

## C. SURVEY FINDINGS

**Results of the Sterling Open Space and Recreation Plan Public Opinion Survey****146 SURVEYS for Question 1 (except items F & G)****130 surveys for all other questions.****Blank includes data for both individual items or an entire question not responded to.****1.) Of the following ten open space related challenges, which do you believe are the most critical for Sterling?**

	<i>Important</i>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Not Important</b>
A. Maintaining Sterling's rural/historic character	126	15	1
B. Balancing the needs of people, wildlife & industry	100	39	2
C. Preserving farms & active agriculture	117	26	2
D. Protecting our water resources	129	10	1
E. Providing adequate recreation facilities, fields, courts	52	70	17
F. Providing access to open space lands & trails	78	39	11
G. Minimizing the impact of earth removal projects	69	51	5

**2. What actions should be taken regarding protection of local open space resources?**

Continue current zoning and land use policies	48
Consider innovative residential zoning concepts	53
Support creative initiatives to protect open space resources	95
Install town sewerage or small onsite sewage treatment plants	26
Purchase specific sites or conservation/use restrictions on critical parcels	90

**3. Which of Sterling's recreational resources do you use?**

Conservation Land	<b>67</b>
Fishing/Hunting areas	40
Hiking Trails	91
Organized Events	52
Playgrounds	41
Playing Fields	56
Rail Trail	108
Skating Rink	19
Tennis or Basketball courts	18
Town Beach	90
Walking on Road	100
Other:	15

Running 2, Biking 2, Yoga Classes 1

**4. Which actions should Sterling take regarding recreation opportunities?**

Improve recreational access to public land	61
Maintain existing recreational facilities	89
Provide more recreational facilities	35
Improve parking access	22
Improve regional trail connections (rail trail, etc.)	82
Enable more water-based activities	13
Create safer pedestrian spaces	51
Improve publicity for recreational opportunities	21
Improve handicapped accessibility	24
No action necessary	6

**5. What are your top 5 recreational interests? (Please check 5 items only)**

Bird watching/tracking	<b>34</b>
Boating, Motorized	10
Boating, Non-Motorized	40
Camping	22
Cross country skiing	46
Cycling—Mountain biking	24
Cycling—Road cycling	30
Fishing	32
Golfing	20
Hiking	81
Horseback riding	9
Hunting	16
Ice skating	14
Picnicking	31
Rollerblading or Skateboarding	18
Running	28
Snowmobiling or ATV/ORV riding	13
Swimming	52
Team Sports	27
Other	22

WALKING ON ROAD 7, Tennis 5, Snow Shoe 2, Football 1, Gardening 1, Photo/paint 1

**6. Which of the following organized events would you like to see in Sterling?**

	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Blank</b>	<b>Youth</b>	There are discrepancies in the tallying methodologies here. Not sure what the correct totals should be. It appears there is some double counting.		
Agriculture Programs	41	90	41			
Concerts/Drama	39	91	36			
Dances/Socials	23	108	24			
Fitness Programs	41	90	24			
Historical Programs	59	71	41			
Nature Programs	51	79	54			
Organized Sports	25	105	36			
Self-Improvement Programs	24	106	15	18	12	9
Town Picnic	36	94	37	28	28	6
Trips & Tours	26	114	19	20	15	7
Water-Based Activities	19	111	19	20	15	7
Other:	2	128	4	2	3	12
No new programs	5	125	2	4	2	11

**7. How much would your household be willing to contribute per year to improve & maintain open space and recreational resources in Sterling?** (Check appropriate box. Please keep in mind that contributions could include non-profit donations, taxes, fees, etc.)

A. No contribution	8
B. Up to \$50 per year	52
C. Up to \$500 per year	35
D. Over \$500 per year	7
E. Contribute only for specific purposes	40

**The Following 3 Questions are OPTIONAL...****8. How long have you lived in Sterling?** (Check appropriate box)

Less than 5 years	12
5 to 10 years	34
11 to 20 years	28
More than 20 years	51

**9. Which of the following best describes your current living situation?** (Check one)

Household w/at least 1 child 5 or under	16
Household w/ at least 1 child 6 to 18	37
Household w/ at least 1 child 19 to 25	15
Household with adult children in home	9
Couple with no children in home	34
Single Adult	11
Other:	3
<b>BLANK</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>COUPLE WITH SENIOR</b>	<b>1</b>

**10. How many people live in your household?** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>

## **2007 Sterling Open Space & Recreation Survey: A Summary of Quantitative Results and Written Comments**

**Last Update: October 7, 2008**

**Compiled By: Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC)**

Town of Sterling

1 Park Street

Sterling, MA 01564

Email: [sterling.openspace@gmail.com](mailto:sterling.openspace@gmail.com)

