

## Introduction:

The preliminary draft Open Space Baseline Inventory review has been completed. This report is based on information reviewed from three key areas:

1. Milford's GIS ArcMap,
2. Assessor records,
3. Deeds and Maps from the City Clerks records

This report includes undeveloped parcels that are owned by:

1. City
2. State
3. Federal
4. Milford Land Conservation Trust
5. Private - Deed Restricted properties – some are not for public access & some privately owned but used for Recreational access such as the YMCA or Great River Golf Course
6. Charles E. Wheeler Wildlife Management Area – 585 acres even though this is not technically a city Assessor's parcel but has been included in previous Open Space calculations.
7. ***This baseline list of properties includes properties that are protected by deed restrictions and properties that are un-protected.***

## Open Space Definition

The State of CT, Assessor, P&Z department each views and defines parcels differently in terms of what is open space.

**State of CT** : The previous State Statute, Sec. 7-131c for Open Space Land, Definitions, was repealed July 1, 1998.

The definition of protected open space used in CT DEP's Protected Open Space Mapping (POSM) project, referenced throughout the current *CT Green Plan*, is:

*Protected open space is defined as: (1) Land or interest in land acquired for the permanent protection of natural features of the state's landscape or essential habitat for endangered or threatened species; or (2) Land or an interest in land acquired to permanently support and sustain non-facility-based outdoor recreation, forestry and fishery activities, or other wildlife or natural resource conservation or preservation activities.*

(source: [http://www.cteco.uconn.edu/metadata/dep/document/PROTECTED\\_OPEN\\_SPACE\\_DATA\\_FGDC\\_Plus.htm](http://www.cteco.uconn.edu/metadata/dep/document/PROTECTED_OPEN_SPACE_DATA_FGDC_Plus.htm))

**Assessor Guidelines:** At the municipal level, the Assessor’s Department is guided by State Statutes for property Tax Assessment, Chapter 203. This statute does define Open Space land. [http://www.cga.ct.gov/2013/pub/chap\\_203.htm#sec\\_12-107b](http://www.cga.ct.gov/2013/pub/chap_203.htm#sec_12-107b)

(3) The term “open space land” means any area of land, including forest land, land designated as wetland under section 22a-30 and not excluding farm land, the preservation or restriction of the use of which would (A) maintain and enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources, (B) protect natural streams or water supply, (C) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes, (D) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries or other open spaces, (E) enhance public recreation opportunities, (F) preserve historic sites, or (G) promote orderly urban or suburban development;

**Milford’s Zoning Regulations** specifies a purpose and a definition.

- Purpose of **OPEN SPACE**: The preservation of open spaces and natural features of the land.
- Definition of an open space district (Sec. 3.14) is “Land that is dedicated to remain largely in an undeveloped state for purposes of providing passive or active recreation, wildlife or nature preserves, farmland, forests, and other open space purposes, shall be classified as Open Space.”

In Milford, parcels that are deed restricted as Open Space may not be zoned as open space. Conversely, properties that are zoned as open space may not be deed restricted. Often deed restricted parcels are only referenced as “open space” on the deed or map. Rarely are the conservation restrictions or easements defined.

Also included are “developed” properties such as golf courses and cemeteries. City schools and Parsons have also been included however, primary buildings and parking areas have been excluded from the estimated open space areas.

## Plan of Conservation and Development

### Open Space Corridors

Milford’s 2012 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) page 28 provided the following guidance.

