



Westborough Community Land Trust

March 21, 2011

To: Westborough State Hospital Reuse Commission
From: Westborough Community Land Trust
RE: Comments on the Westborough State Hospital Property Reuse Report

The Board of Directors of the Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT) has reviewed the Recommendations for Reuse of Westborough State Hospital Property by Sasaki Associates, dated 2/16/11, and would like to offer the following comments for your consideration.

Reuse Recommendations

The Westborough Community Land Trust supports the idea of reuse of the Westborough State Hospital for an appropriate level of mixed residential/retail and open space uses. To best direct your reuse planning, we think it is critical for the Commission and its consultants to understand the importance of the existing open space at Westborough State Hospital, particularly along the northern shore of Lake Chauncy. This area is one of Westborough's greatest natural resources. The beauty and bounty of Lake Chauncy have sustained Town residents from its earliest settlement in the 17th century to the present day. Westborough State Hospital's natural spaces are also an integral part of the largest contiguous wildlife corridor in the region, nearly 1200 acres, reaching from Westborough to Framingham. For these reasons, it is imperative that this wildlife corridor not be fragmented. Open space of such vital importance to humans and wildlife is rare and, once developed, can never be regained.

The Westborough Community Land Trust strongly recommends that all retail/residential construction be restricted to restoration/reuse of the existing buildings where possible, and otherwise, all new construction should only occur within the limits of the existing built environment.

In our view, the existing open space at Westborough State Hospital property, specifically in the area surrounding Lake Chauncy, should continue to be preserved for the benefit of its citizens as a public natural area. We recommend therefore that the contiguous open land south of and including the Superintendent's Cottage and west of Hospital Road (Parcels C,E,F,G,H) remain as open space. This spectacular scenery, including the Great Lawn and northern lake shore, should be permanently protected as a public park for the enjoyment of all. Our recommendation would accomplish both goals of adaptive reuse and land preservation. This would bring revenue to the Town without losing one of its most beautiful natural places to development.

Trail Considerations

WCLT has a working agreement with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife to use the existing trails as delineated on the Trail Network site analysis map in the Reuse Plan (p.13). The current

trails are not affected by the Reuse Plan, but we would like assurance that these trails will remain open to the public.

- A new trail at the bottom of the slope to the northwest of the Kennedy School was approved in 2006 by the Department of Capital Asset Management. WCLT requests to be allowed to develop this new trail to connect with the existing trail network and that this land remain open space.
- The major access point to the open space at the rear of the Great Lawn is along the lake shore road. We would like to ensure that public access and the current number of parking spaces (8) at this location are preserved.

The natural beauty along the north shores of Lake Chauncy has been enjoyed as public property for more than 150 years. This is a unique opportunity to give the community a beautiful park as part of its permanent heritage. The Board of the Westborough Community Land Trust believes that the reuse of Westborough State Hospital can balance the proposed development and restoration work with the retention of existing open space. This would meet the true meaning of Smart Growth while enhancing the quality of life for all residents of Westborough and its surrounding communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these plans. We would be happy to meet with the Reuse Commission to discuss these comments in more detail and work toward a suitable plan for the reuse of Westborough State Hospital.

Sincerely,

John Metzger, President
Westborough Community Land Trust
WCLT Executive Board

CC:

Sen. James Eldridge
Rep. George Peterson
Rep. Carol Dykema
Rep. Matthew Beaton
Carole Cornelison, Commissioner, DCAM
Mary Beth Clancy, DCAM
William Davis, Fisheries and Wildlife
Westborough Board of Selectmen
Westborough Planning Board
Westborough Conservation Commission
Westborough Open Space Committee
Westborough Recreation Department

Attachment: WCLT Annual Report 2010