

# Waltham Land Trust



*Waltham Land Trust, Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving our community's natural resources for the future through education, open space acquisition and protection.*

# QUARTERLY

SPRING 2003

*Marc Rudnick*

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND LAND PRESERVATION: SHALL THE TWAIN NE'ER MEET?**

Waltham Land Trust's work preserving and protecting the land is a part of a larger community-building process. WLT's intentionally local mission reflects, alongside of environmental concerns, our interest in Waltham residents' involvement with the city's open space. There is no escaping the impact of working within a city context, with the pressures of traffic, development, pollution and the demand for housing on resource protection.

While we have focused on the green-space side of the community development equation, others have focused on affordable housing, transportation alternatives, energy conservation and historic preservation as elements of a sustainable home town that is the overarching goal of so much good work in Waltham. These complex concerns have gained currency beyond local efforts, as evidenced by the state's recent focus on Community Preservation (see the related article in this issue) and on Smart Growth, a scheme of regional development aimed at addressing issues of sprawl, pollution and urban design.

While Smart Growth has been presented as a high-level objective, it is unclear at this point how the Smart Growth principles will be applied to communities like Waltham.

At its theoretical optimum, Smart Growth promotes a more compact metropolitan development pattern with open space preservation integrated throughout the community, infill and reinvestment in the downtown, and a local balance among commercial, industrial and housing development in both volume and cost, all linked by an efficient transportation system.

In a less optimistic scenario, Smart Growth reduces sprawl, but also limits affordable housing growth in favor of commercial growth to enhance city revenues and help pay for preserving open space. This brings a glut of commuter traffic while displacing local low and

*continued on page 3*



INGE UHLIR

*Chester Brook Woods, shown here in early spring, will be on the itinerary of the WLT-sponsored walk during the Waltham Historic Days. (See Calendar).*

*Inge Uhlir, Membership Chairman*

## **WLT BOARD UPDATES MEMBERSHIP POLICY**

WLT membership has grown over the last four years and we have reviewed and updated our membership policy. We are happy to announce that membership is still just \$15.

*continued on page 5*

Stephen Rourke

## BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHY

The woods behind my family's house on Albert Street were one of the great playgrounds for the kids in my neighborhood when I was growing up. As my interests turned elsewhere — to music, theatre, college and the beginnings of a career in education — the woods faded into a childhood memory. Once in a while I would be reminded of the grace and beauty of a quiet wood — hiking the White Mountains with friends, preparing the Paine Estate grounds for an Arts Festival, taking a Sunday afternoon to walk with Donna Marie — then my fiancée, and now my wife of 27 years — around Sandy Pond in Lincoln, one of her favorite places.

Most of my life has been focused on the indoors: theatre, specifically, where the artists exert lots of control to create an artificial environment to get close to the truth. After graduating from Waltham High School in 1968, I studied Theatre at UMass Amherst. In the 1970s I worked as Scenery Shop Foreman in the UMass Theatre Department, and began teaching drama at Waltham High School. In the early 1980s I began a communications enterprise with William Lawler, Lawler/Rourke Associates, which has been my major occupation for over 20 years. We produce video programs and major events for a variety of corporate clients. For me, the natural outdoors is a healthy balance to the closed-in everyday activity of my work life.

My appreciation for open space has been nourished especially by the Charles River. When Donna Marie and I had our first child, Adam, and began searching for a house, we luckily came to Riverview Avenue in the "Island" neighborhood across the river from some of my childhood haunts in Angleside. We didn't know then how much we would grow to appreciate the open space nearby: Forest Grove, Auburndale Playground, Lyon's Park, Mt. Feake Cemetery across the river, and the Charles River itself.

We bought a canoe, and explored the Norumbega Lakes. Whenever we convinced others to join us, it was most gratifying to hear them marvel at the beauty of the river, and express their disbelief that we were indeed a few miles from Boston, and not in Maine or New



ARTHUR UHLIR

*Stephen Rourke discusses local issues with WCONA president Doris Donovan at the WLT Open House, held on Feb 12, 2003.*

Hampshire. I enjoyed canoeing, but I was always envious of small motorboats and the opportunity one might provide to share the river experience in a leisurely way with many others. Our second son, Patrick, forced the issue. He said out loud what was secretly on my mind: "We need a boat!" So we saved our pennies and got a boat. To this day boating on the Charles is our primary recreational pastime.

Living in a neighborhood that includes a part of Newton, I learned of a group called the Newton Conservators. They were a "land trust", which sounded like something we ought to have in Waltham. I had seen open spaces where I had grown up cleared and developed, and the woods and hills behind my parents' house were being nibbled away. When a like-minded group assembled to explore the idea of a land trust for Waltham, I was an enthusiastic participant. That's how I came to be a founder and officer of the organization, and I am very proud of how well it is progressing. The pressure to develop dwindling open space needs to be balanced with pressure to preserve and protect this valuable and finite resource, and the Waltham Land Trust is a key player in providing that balance.