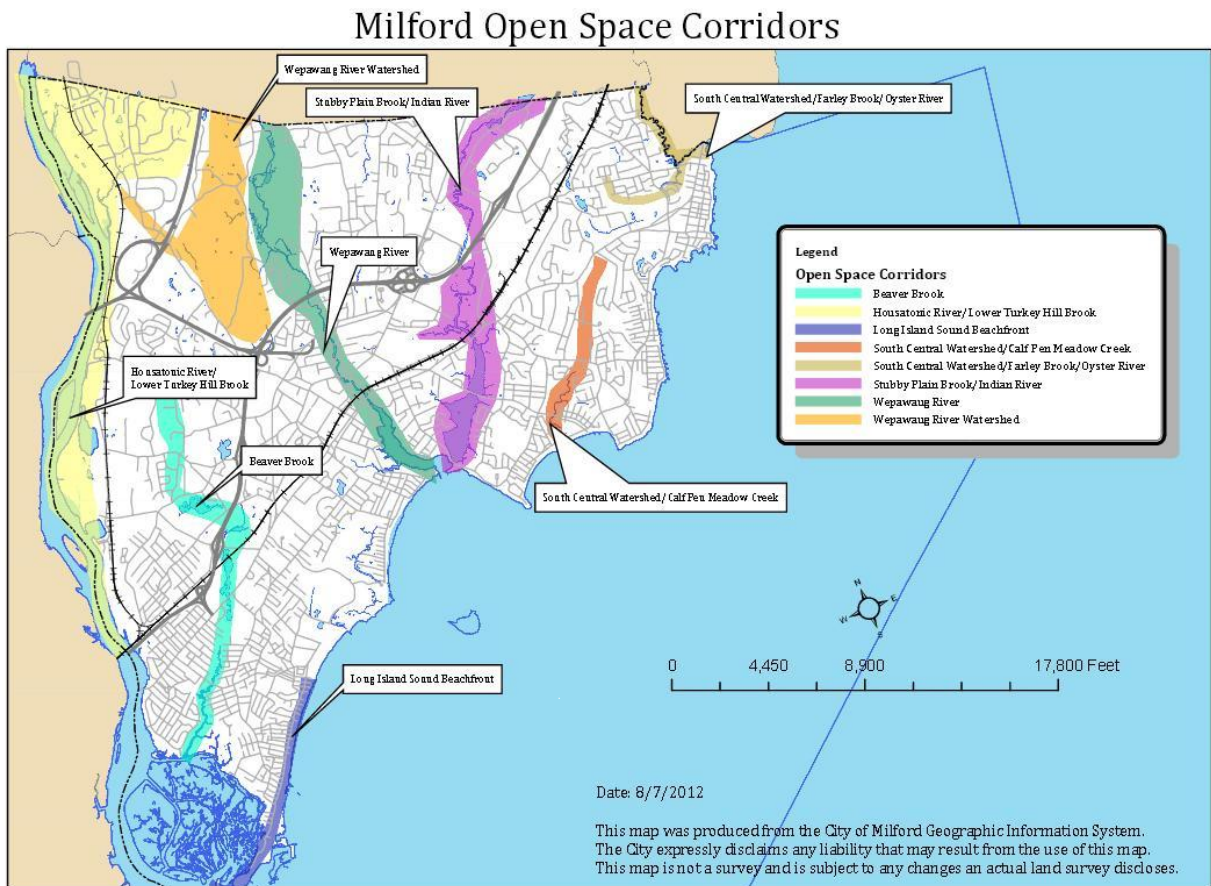
“As Milford is a coastal community at the base of several watersheds, the City’s greenways are defined by waterways. Nine (9) areas were targeted in the City’s last two plans (1973 and 2002) for preservation and conservation. These areas continue to have lasting importance as greenway corridors targeted for preservation, although some have been consolidated in this Plan resulting in just seven (7) combined resource/greenway corridors. Greenbelts are defined

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as the entire preserved corridor left in its natural state for habitat preservation and greenways are paths or connected access points that provide public access which can be located within these corridors. Where possible, greenways should be identified within the greenbelt areas to provide better passive recreation oversight and so that Milford's citizens can experience these unique natural environments."

These seven combined resource / greenway corridors are:

1. Wepawaug River and Watershed Corridor
2. Housatonic River Corridor/Lower Turkey Hill Brook Greenbelt
3. Beaver Brook Corridor
4. Long Island Sound Beachfront/Tidal Marshland Protection
5. Stubby Plain Brook/Indian River Corridor
6. Calf Pen Meadow Creek Corridor
7. Oyster River and Farley Brook Corridor



Our POCD recommends that it;

“should be a high priority to acquire properties where possible within these seven (7) designated greenbelt/ greenway areas and to locate public access point and greenways where possible.

### Preservation and Acquisition

In purchasing prior open space properties, the City has relied heavily on the State DEEP Open Space Grant program. This program has specific criterion or land that may be purchased as part of the program. Properties need to meet one of the following open space characteristics:

Land that is:

1. Valuable for recreation, forestry, fishing, conservation or wildlife or natural resources;
2. A prime natural feature of the state's landscape;
3. Habitat for native plant or animal species listed as threatened, endangered or of special concern;
4. A realively undisturbed, outstanding example of an uncommon native ecological community;
5. Important for enhancing and conserving water quality;
6. Valuable for preserving local agricultural heritage; or
7. Eligible to be classified as Class 1 or Class II watershed land.

