

# PAWTUCKET FARM WILDLIFE SANCTUARY FRAMEWORK PLAN

Formerly Rollie's Farm



Prepared for Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust,  
Mass Audubon and Mill City Grows  
Lowell, Massachusetts  
October 17, 2022  
Prepared by: Agency Landscape + Planning



## The Partnership

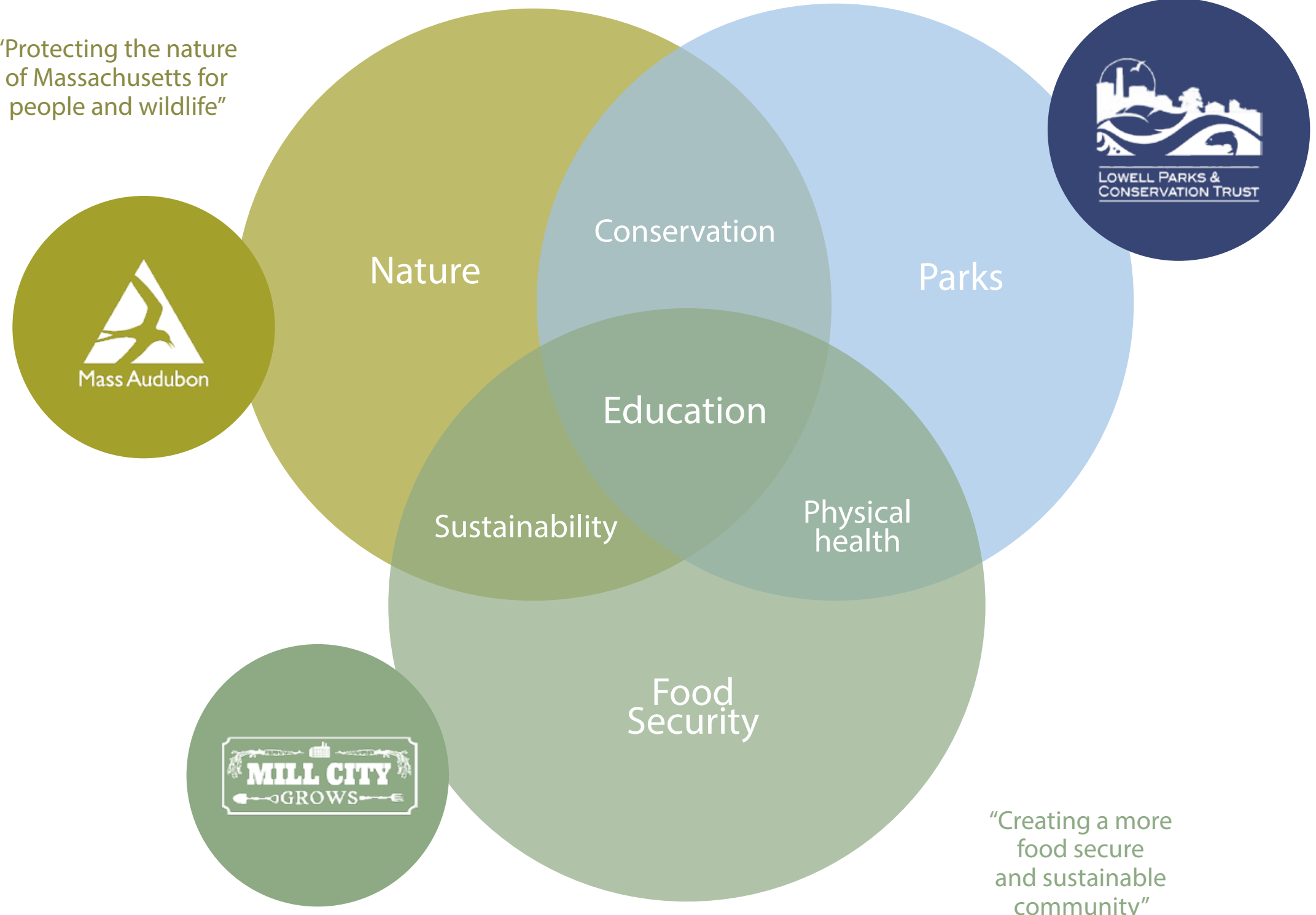
Mass Audubon + Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust + Mill City Grows