As a Waltham City Councillor representing the very densely settled Ward 8 on the city's south side, I am keenly aware of how much open spaces like Prospect Hill Park and the Charles River contribute to the quality of life for Waltham residents, and how much value accrues to all of us through open space preservation. Very simply, some of these special places ought to be there *always* for the enrichment of future generations, as they have been throughout my life for me, my family and friends.



## Housing *continued from page 1*

moderate income families. Smart Growth, with its regional perspective, could wind up sacrificing Waltham's open space for dense housing.

Regardless of the impact of state policy, a sustainable city requires complex planning that incorporates conflicting interests and demands. These include revitalizing downtowns, promoting affordable housing, improving street design, creating buffers and greenways, expanding athletic facilities, retaining farmland, preserving historic structures, and reducing congestion while keeping an eye on zoning, taxes and revenues. These complex demands cry out for cooperation among advocates for these varied interests, rather than pitting them against each other in a battle for funding, land and political support.

One hopeful model is the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund, which has funded affordable housing for over 10,000 people and saved 165,000 acres of farms and open space. This state program grew out of a grassroots coalition of local land trusts, housing advocates, historical preservation groups, and environmentalists who formed the Housing and Conservation Coalition.

Initially, the housing advocates feared a draining of their limited subsidy funding stream. Conservationists and farmers were afraid that the housing and low-income advocates would be too radical and dogmatic. By engaging in open dialog about these concerns, through a process of working together and through the creation of policies that supported a balancing of interests, these fears slowly dissipated. Instead, each

group benefited from increased popular support for their campaigns among the citizens concerned about their partner's issues.

The Vermont experience is one example of a growing trend in alliances between housing and open space advocates. In New Jersey, the Coalition for Affordable Housing and the Environment has forged a unified effort to advocate for urban planning inclusive of both housing and open space concerns. In New England, Grow Smart Rhode Island is another place where the balance seems to be working, linking environmental organizations with housing-oriented Community Development Corporations.

Here in Waltham, with a huge demand for affordable housing, and scarce remaining open space, there is ample motivation for cooperation between these movements. Without open space, Waltham becomes a less desirable community for everyone. Without affordable housing, many will find it harder to keep their families in the city. The high cost of land in the city increases the likelihood that limited development will be a part of land preservation efforts. In order to address the community's concerns about traffic, and to create more amenable low-income housing development, the preservation of open space corridors will be important to the housing advocates as well. If we work together, create a sustainable policy on urban density, encourage better energy conservation in new and rehabbed housing, and attract development and preservation funding to the city, we can help forward all of the advocates' agendas. The Waltham Land Trust hopes to find common ground with many community to craft a sustainable future for Waltham.

*Myrtle Street resident Nichole Belliveau visits a vernal pool near Prospect Hill Park. Nichole was granted a complimentary one-year WLT membership in recognition of her work in the study and certification vernal pools.*



INGE UHLIR

*Kate Buttolph*

## **THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION INSTITUTE**

The Community Preservation Institute (CPI) is the result of a partnership between the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the University of Massachusetts. The CPI combines the expertise of professional educators, government leaders and citizen group leaders in a 9-week program designed to expose students to a variety of topics that communities are addressing. The first session of the CPI was offered in the Spring of 2001. Classes are now offered at the UMass Boston, Amherst, Lowell, and Dartmouth, making it convenient for any citizen of the state to attend.

The CPI was created to help Massachusetts residents explore various means and resources for use in their own communities, to help preserve and enhance the places in which they live and work. The Institute is intended to give any interested Massachusetts resident an understanding of community preservation as a concept for planning and growth.

Each week for 9 weeks, we met at UMass Boston, and discussed a different issue for 2 and 1/2 hours. Some of the classes were more interactive than others. In some, a real planning or preservation issue was provided to students to solve. There were about 25 students in the class, most with some active participation experience in a community issue.

We began with Land Preservation (Open Space and Parks) and learned about the tools for acquiring open space for a variety of purposes in an urban setting. Partnering with landowners, land trusts and local government was described using actual case studies.

The second meeting concentrated on issues involving water management. We learned how much water is used daily in Boston, (250 million gallons per day) where it comes from and where it goes. We talked about how to protect watersheds in the face of growth and development. We also learned about the Deer Isle Sewage Treatment Plant.

Next we focused on housing and the need to provide more affordable housing across a broad range of communities. We learned of creative ways of putting affordable housing in downtown areas in order to revitalize those areas, bringing back small businesses and residential use in a common district. The key actors and sources of funding were reviewed. We concluded with a discussion of housing policy issues, preservation vs. new housing and government regulation vs. local control.

Historic preservation of older buildings and landscapes can also serve to revitalize a town center and bring business and people back from suburban sprawl.

While housing is a big issue, transportation is also critical to making a community livable. Encouraging people to get out of their cars, thus reducing traffic and the resulting noise and pollution, helps communities to maintain a better quality of life. We talked not only about public transportation systems, but also about creating bicycle and pedestrian paths.

In order to facilitate changes in a community, changes to zoning may be required. Using maps, we were able to see the impact of local zoning on shaping a community. We learned zoning terms and heard an overview of the Home Rule Act, Subdivision Control Law and how to enact zoning amendments.

