified by MDFW;
6. Land containing some unique natural, cultural, or historical feature, e.g., an archaeological site; a scenic vista; a valued grove of mature trees; a rocky outcrop, bluff, or hilltop providing attractive scenery; land along a designated scenic road

where visible open space as a buffer would be desirable;

7. Land with trail systems or hiking/running/riding access, or land linking such systems, especially if so designated under the Bay Circuit program;
8. Active agricultural land to be kept in production;
9. Land with high potential for recreational use, such as parks, playgrounds, ballfields, or swimming facilities;
10. Provision of appropriate access to the open space and/or recreation facilities for the disabled, the elderly, and children, as well as to the other residents of the development and to the public in general.

Glossary

Open space - land not developed and basically in its natural state, even if previously disturbed, such as agricultural land that has grown back to forest or fallow field

MDFW - Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

Threatened or endangered species or species of special concern - species so listed by either MDFW or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as needing appropriate habitat management

Vernal pool - a temporary pool, usually dry by late summer, that is the only possible breeding habitat for many amphibians and invertebrates; vernal pools may be certified as such by MDFW, affording them additional protection

Wildlife corridor - a strip or parcel of land connecting two other quality wildlife habitats that might otherwise be isolated by development, thus restricting the free movement of wildlife and possibly jeopardizing the animals' reproductive capacity

Scenic road - a road so designated by the state as worth preserving its scenic value

ACEC - Area of Critical Environmental Concern, as officially designated by the state; Ipswich-Essex Bay is one such area because of its value as a spawning ground for marine wildlife, much of which is commercially harvested

Chapter 61 land - land given tax advantages by the state so long as it is kept in agricultural production (Chapter 61), forestry (Chapter 61A), or recreational use (Chapter 61B)

Bay Circuit - a longstanding statewide open space/trails program whose goal is to provide a network of connected trails and greenspace throughout eastern Massachusetts for the enjoyment of the public and for the benefit of wildlife