Current Webpage: [http://www.sterling-ma.gov/Pages/SterlingMA\\_Boards/open](http://www.sterling-ma.gov/Pages/SterlingMA_Boards/open)

---

### **General Notes & Background Information:**

- A 4-page survey was developed by the Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC) as part of the public outreach component of the state mandated Open Space & Recreation planning process. OSIC efforts are currently underway to update the current Town and State approved 2002 Open Space & Recreation Plan based in part on the survey results reported here.
- 2007 Surveys were distributed via the Sterling Meetinghouse News (free newspaper mailed to all residential locations), official Town of Sterling website (PDF), Emailed versions of the survey (PDF), as well as hardcopy distribution at the Butterick Building, Conant Library, 1835 Town Hall and other venues. Efforts to have the survey posted on the website for *The Landmark* newspaper failed due to a formatting error during posting.
- The survey effort was focused on the entire month of October, 2007. Completed surveys results and comments were requested by October 31, 2008 returned in person to OSIC or via other modes including mail, mailbox, drop boxes, and email.
- Quantitative and Qualitative data for 146 total surveys is compiled below, including 16 preliminary/test surveys collected at the 2007 Sterling Fair. Results for Question #1 (except items F & G) are based on all 146 surveys. Results for Question #1 line-items F and G and all other Questions are based on 130 surveys.
- Results were compiled by OSIC members Maryanne MacLeod and Joyce Hinckley with the support of Brian Cline. All items in square brackets [ ] are editorial comments made by these OSIC members in an effort to clarify the results and context of the responses.
- All items in *italics* are intended to represent actual written or typed statements from survey respondents.

Thank you to those who participated in the survey and the state-mandated open space & recreation planning process!

**1. Question #1: Of the following ~~ten~~ open space related challenges, which do you believe are the most critical for Sterling?**

**Notes:** 12 Preliminary/Test format surveys collected at the 2007 Sterling Fair did not include options F and G under this question. Therefore, results for Question #1 are based on all 146 surveys, except items F and G which are based on 130 surveys. Some surveys accidentally included the word “ten” as denoted with a strikethrough marking in the question above, but only seven challenges itemized in the survey as listed along with a quantitative results summary below.

**Quantitative Feedback:**

	<b>Important</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Not Important</b>
A. Maintaining Sterling's rural/historic character	126	15	1
B. Balancing the needs of people, wildlife & industry	100	39	2
C. Preserving farms & active agriculture	117	26	2
D. Protecting our water resources	129	10	1
E. Providing adequate recreation facilities, fields, courts	52	70	17
F. Providing access to open space lands & trails	78	39	11
G. Minimizing the impact of earth removal projects	69	51	5

**Qualitative Feedback:**

1-a Maintaining Sterling's Rural/Historic Character

- Maryanne's compilation:
  - *We need to monitor development so we aren't just some bedroom community*
  - *This question appears on every survey, but no one takes it seriously. It is a joke.*
  - *Once the historic character is gone, it's gone for good. There is no turning back*
  - *Ticky tacky neighborhoods. Stop building the mini neighborhoods or we'll look like Rutland. It's ideal lost. We'll get all those houses that look the same*
  - *All store signs and store fronts should have historical character. Certain store fronts "bring down" the quaint look of Sterling.*
  - *Need clean up and rubbish removal behind Appletown Market – papers, rubbish blowing – it's a health hazard. What does the DPW do?*
  - *Repair the fence around the Common and paint it. It's disgraceful and reflects on our care of the town and its property.*
  - *Over the past 25 years, I have watched Sterling lose its historic homes, some dating to the beginning of this town. They crumble and decay only to be replaced by two or three trophy homes. The owners let them be empty and rot beyond repair. A fine example is on the corner of Princeton and Jewett Road; that house has been empty for a few years. Soon it will decay and crumble. So we lose our historical beauty so someone can line their pockets. Very sad!*

• Joyce's compilation:

- No qualitative detail specified under item 1-a.

1-b Balancing Needs Of People, Wildlife Industry

- *It would be nice if there was a real possibility of achieving such a goal. But Sterling's pro-development practices makes this utterly impossible.*

1-c Preserving Farms And Agriculture

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - NOTE: Maryanne reported that “several with three or more checks in box” under the “Important” option under this question.
  - *Very important to preserve farm land*

