Discovery: Open Space & Recreation

Shrewsbury Master Plan

ABOUT

Open space refers to undeveloped areas such as conservation land, forested land, recreation land, and agricultural land. These areas play a variety of environmental, economic, and social roles for a community. Shrewsbury offers a diverse range of open space that has been increasingly utilized by the town's growing population and visitors.

Shrewsbury hosts a total of 1,280 acres of open space. As reported by Mass Audubon, Shrewsbury had one of the highest rates of development in Massachusetts, with an average of 6.8 acres per square mile developed annually between 2012 through 2017.[1]

Over 75 percent of open space areas in Shrewsbury today are protected in perpetuity, and a further 20 percent have limited protections.[2]

Park space in Shrewsbury may vary in accessibility. The Shrewsbury Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan of 2022 identifies gaps, including the need for additional accessible routes, more level trails, field maintenance, and improvements to signage and accessible parking. A 2024 Playground Assessment further identified repairs needed for every playground surveyed in Shrewsbury, some urgently.

An estimated 9 percent of people in Shrewsbury's zip code (01545) participate in volunteer groups, a relatively high percentage compared to neighboring zip codes and Worcester County as a whole (7 percent).[3]

KEY HIGHLIGHTS SINCE THE 2016 MASTER PLAN

- ✓ Shrewsbury documented and added estimated habitats to the National Heritage & Endangered Species Program.
- ✓ Based on recommendations from the 2020 Open Space & Recreation Plan, the town applied to several federal and state grants and won funding to expand trails, improve hazard mitigation efforts, and increase local climate change resiliency.
- ✓ The town established a Community Preservation Committee, which stewards funding for open space-related projects such as Arrowwood Park improvements, Dean Park basketball courts, open space acquisition, and ADA accessibility improvements.

DID YOU KNOW?

9% of land in Shrewsbury is Open Space

Shrewsbury featured **201** recreation programs with **4,078 registrations** in 2025

75% of Open Space in Shrewsbury is protected in perpetuity

Shrewsbury hosts **19** distinct parks

1,064 Boat Ramp Passes were issued for use of **2** boat ramps in 2025

Shrewsbury hosted 18 Community & Special Events, and 7 Summer Concerts in 2025

OPEN SPACE BY OWNERSHIP

Open Space Owner	Parcels	Acreage	Percent of Total Open Space
Municipal	92	907	71%
State	8	175	14%
Private For-Profit	8	122	10%
New England Foresty Foundation Land Trust	1	75	6%
First Congregational Church	1	1	Less than 1 %

Source: MassGIS (July 28, 2026).

1. 2020 Town of Shrewsbury Open Space and Recreation Plan.
2. MassGIS, 2026.
3. Chetty, Jackson, Kuchler, Stroebel, et al. Nature, Social Capital Atlas, 2022.