The City has additional open space acquisition goals that include:

1. Areas adjacent to City owned , State or Milford Land Conservation Trust open space properties.
2. Areas adjacent to other open space parcels that could provide connected passive recreation opportunities.
3. Areas with the 100-year floodplain or the floodway.
4. Areas within the seven (7) greenbelts/greenways"

### Open Space Mapping

Our GIS department maps the open space parcels based on guidance from the Assessor. Our current mapping has not been updated since before the 2012 Plan of Conservation and Development. I have identified parcels that need to be corrected. Once these corrections can be completed by the Assessor, the parcel updates will need to be reflected in the GIS system for mapping and planning purposes. To date, 642 parcels and 3,184 acres have been identified.

Comparing this to an estimated total area calculation of 26.1 square miles (16,704 acres), the estimated open space is 19.1%.

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Open Space parcels and area calculations will be subject to change during on-going research. This research was assisted by Steve Kraffmiller, Open Space Advisory Committee member. Properties have been identified that will require further review by the Assessor and GIS personnel to resolve reported issues. Where data is inconsistent, I have estimated the open space area until the additional information is confirmed.

Below are listed several initial observations from the perspective of Watersheds, Parcels and Acreage. Not reported yet are breakdowns of deed restricted parcels.

The 2012 POCD listed 47 Deed Restricted Open Space (DROS) parcels in yellow. This research has uncovered an estimated 161 DROS parcels totaling an estimated 816 acres. This increase of 114 DROS parcels is almost entirely identified from previously "Town Owned" parcels in the 2012 POCD listing and a few that had no previous classification. Milford Land Conservation Trust parcels are counted separately totalling 30 parcels and 119 acres. The specific deed restrictions have been photocopied or noted for reference and included with filed documentation on each individual parcel. The oldest deed restriction uncovered so far dates back to 1897 ensuring public beach access:

*This deed is made however upon the following express conditions to wit~*

*That the premises herein conveyed shall be and remain forever open for the free and unobstructed use of the public for the purposes of travel between Trumbull Avenue and Long Island Sound".*

*18th November, 1897.*

Interestingly, only 60 parcels, 583 acres are zoned as Open Space by P&Z. Rezoning a parcel as Open Space requires a separate P&Z agenda item and a vote to approve the zone change, even if this deed restricted Open Space (DROS) parcel was part of an approved sub-division set aside. Often, this secondary zone change to Open Space was not included once the sub-division was approved.

### Watersheds

Each parcel was identified as being within one or a combination of five (5) regional / sub-regional watershed areas, Housatonic, Wepawaug, Indian River, South Central Shoreline, and Long Island Sound's Charles Island.