- *We probably need to slow development which comes at the expense of older farms. Balancing this so it doesn't get out of control is important and so that it preserves some character is important. That's what makes Sterling a desirable place to live.*
  - *Add tax incentives for farmers to encourage farming*
  - *We must preserve our farms. Once they are gone, they can never be replaced. Farms actually save the town money as opposed to development*
  - *Our farms form the most important component of rural character.*
  - *To grow (and have increasing property value) we probably need to allow development, which occurs at the expense of older farms. Balancing this so it doesn't get out of control is important and so that it preserves some character is important. That's what makes Sterling a desirable place to live and work.*
  - Joyce's Compilation:
    - *Critical.*
- 1-d Protecting Water Resources
- Maryanne's Compilation:
    - NOTE: Maryanne reported "several with three or more checks in box" under the "Important" option under this question.
    - *Water resources must be protected*
    - *Very important to protect our water resources, especially those that are underground. The town should be balancing growth to ensure a sustainable water supply.*
    - *Water resources are understood to be critical and I assume local, state and federal government standards and policies would not allow industry into town that was detrimental to any and all resources.*
    - *The town really needs to do more investigating of the Kane-Perkins Co on Route 12. They are close to water area across Route 12. They have blocked every single visual Area. Should we fear the impact of such massive earth removal at this spot?*
    - *We must preserve our water resources. Shame one the town if it thinks it can profit from the sale of the Wekepeke waters.*
- 1-e Provide Adequate Recreation Facilities
- Maryanne's Compilation: No qualitative results or comments reported.
  - Joyce's Compilation:
    - Already have adequacy*
- 1-f Providing Access To Open Space
- Maryanne's Compilation:
    - *Want to see more trails for walking or bicycling on open space land in Sterling*
    - *Need for Sterling: Skate board park behind the Police Station*
    - *Stop inviting out-of-towners to bicycle in our town and disrupt our roads*
  - Joyce's Compilation:
    - *Providing access to open space land and trails—Not all open space should be used for rec. Sterling has a SPRAWL problem due to lack of community planning. This is a critical need for the town.*
    - *Our kids need more fields to play on. They also need a skate park, because skating is a sport too.*
    - *Already have adequacy. (Ditto)*
    - *Dogs allowed*
- 1-g Minimizing Impact of Earth Removal
- Maryanne's Compilation:
    - *Impact of earth removal projects should be minimized.*
    - *Kane-Perkins Co has blocked every visual area. Should we fear the impact of such massive earth removal in this spot?*

- *Too much blasting*
- *Earth removal is greatly changing the town.*
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *How many earth removal projects are there?*
  - *Let's make sure we know what we've got before it's gone.*

#### **General Comments Regarding Question #1:**

- Maryanne's Compilation: None reported.
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Also enforcing existing town and state laws regarding wetlands and runoff.*
  - *All above are important to Sterling's future. Finding a balance will be the challenge.*

#### **Question #2: What actions should be taken regarding protection of local open space resources?**

**Notes:** The pilot survey had a different Question #2, which corresponded more closely to Question #7 inquiring on amount of contribution citizens would be willing to make. Results for this question and all remaining questions are based on 130 surveys.

#### **Quantitative Feedback:**

Continue current zoning and land use policies	48
Consider innovative residential zoning concepts	53
Support creative initiatives to protect open space resources	95
Install town sewerage or small onsite sewage treatment plants	26
Purchase specific sites or conservation/use restrictions on critical parcels	90

#### **Qualitative Feedback:**

##### **Continue Current Zoning and Land Use Policies**

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *All development should stop until a real assessment of Sterling can be completed. This survey will not do that. Surveys are an excuser for real action. These surveys are so stupid and a waste of time. For decades I have seen them, filled them out and no action ever results. All surveys say protect open space, rural character and farms; yet we continue to lose farms and Sterling is no longer a rural town. I doubt anything significant will result from this survey.*
  - *A moratorium on **all building** in Sterling should be considered seriously. No one has a clue for the long term sustainability of the town from all of this growth; i.e., impact on water resources, impact on land.*
  - *Continuing current practice will ensure that the town will be wrecked more than it already is.*
  - *Increase minimum lot size*
  - *This town needs to stop building such huge trophy homes.*
  - *We have out priced our land with this & DCR to the point your children can't afford to live in the town.*
  - *Need to change or alternatives to 2 acres.*
  - *Please re-consider cluster zoning or similar concepts. 2acre zoning creates sprawl and less affordable housing options.*
  - *[Marked as action that should be taken] altho[ugh] I don't know what they are now.*

##### **Consider Innovative Residential Zoning Concepts**

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *Allow or require more buffer between roads and buildings. Example is the new complex by the police station. There should be a buffer between the road and the buildings.*

- *Need to improve current zoning and land use policies. Avoid too many people living in small areas.*
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Could be worthwhile looking at cluster zoning, with residences closer together and more land untouched.*
  - *I would like to see min. lot size decreased but requiring more zoning to open space/conservation land from remaining land.*

#### Support Creative Initiatives to Protect Open Space Resources

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *I believe in protecting open space but become concerned what it costs the town and wonder what is enough "open space".*
  - *Sterling needs to be commended for the emphasis on land conservation. It's a great place to live.*
  - *By all means. This is very important*
  - *We need to preserve open space. This is the true beauty of Sterling. If we don't act conservatively on this, the town will lose its Norman Rockwell appeal.*
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - No specific qualitative info reported under this item.