Rollie's Farm is a 20-acre Christmas tree and produce farm, operated by multiple generations of the Perron family for over 70 years. This is the last remaining family farm in Lowell and the last significant piece of undeveloped land in the city. This land also provides a critical ecological link between the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsboro State Forest and the Merrimack River.

When the Perron family sought to sell their property, a unique partnership came together to ensure the land would remain agriculturally productive, ecologically healthy, and beneficial to the Lowell community for generations to come. Mass Audubon, Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, and Mill City Grows, in collaboration with the City of Lowell, have reached an agreement with the Perron family to purchase and protect in perpetuity what is currently called Rollie's Farm.

The Framework Plan that follows provides a vision for the future of Rollie's Farm, building on the land's potential, community engagement, and collaboration between these partner organizations. The plan is a sustainable vision that allows for each of these three organizations to further their individual missions - for food security, nature, and parks - while also allowing for collaboration, shared interests, and more diverse programming than any could do alone.

"Protecting the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife"



"Improving the quality of life for the people of Lowell through education and through the conservation of special places"

"Creating a more food secure and sustainable community"

## Plan Principles

### Design Guidelines

Throughout the summer of 2022, the Framework Planning team and the partnership hosted a series of community forums, focus groups, and pop-up events throughout the City of Lowell. Various open-ended questions and activities were created to enable community members to share their thoughts, ideas and concerns for the future of the farm. With great consistency, community members expressed optimism about the future of the farm and gratitude for the opportunity to preserve and expand the farm's community benefit.

From those conversations, the team synthesized four commonly-held principles. These four principles express the community's vision and guide the partners in planning for future change: Access for All, Education and Recreation, Growing Space and Ecological Sanctuary. These principles we presented as part of the draft vision with the community and now help to organize the Framework Plan on the following pages.

### ACCESS FOR ALL



Learn how trails, programs, facilities and way-finding can be enjoyed by and welcome all!

### EDUCATION AND RECREATION



See how the future will include active and passive opportunities for learning and gathering.

### GROWING SPACE



Imagine the existing farmlands cultivating culturally connected foods for the Lowell community.

### ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP



Explore how restoration of diverse critical habitats can heal the site's existing ecology.

# Pawtucket Farm Wildlife Sanctuary Plan Vision

The Framework Plan is a vision that provides a clear roadmap to guide future investments. It does this first by imagining a few distinct zones of use which are aligned with the community's needs and the plan's principles.

Low-lying existing farmland along Varnum Avenue is re-purposed as community farming and larger growing plots. Nearby, the existing pond is enhanced for ecological value and biodiversity. The existing farmhouse is renovated as a new operations hub - for staff office, support space, and storage for farming uses. At the north edge of the frontage, a new, safe entrance drive and parking lead to a drop-off area, Education Center, farm stand and community plaza.

Moving up the hill into the existing Christmas tree farm, places of pause, overlook, learning, and play are interwoven with extensive, accessible trail loops through a restored ecological landscape of heathland, shrubland, and forest.

**Farm & Sanctuary Features**

① Cultural Gardens	⑬ Overlook Hill
② High Tunnel Greenhouses	⑭ Hammock Hill + Nature Play Area
③ Community + Market Gardens	⑮ Restored Wetland
④ Cold storage + Produce Washing	⑯ Trailhead Outpost
⑤ Staff Offices + Storage	⑰ Pond Education Dock
⑥ Pavilion	⑱ All-Persons Trail
⑦ Education Center + Farm Stand	
⑧ Food Forest	
⑨ Parking	
⑩ Bus Drop Off	
⑪ Arrival Plaza	
⑫ Outdoor Classroom	



## Listening Sessions + Focus Groups General Public

The Framework Plan is the result of a community-engaged process that included a number of outreach and engagement events. Three distinct community forums called "Listening Sessions" welcomed broad, public engagement.