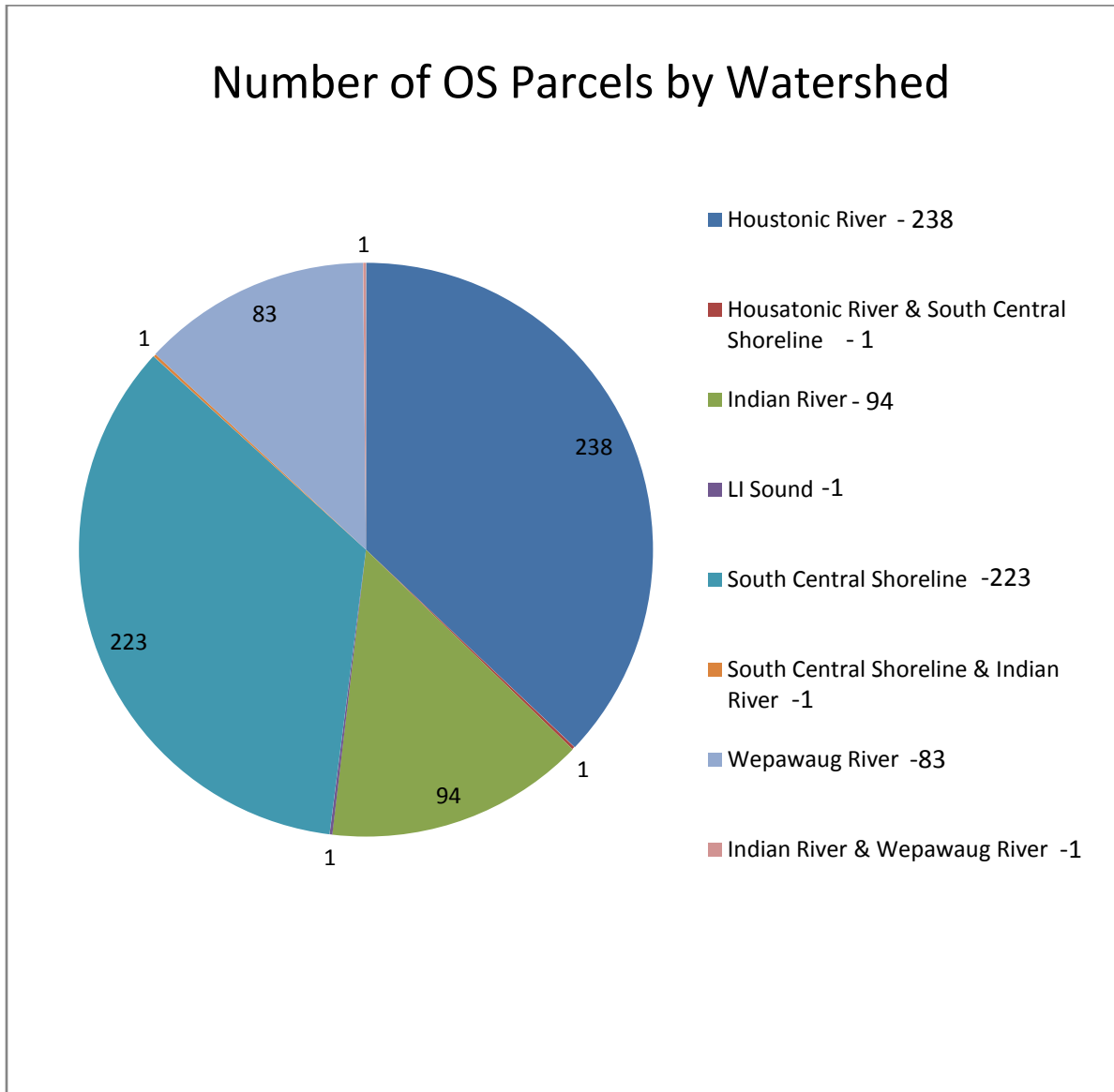
These watersheds are highlighted on the following page.



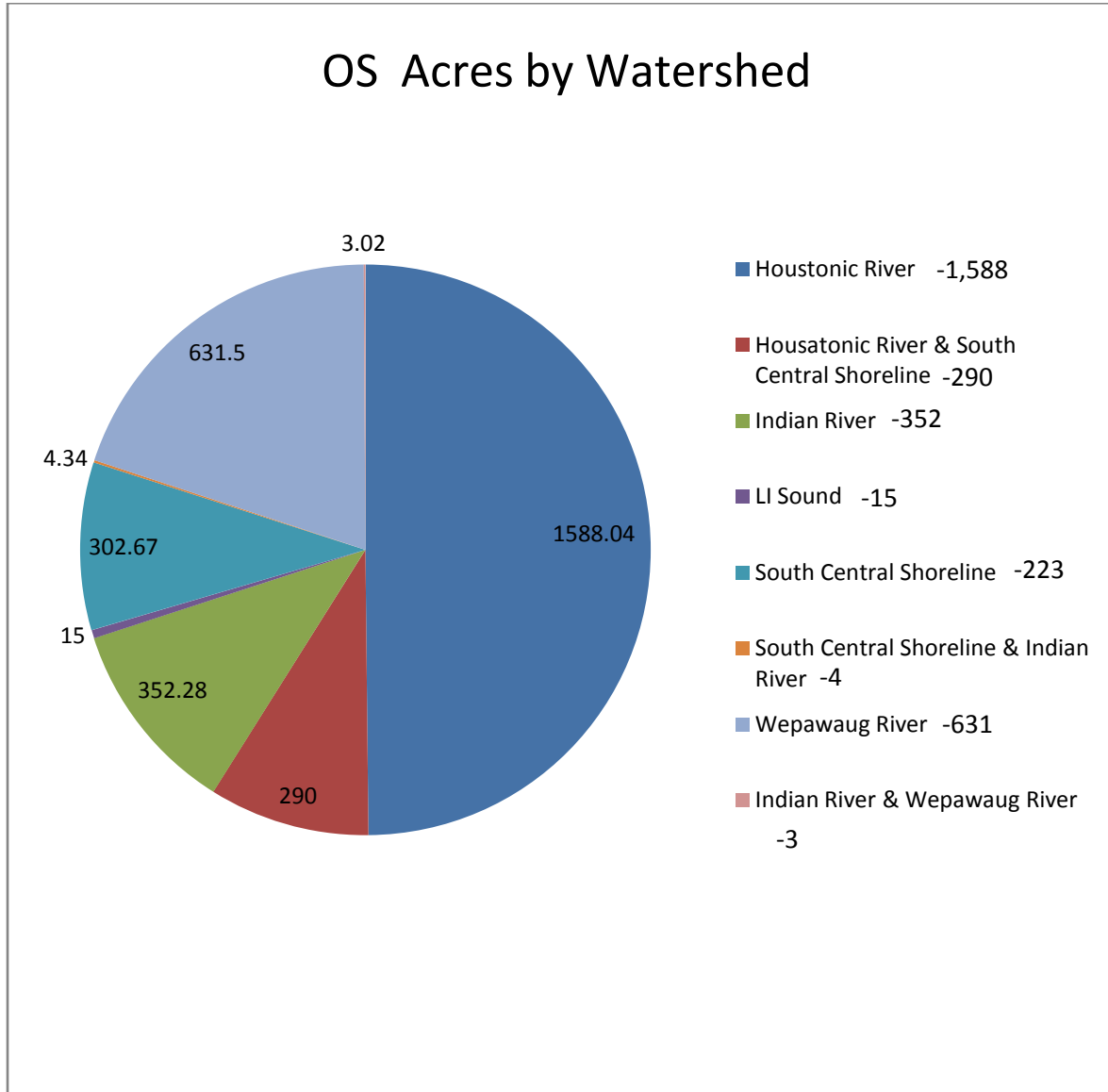
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The number of OS parcels within a watershed shows an interesting balance. The Housatonic and the South Central Shoreline Watersheds share about the same number of parcels, 34% - 38%. The Indian River and Wepawaug Watersheds each have about 13% -14%.