#### Install Town Sewerage

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *Town sewerage will only increase development. Implement more innovative and environmentally sound practices.*
  - *Don't have info in order to evaluate...* [Item not checked by respondent]
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Sewers around the lake might benefit the water, but sewers throughout the town could encourage more building.*
  - *Although town sewer would be convenient in some ways I think it would further encourage new construction which is something that I do Not want to see happen.*
  - *Sewerage expensive & would enable too much density.*
  - *Install town sewerage... \*\*\*\* We need town sewerage!!*
  - *Install town sewerage...small only!*
  - *Install town sewerage...? Need more info*

#### Purchase Specific Sites or Conservation/Use restrictions on Critical Parcels

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *Yes, purchase specific sites seems to be the only means of protection*
  - *Don't have info in order to evaluate...* [Item not checked by respondent]
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - No specific qualitative info reported under this item.

#### **General comments on Question #2:**

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *A lot depends on the details of what this question means*
  - *We voted to have 2 acre house lots to decrease housing density, now we have huge condo complexes.*
  - *You have put land out of price for your children – too much open land*
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Consider innovative zoning concepts—Keep 2 acre min to build.*
  - *Consider executive community, for over 55 with condo-like use of land plus open space. Small homes –loaded with amenities—very limited lot sizes & lots of common space. The pop will not require additional services, e.g., schools, rec. etc.*



- *I can't comment on the first two because I don't know current policies nor do I know what the second refers to.*
- *Land cost too high for your own children. Smaller lot or frontage.*
- *The town needs to collect money from developers specifically for open space preservation and recreation.*
- *Zoning and conservation determine the character of the town. We need to be creative to balance growth and preservation.*
- *Planning Board comprised of local realtors is prescription for continued excessive development.*
- *I'm not really sure what those actions mean.*

**Question #3: Which of Sterling's recreational resources do you use?**

**Quantitative Feedback:**

Conservation Land	<b>67</b>
Fishing/Hunting areas	40
Hiking Trails	91
Organized Events	52
Playgrounds	41
Playing Fields	56
Rail Trail	108
Skating Rink	19
Tennis or Basketball courts	18
Town Beach	90
Walking on Road	100
Other:	15

Running: 2

Biking: 2

Yoga Classes: 1

**Qualitative Feedback:**

Fishing/Hunting Areas

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *I just get shot at! seriously* [Item not checked by respondent]

Playgrounds

- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *What playgrounds?!*

Rail Trail

- Joyce's Compilation
  - *Would love to see the rail trail continue further and connect to other recreational activities.*

Tennis or Basketball Courts

- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Tennis or Basketball courts—should be allowed for skateboarders! How dare you put a sign up!*
  - *It is a disgrace that the tennis courts on Rt. 62 in W. Sterling are in such poor condition. I enjoy playing tennis and unfortunately, those are the only public courts in town. They need to be resurfaced, at the least.*
  - *I don't use courts but consider them to be important for the town*

Town Beach

- Joyce's Compilation
  - *The Waushacum Town Beach and the open land around is often strewn with litter and, after weekend nights, with beer cans. Ugh! Can some litter barrels be there year round (chained to a tree) and more signs put there asking people not to litter? Could the Sterling Police check this area more often on weekends (especially after dark)?*

Walking on Road

- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *To be sure, our sidewalks in the center are more dangerous than the road. Repeated requests to repair sidewalks have been ignored by the TOWN!!!*
  - *Walking on road—we need this more than more recreation program. How can one enjoy recreation in Sterling with a sprained ankle, or worse, a broken leg?*

Other

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *Running/biking*
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Please preserve space for the Sterling Fair!*
  - *Many roads provide wonderful opportunities for photography or sketching*
  - *Other: Anywhere I can hike with my dogs*

**General Comments Under Question #3:**

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - No additional "general" qualitative comments reported.
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *It is lovely to have areas to walk dogs (on leashes, of course). At these dog friendly areas could a barrel be provided for "Poop" bags and a sign be there too asking dog owners to scoop/bag "poop." I have 3 dogs and plastic bags always in my pocket to collect and "poop" from them. No one wants to see or step in dog waste.*
  - *I was sorry to see the "No Pets" signs go up at the Wausch Town Beach area but understood after seeing what many dog owners left behind.*
  - *Sterling has plenty of recreation. Now is the time to evaluate—NOT continue to develop. What we have is not 100% utilized—No need to create more.*
  - *I just moved to Sterling and have yet to explore all the recreational resources that the town offers. But, I anticipate using the conservation land, hiking trails, rail trails, skating rink, etc.*
  - *Most use is of MDC land*
  - *Allow pet walking on rail trail (w reqd cleanup)*
  - *Use of the Lake*
  - *I would use more land if the DCR and Conservation didn't have so many restrictions on them. Snow mobile/walking my own pet (DCR-No). Clearing walkways in the woods etc can't do. Green Signs*
  - *Playing Fields...\*\*\**
  - *With 3 children very involved in sports, football, baseball & basketball. We need more field space. Soccer should have its own complex and not have to be in the middle of baseball fields.*
  - *Improved parking access—Holden Road Field*
  - *Would like to see conservation land that is available for walking made more obvious—maps?*