At Listening Sessions 1 and 2, poster board exhibits shared key analysis findings while offering an interactive game for community members to vote on future desired uses and programs. At Listening Session 3, a hybrid in-person and virtual meeting allowed community members to preview and offer feedback on the draft plan.

Six curated focus groups gathered cultural, ecological and community experts as well as native Spanish, Portuguese and Khmer speakers in rousing conversation.

200+  
total attendees

730+  
program  
votes cast!

180+  
ideas shared!

23  
communities  
reached!



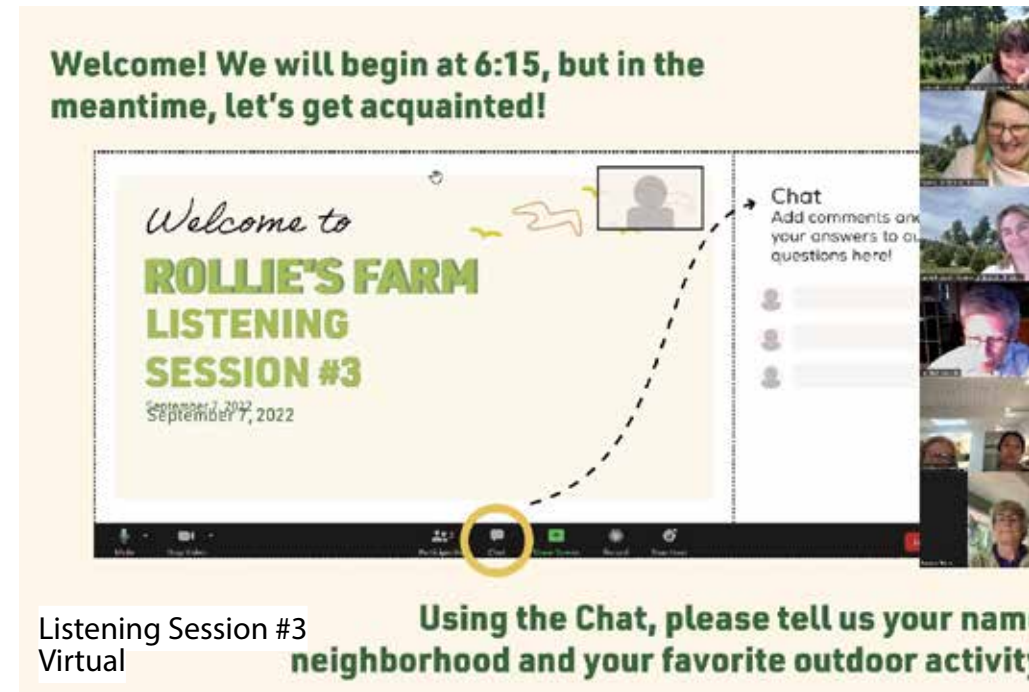
Listening Session #1  
Wang Middle School



Listening Session #2  
Shedd Park



Listening Session #3  
UMass Lowell



Listening Session #3  
Virtual

Using the Chat, please tell us your name, neighborhood and your favorite outdoor activity!



Focus Groups  
Spanish, Khmer, Portuguese

## Engagement Takeaways

Listening Sessions + Focus Groups

The Framework Plan recommends strategies and action based on a synthesis of community priorities and feedback. Feedback included support of key initiatives with a priority on food production and nature engagement.