Charles Island is the 15 acres comprising the only Long Island Sound Watershed. Two other parcels span two watersheds. The largest is Silver Sands State Park at 290 acres that is listed as the South Central Shoreline and Indian River.



Viewing Open Space acreage by Watershed offers an important perspective. The Housatonic River Watershed includes 51 % and the Wepawaug Watershed that only included 12% of the parcels comprises 20% of our watershed acreage.





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**Examples of Open Space Properties by Watershed**

<b>Watershed</b>	<b>Parcel</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Established Trail Length (Est.)</b>
Housatonic	Audubon Coastal Center	10	TBD
Housatonic	Beaver Brook – MI-4 West Avenue (Kingdom Life Conservation Easement)	41	1.5
Housatonic	Beaver Brook MI-8 Mondo Ponds	35	1.25
Housatonic	MI-7 Plains Rd, MI-2 Milford Reservoir	80	None
Housatonic	Charles E Wheeler Wildlife Management Area	584 (estimated- this is not a city parcel)	Waterways & Tidal Marsh
Housatonic	Great River Golf Course	95	None
Housatonic	Great River River Trail	TBD	0.33
Housatonic	Milford Point	22	TBD
Housatonic	Nells Island	135	Waterways & Tidal Marsh
Wepawaug River	Eisenhower (multiple parcels including Orchards Golf Course)	220	5
Wepawaug River	Solomon/Alter	100	3
Wepawaug River	North Street & City Hall Ponds/Arboretum		
Wepawaug River	Fowler Field	5	
Wepawaug River	Wilcox Park	12	1
Wepawaug River	Milford Green	5.28	
South Central Shoreline	Silver Sands State Park & Walnut Beach Boardwalk –also a part of Housatonic Watershed	290	TBD
South Central Shoreline	Walnut/Myrtle Beach in front of Heritage Sound, estimated woods only	9.5	TBD
South Central Shoreline	Walker Pond	8.27	1.5
Indian River	Burnt Plains – Red Bush Field		
Indian River	Wampus Lane	33.5	
LI Sound	Charles Island	15	TBD

Presently, we have about seven (7) open space parcels with public access passive hiking trails measuring approximately 15 miles. During the early in 2016, these trails are being GPS'd by the Open Space Agent that will be mapped by the South Central Regional Council of Government's regional trail project. Public

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Works helped clear the Eisenhower Park trails used by Cross Country Teams in 2014. It is hopeful that a collaborative Public Works & Volunteer Trail Steward effort can be initiated. This is needed to sustain the safety and access for the public.

Other open space parcels that have abutting residential properties do have some unofficial trails that are not documented.