**Question #4: Which actions should Sterling take regarding recreation opportunities?****Quantitative Results:**

Town of Sterling, Massachusetts

Open Space Implementation Committee

Improve recreational access to public land	61
Maintain existing recreational facilities	89
Provide more recreational facilities	35
Improve parking access	22
Improve regional trail connections (rail trail, etc.)	82
Enable more water-based activities	13
Create safer pedestrian spaces	51
Improve publicity for recreational opportunities	21
Improve handicapped accessibility	24
No action necessary	6

**Qualitative Results:**Improve recreational access to public land

- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *i.e. for hunting*
  - *If it is to be considered for passive or full recreation.*

Maintain existing recreational facilities

- Maryanne's Compilation
  - *Not sure which way "maintain" is meant, and what the scope of recreational facilities is.*

Provide more recreational facilities

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *We have enough for organized sports*
  - *I think a skate park for those teenage males. It's a hobby that is here to stay and they need a safe place to do it.*
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Town Center*
  - *Improve parking...Holden Road*
  - *Provide more rec facilities... \*\*\**

Improve parking access

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *There is not enough parking for the athletic fields*
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Holden road/62 baseball*

Improve regional trail connections (rail trails etc)

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *Bicycle/Rail Trails should be sited so they can be used for something. Who the hell wants to go to Ware!*
- Joyce's Compilation:
  - *Improve regional trail connections...see above about pets*

Enable more water based activities

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *More low impact activities, NO motor boats*
  - *There may be future problems with water. Preserve fishing in water across from Miles Funeral Home. If something is not done, If something is not done about the water allergens taking over the water bed. The water has even appeared to be lowering over the past couple of years and killing off shoreline vegetation.*

Create safer pedestrian spaces:

- Maryanne's Compilation:

- *Walking Sterling's beautiful roads is becoming more and more dangerous. Walking is an easy low cost way to maintain health and safe walkways improve the quality of life.*
- *Create more breakdown lanes that are maintained and plowed and can be used by pedestrians and bicycles. Sidewalks are useless and inadequate for joggers.*
- *Repair sidewalks. Wasn't funds previously voted on? Sidewalks are a liability*
- *Safer pedestrian spaces does not mean sidewalks. However, shoulder areas on many are dangerous for pedestrians. Along that same idea, the edges of some roads are eroding and pavement is collapsing (upper North Row and Justice Hill)*
- *It would be great to have more sidewalks*
- *Somewhat scare to walk in my neighborhood with cars speeding by.*
- *Would love to see more sidewalks making roads safer to walk (i.e North Row Rd, and Route 12 to center.*
- *Joyce's Compilation:*
  - *Need sidewalks. Should require in all subdivisions & along main roads.*
  - *i.e. better shoulders on roads for running, cycling*
  - *Create safer pedestrian ...more walkways and sidewalks*

#### Improve handicap accessibility

- *Maryanne's Compilation:*
  - *What do you plan on doing ; i.e. hiking trails and wheelchairs don't mix. What do you have in mind? I think the biggest thing is that people don't know what they have available to them.*

#### **General Comments Under Question #4:**

- *Maryanne's Compilation:*
  - *As with most surveys, it's difficult to know the interpretation intended with these terms.*
- *Joyce's Compilation:*
  - *Improve parking access—Little League field of Rt. 62. The G Gibbs LL field on Rt. 62 should have lights enabling teams more practice time—better scheduling of games, etc. We could host more games bringing in more revenue to the league.*
  - *Maintain existing recreational facilities—they need to maintain the football 10X better. Parking needs work especially @ Griffin Rd.! And everyone needs to stop blaming Pop Warner football! They give the most \$ to the town. So stop being so rude!*
  - *No more growth—acquire land—limit building.*
  - *Would be wonderful to have a system of ratings for ease of accessibility—like a diamond rating for ski trails.*
  - *Town should try to acquire land North of Rt 62 & East of I-190 for rec field by town center*
  - *Skate board park?*
  - *I feel very strongly that Sterling should build a sidewalk going out from the center of town towards Chocksett Crossing (where I live.) This would encourage people to walk downtown which would bolster recreational use of the town, the rail trail, and increase revenues at the stores.*
  - *I would add one more to the above—improve existing recreational facilities or at least maintain in proper condition.*
  - *What do you mean by "recreational facilities"? A trail or conservation land? A baseball field? They're quite different.*
  - *Need new/improved bathrooms at beach (need clean changing rooms with benches, showers, child-sized sinks).*
  - *Allow selective timber cutting on town land money to be used for purchase or upgrade of public land. Explore all avenues for grants, gifts, donations, bonding to buy the airport and all land.*
  - *Enable more water-based...\* Consider efforts to make Sholan Park a place for adults to enjoy, not just kids.*