An issue particularly important in urban areas is the restoration of "brownfields." These are areas formerly used by industry, and abandoned with hazardous materials in place. Many of these sites are in downtown areas, eyesores in the community. Laws and regulations are in place to assist in the cleanup of these sites, and to convert them to more productive uses.

Finally, we tried to tie it all together. The last class involved a series of presentations by groups of students. The class had been divided into five different groups at the beginning of the semester, based on students' interests. We were asked to pick a real issue in our communities and prepare a presentation, using the materials we had been given in class. Each group had 15 minutes to deliver their presentation, with PowerPoint slides or maps available as visual aids. In my session, these groups covered Open Space and Parks, Transportation, Historic Revitalization/Preservation, Water Resource Protection, and Affordable Housing.

With each session we were provided with handouts and a multitude of internet links to applicable resources. Visit <http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/> for detailed information about the CPI, the course descriptions and course materials, as well as many other free resources relating to community preservation.

## **HELP OUR FUNDRAISING EFFORTS**

Do you have an account at the Watertown Savings Bank? If so, please write to the bank and ask them to include the Waltham Land Trust on their list of community organizations to support with charitable donations. If at least 8 members contact the bank with this request, then the WLT will be added to the list. Write to: Watertown Savings Bank, 60 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472

*The Development Committee*



## Membership *continued from page 1*

Membership benefits in the WLT include our very popular newsletter, invitations to our annual meeting, opportunities to meet people who have valuable information for WLT and to volunteer for the standing committees (Land, Membership, Development, and Greenway), and notices of guided walks and other outdoor activities. As you can imagine, the cost of sending our newsletter and other mailings add up.

Before updating our membership policy, we sent newsletters to people with overdue membership fees, hoping they would renew. But to be fair to our paying members, we cannot continue to allow un-paid members to enjoy all the same benefits as paid members.

The renewal date for your membership is on your newsletter's mailing label above your name. Members who are overdue by 3 or more months will receive a separate notice (diverting valuable resources that could be devoted to the WLT mission) to request a renewal payment. Members who are overdue by 6 months or more will receive one last newsletter with the words **LAST ISSUE** on the label.

We hope that you will continue to support the efforts of the WLT and pay your dues promptly. But if dues are still not paid after one year, your name will have to be dropped from our membership roles. Please don't let that happen.

So when your dues are due, just send a check for \$15 to WLT, PO Box 54-1120, Waltham MA 02454-1120. An additional contribution is, of course, always welcome.

Your membership sustains our activities. If your membership has lapsed for over a year or more, please fill out a membership form to re-apply for membership.

## **CORRECTION: THANKS TO OUR DONORS**

In the last issue of the Quarterly, we neglected to list a challenge grant in the amount of \$5,000 from an organization which wishes to remain anonymous. We appreciate the support of this organization.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Waltham Historic Days.**

*Saturday, June 14, 2003. 10:00 AM*

Stroll with the Waltham Land Trust through Chesterbrook Woods, the Storer Conservation Land, and the Lyman Estate. Meet at the Waltham High School parking lot.

### **Fourth Annual Meeting\***

*Wednesday, October 22, 2003. 7 to 9:30 PM  
Waltham Public Library Lecture Hall.*

Come find out how we are growing and what we've been doing during an exciting year. Learn about some of the benefits of saving open spaces. Open to members and non-members free of charge.

\*This is technically a meeting "in lieu of" our annual meeting which our by-laws require to take place on the third Wednesday of October. Notice to members is hereby given.

### **Rare opportunity**

Participate in or observe Fish Ladder Cleaning at the Moody Street Dam, late summer or early fall. Contact Dudley Bonsal, Charles River Watershed Association, 781-788-0007 x232 for more information.



*A hiker visits Chester Brook Woods*

INGE UHLIR

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An electronic file (pdf) of this newsletter is available on our  
website. <[www.walthamlandtrust.org](http://www.walthamlandtrust.org)>

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## Waltham Land Trust's Mission

We are a group of Waltham citizens who want to save open  
space in our city. Our mission is to acquire, preserve or restore  
land in a way that:

- balances conservation and access,
- maximizes the natural value of land,
- reduces habitat fragmentation, and
- permanently protects and conserves natural resources;

So that

- public appreciation of natural resources grows,
- native habitat is preserved and restored, environmental  
quality of life is improved (air, water, noise and light  
pollution are reduced),
- biodiversity is increased, and
- a legacy of conservation is perpetuated in Waltham.

Please send any comments to the return address below,  
or email to <[memberlink@walthamlandtrust.org](mailto:memberlink@walthamlandtrust.org)>.

Waltham Land Trust  
PO Box 54-1120  
Waltham MA 02454-1120

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Time to renew? Your membership renewal date is on the  
label. If there is no date, please consider joining today!

## Waltham Land Trust Membership Application

I wish to  join  renew at \$15 per year.

I wish to make an additional donation:

\$15  \$25  \$50  Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in donating land or establishing  
a conservation easement. Please contact me with  
more information.

I wish to help by volunteering. I have skills in:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Make your check payable and send with this form to:  
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Waltham MA 02454-1120