234 Food production

258 Nature

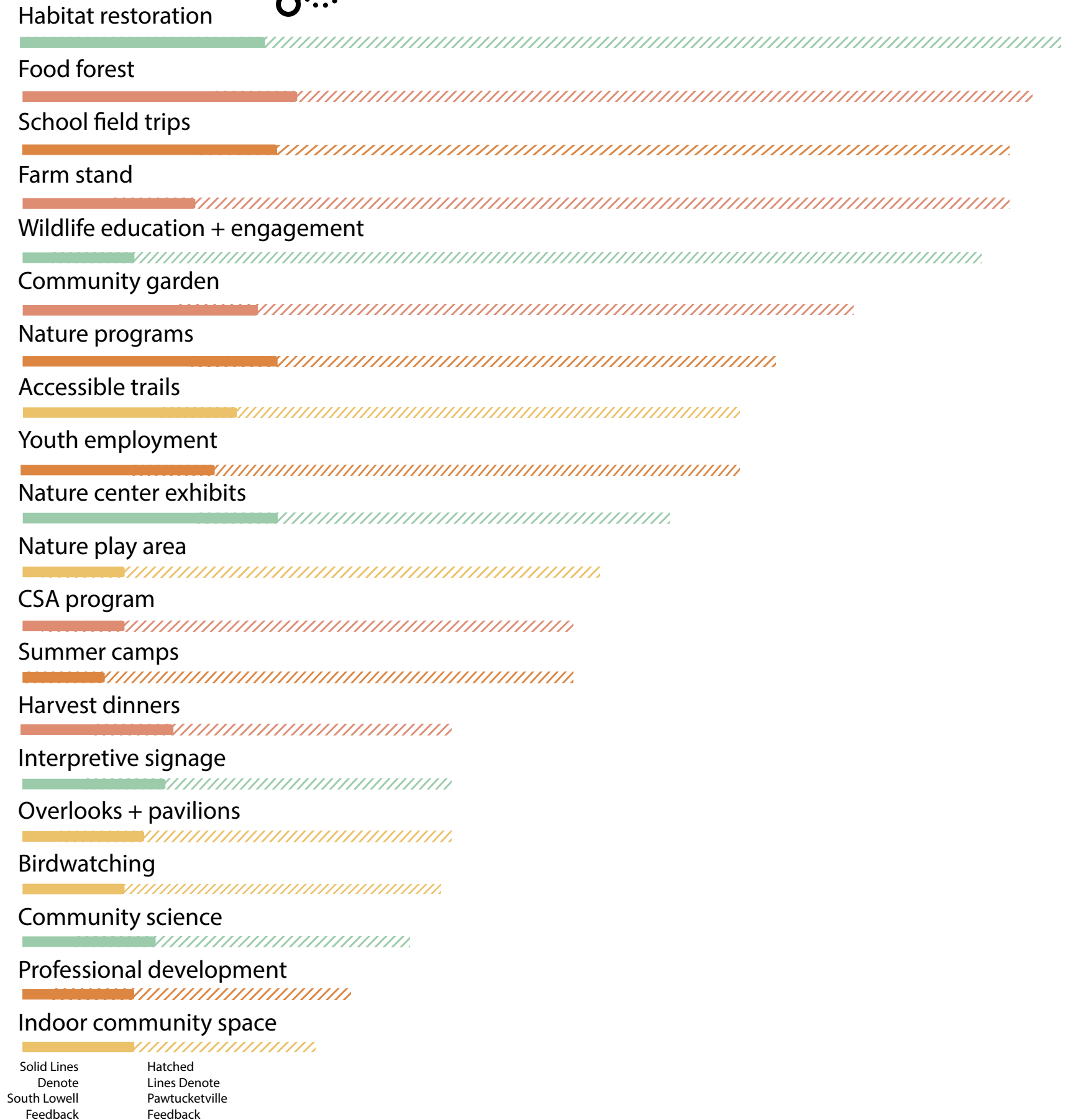
220 Education

160 Recreation

#1 from Shedd Park!

Over 870 votes!

#1 in Pawtucketville!



## Get Involved

### Looking Ahead to Next Steps

Our team is continuing to refine the design for the property and will be gathering more community input. For more information on how you can support the future of Pawtucket Farm, please contact us:

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