- *Where are the recreational parcels? What is the role of the conservation commission in opening up parcels and mapping parcels for public use?*
- *Improve recreational access...Where are they?What does Conservation do with their land in terms of public access?*
- *More fields and a skateboard park is needed. Schools should have their own fields for school teams and leave the rec and Pop Warner fields to those organizations.*
- *Allow dogs to be walked on the Sterling Rail Trail. (A good part of the W Boylston rail trail allows dogs.) A ranger told me I could walk my dog in the Leominster State Forest but that's a good 15 min drive away from home. Seems crazy.*

### **Question #5: What are your top 5 recreational interests?**

**Note:** Respondents were told to “Please check 5 items only”

#### **Quantitative Results:**

Bird watching/tracking	34
Boating, Motorized	10
Boating, Non-Motorized	40
Camping	22
Cross country skiing	46
Cycling—Mountain biking	24
Cycling—Road cycling	30
Fishing	32
Golfing	20
Hiking	81
Horseback riding	9
Hunting	16
Ice skating	14
Picnicking	31
Rollerblading or Skateboarding	18
Running	28
Snowmobiling or ATV/ORV riding	13
Swimming	52
Team Sports	27
Other	22

#### **WALKING ON ROAD: 7**

Tennis: 5  
Snow Shoe: 2  
Football: 1  
Gardening: 1  
Photo/paint: 1

#### **Qualitative Results:**

Comments under “Other”

- Maryanne’s Compilation:
  - Walking
  - Other...is that it?
- Joyce’s Compilation:
  - Walking\*\*
  - Hiking—walking trails
  - Rollerblading...\*\*\*\*\*
    - *Rollerblading...made with concrete*
  - Team sports...\*\*\*
  - Football...\*\*\*\*
    - *Pop Warner always gets overlooked since it is a regional program.*
  - Tennis...\*
  - Skateboarding...????
    - *Would like place for skate boarding*

#### **General Comments for Question #5:**

- Maryanne’s Compilation:
  - No additional qualitative notes or comments.
- Joyce’s Compilation:
  - *A map of town properties that have hiking trails would be a nice thing to have. Sometimes developers donate portions of subdivisions for public use, but I don’t think many people know where these places are.*
  - *Limit motorized boating—it is too environmentally destructive. Limit ATV or V riding—very destructive to environment.*
  - *Rollerblading or SkateBoarding & Team Sports –Football –most important.*

- *The kids who skate have nowhere to go. They always get yelled at for being downtown. If you kick them out it like kicking kids off the baseball field!*
- *By building a sidewalk into town, you would not only increase the # of people that would walk, hike, or run, but you are making it safer for the residents. Currently, there is no sidewalk and the road is very dangerous with little or no median on the sides for pedestrians.*
- *Done is Sterling or anyplace? (We don't camp here but we are campers.)*
- *Can public lands be on web site with an overview of features and directions? Geo catelling isn't fun. What about one regarding Sterling History.*
- *Can't limit to only 5—all 6 equally important.*

**Question #6: Which of the following organized events would you like to see in Sterling?**

**Quantitative Results:**

	Adults	Youth
Agriculture Programs	41	41
Concerts/Drama	39	36
Dances/Socials	23	24
Fitness Programs	41	24
Historical Programs	59	41
Nature Programs	51	54
Organized Sports	25	36
Self-Improvement Programs	24	15
Town Picnic	36	37
Trips & Tours	26	19
Water-Based Activities	19	19
Other:	2	4
No new programs	5	2
Self-Improvement Programs	18	9
Town Picnic	28	6
Trips & Tours	20	7
Water-Based Activities	20	7
Other:	2	12
No new programs	4	11

**Qualitative Feedback:**

**Agricultural Programs:**

- From Maryanne's Comments:
  - *Not sure what this means: programs as in workshops/training?* [Item not checked by respondent]

**Self-Improvement Programs**

- From Maryanne's Comments:
  - *Not sure what this means, in what respect.* [Item not checked by respondent]

**Other**

- From Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *yoga*
  - *yoga & 1 Aviation Lessons*

**General Comments Under Question #6:**

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *Support the Sterling Fair and continue children's activities at the Fair*

- *We're thrilled about the new playground being built*
- *More adult intramural sports, i.e. a mom's soccer or collegial league, perhaps with children*
- *Opportunities to see the area's outdoor spaces (guided tours, and more publicity about what is available and maps*
- *Find out very few use lake – pollution?*
- *All of these ideas have some merit for somebody. But I'm always amazed that in a rural area like this how little people know about agriculture and how they don't take advantage of the space they have. Also I'm sorry to say most of us know very little about the town and its roots.*
- *I'd like to see an expanded earth day program – more than once or twice a year regionally*
- *Town Rec already offers many of these activities (thank you Rec Dept. I have not participated in the past, but hope to in the future.*
- *I don't like organized events*
- *Town socials that help residents to know each other*
- *Charge a fee for the town beach and spruce it up. A small playground for children would be nice.*
- *Hockey and figure skating along with basic learn to skate programs continue to gain momentum in the state. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could build a rink right here in Sterling as a home for the Wachusett hockey team and as a place for aspiring skaters to learn and train? We love the rink behind the fire station but global warming makes that difficult to maintain and it is too small for a hockey game*
- *Joyce's Compilation:*
  - *No dances for children or teens. Too many potential problems, liabilities. Churches can sponsor if the wish.*
  - *SKATE PARK!*
  - *Photography if sketching workshops featuring natural and historical highlights.*
  - *Wonderful to have programs related to apple farming across the season.*
  - *We have most of these programs which are great. Let's keep the quality high on our existing programs.*
  - *Have agricultural festival:*
    - kid-friendly*
    - invite local farmer's markets*
    - teach kids about how produce is grown/harvested*
    - set up booths for kids to start their own bean or tomato plant*
    - teach benefits of organic farming*
    - have related games: sack races. Tic tac toe w/dried beans, potato rolling contest*
    - set up booth for tie-dyeing with natural dyes (charge for article dyed.)*
  - *Block dances for kids-hang out for kids. Need more for 12-16 yrs.*
  - *Could use older kids playground with Big Kid swings etc. Just to hang and talk*
  - *All are worth considering/supporting.*
  - *Organized sports...only if new land is developed*
  - *While the new playground is nice, the older kids need a place to go as well. A teen center would be a great use of that eye sore in the center of town.*
  - *Activities for pre-schoolers i.e. swim lessons*
  - *Summer Concerts are great. Ballroom dancing lessons would be great.*
  - *Please continue tennis for adults.*
  - *Actually there are loads of good programs in Sterling. Please continue the great fitness programs—esp. flat abs/pilates with Sue Robbins.*
  - *Contra Dances would be great. All the ones I checked seem to be available now and that's great. I would support all of them.*
  - *Seems to be a good balance of activities thus far.*

**Question #7: How much would your household be willing to contribute per year to improve & maintain open space and recreational resources in Sterling?**

**Note:** Respondents were instructed as follows “Check appropriate box. Please keep in mind that contributions could include non-profit donations, taxes, fees, etc.”

**Quantitative Feedback:**

A. No contribution	8
B. Up to \$50 per year	52
C. Up to \$500 per year	35
D. Over \$500 per year	7
E. Contribute only for specific purposes	40

**Qualitative Feedback:**

E. Contribute only for specific purposes

- From Joyce’s Compilation
  - *Fixed income*
  - *Would give \$ for skateparks especially and for maintenance of football field.*

**General Comments Under Question #7:**

- From Maryanne’s Compilation:
  - *I would be willing to donate money or time into projects that I believed in.*
  - *I would like to see Sterling protect its water resources, especially its underground resources, stop enabling development and really work to protect our farm resources. It should be funded through the current tax base – just like all other departments*
  - *Would prefer to designate specific uses for the money and other than putting it into a “pool”.*
  - *More if we could [up to \$50 marked by respondent]*
  - *Should be non-profit donations or general donations. No to Preservation tax*
  - *I wonder if there could be a state wide initiative to include a gift box attached to tax form for taxpayers to donate to their own town projects. Hopefully it would not be a bureaucratic nightmare but could become a competition of sorts to see which town was the more generous.*
  - *Utilize state and federal grants like other towns do. Who is responsible for writing grants?*
  - *I’d prefer volunteer opportunities to provide free labor rather than pay more taxes.*
  - *Money for saved land should be incorporated into town budget just like school funding is.*
  - *Who would manage the funds? [up to \$50 per year marked by respondent]*
- From Joyce’s Compilation:
  - *\$250-300 would have been a good option.*
  - *Would be nice if conservation organizations allowed you to designate specific projects.*
  - *I would contribute for preserving land in the town.*
  - *Probably \$100/yr.*
  - *We contribute quite a bit through the tax rate!*
  - *Don’t know—it would be based on project*
  - *For kids 12-16 yrs*
  - *All for purchase of land like the airport.*
  - *Most for specific purposes only.*
  - *\$100 is too little and \$500 is too much*
  - *Huge jump from \$50 to \$500/yr! Up to \$200/yr.*
  - *Respondent selected item C. Up to \$500 per household: If billed monthly*
  - *I would make contribution via real estate tax.*
  - *Probably not \$500 but \$50+ for other programs*



- Between \$50 and \$500.

**Question #8: How long have you lived in Sterling?**

**Note:** Survey questions 8, 9 and 10 were optional questions related to demographics. For Question #8, survey respondents were instructed to “Check appropriate box”.

**Quantitative Feedback:**

Less than 5 years	12
5 to 10 years	34
11 to 20 years	28
More than 20 years	51

**Qualitative Feedback:**

- Maryanne’s Compilation: No qualitative notes or comments.
- Joyce’s Compilation: No qualitative notes or comments.

**Question #9: Which of the following best describes your current living situation?**

**Note:** Survey questions 8, 9 and 10 were optional questions related to demographics. For Question #9, survey respondents were instructed to “Check one”.

**Quantitative Feedback:**

Household w/at least 1 child 5 or under	16
Household w/ at least 1 child 6 to 18	37
Household w/ at least 1 child 19 to 25	15
Household with adult children in home	9
Couple with no children in home	34
Single Adult	11
Other:	3
Couple with senior	1

**Qualitative Feedback:**

Other

- Maryanne’s Compilation:
  - Elderly parent

**Question #10: How many people in your household?**

**Note:** Survey questions 8, 9 and 10 were optional questions related to demographics.

**Quantitative Feedback:**

1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people
10	36	41	22	9	3

**Qualitative Feedback:**

- Maryanne’s Compilation: No qualitative notes or comments.
- Joyce’s Compilation: No qualitative notes or comments.

**General Comments Under Question #10:**

- Joyce’s Compilation:
  - one away at college [respondent answer was “3 people”]

**GENERAL RESPONDENT COMMENTS not specifically linked with any specific question:**

- Maryanne's Compilation:
  - *This questionnaire does not really address any of the truly important issues concerning open space. Recreation should be a subject to itself which is reality it already is and since recreation fields are not really open space should not be included. Recreation fields are simply spaces with no building on them, but they have been altered, sometimes severely so to adapt them to organized sports. Nowhere in this survey is the question of "What does Sterling want to do with its saved lands? Could they be used for agricultural purposes, as havens for wildlife, as ecosystems not be to altered, to protect underground water, etc? This survey is severely lacking in really thoughtful questions.*
  - *We need a pushbutton pedestrian light downtown near Woody's. It is very difficult to cross the street .*
  - *We need more enforcement of speed limits downtown and Route 140 especially. Currently, Sterling police make about 50 traffic stops a week. Let's enforce the law with 150 traffic stops per week for pedestrian safety. Let's get the reputation: You cannot speed in Sterling. We have a good chief and police force. They just need a push.*
  - *Everything is in disrepair. Only cemeteries are maintained. We are trying to exist on social security and small pensions. Our taxes are over \$4,000 and increase every year. No more new buildings or projects. High taxes are a joke on seniors.*

- Joyce's Comments:

- *This survey was hard to answer. I hope you get data you can use.*

- Candid Email regarding the survey dated Saturday, September 29, 2007:

*It is good and I am very much in favor of stopping all housing development and maintain open space. Being a 4th generation resident, I have seen the town diminish considerably over my lifetime.*

*However, the wording of the survey seems to be slanted toward what the group wants to hear rather than giving people a means for expressing their real feelings (other than through Comments). So you might only get responses from those who have like ideas (and a few verbal dissenters).*

*Examples:*

- *Item 1B "Balancing the needs of people, wildlife & industry" might be important to someone who reads it to mean, "screw wildlife, build industry to give the people tax relief".*
- *Item 1E "Providing adequate recreation facilities, fields, courts" might be Not Important because we have enough, well maintained facilities.*
- *Item 4 "Enable more water-based activities" may mean swimming or canoeing to some people while it might mean jet skis and speed boats to others. So you don't know what a check mark in that box really means.*
- *Item 4 does not have an option for "schedule fields better"*
- Candid Email regarding the survey dated Tuesday, October 30, 2007:

*So glad you sent this out. I saw it in the publication [The Sterling Meetinghouse News] and thought to myself I wish there was a link to this online somewhere, it was awkward to tear out and then although seemingly simple to drop off, email is easier!!*

*Please don't take offense for my comments/pickiness in the questionnaire, many of the questions/terminology is ambiguous, and thus I can answer from my perspective, but as I usually find, my interpretation/perspective is completely different from what was intended.*

*For instance, **agriculture programs**: both of those terms have a wide meaning: **agriculture** could mean anything from home gardening to forestry (and the new chapter 61 b tax & landuse "programs") to commercial farming with chemicals to the woes of organic beekeeping; and **programs** could mean anything from state gov't grants to educational workshops. And of course I'm interested in a lot of it, but at what level and what expense/tradeoff.*