One parcel commonly referred to as the Red Root Lane Nature Park has about 18 acres and at one time had some trails. This property off of Wolf Harbor Road in North Milford abuts the Camp Katona Girl Scout Property. These trails no longer exist.

## Number of Parcels

Over 56% of Milford’s parcels are less than 1 acre in size as listed in the chart Group 1 below.

Within that Group 1, 197 or 54% of these parcels are 0.15 acres or less comprising 15.44 acres.

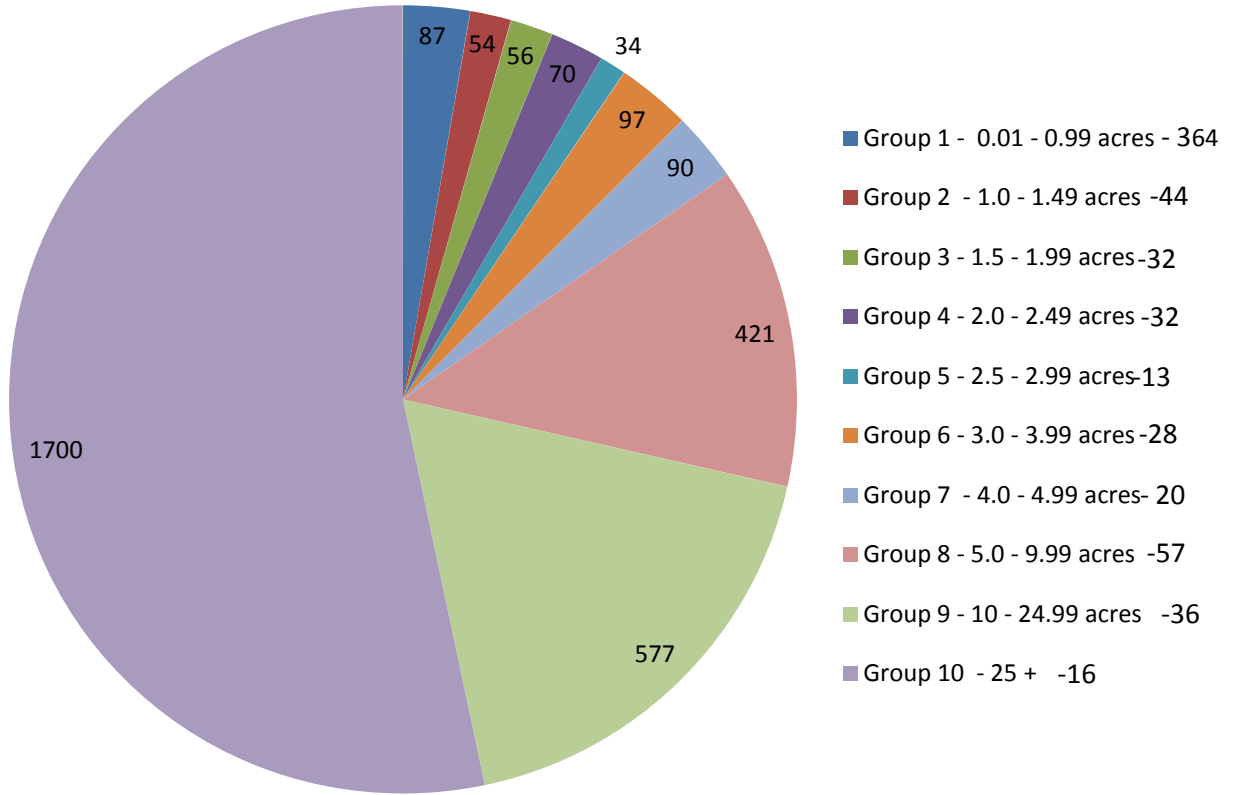
These parcels are concentrated within the higher density properties south of the Post Road.

Forty parcels measure only 0.06 ac, about the equivalent of a lot measuring 50' x 52.25'. For reference, an Acre = 43,560 SF or 188' x 264' (about 90% the size of a football field). The parcels for this report were arbitrarily grouped into the following:

Group 1	0.01 - 0.99 acres
Group 2	1.0 - 1.49 acres
Group 3	1.5 - 1.99 acres
Group 4	2.0 - 2.49 acres
Group 5	2.5 - 2.99 acres
Group 6	3.0 - 3.99 acres
Group 7	4.0 - 4.99 acres
Group 8	5.0 - 9.99 acres
Group 9	10 - 24.99 acres
Group 10	25 +

See the chart on the following page.

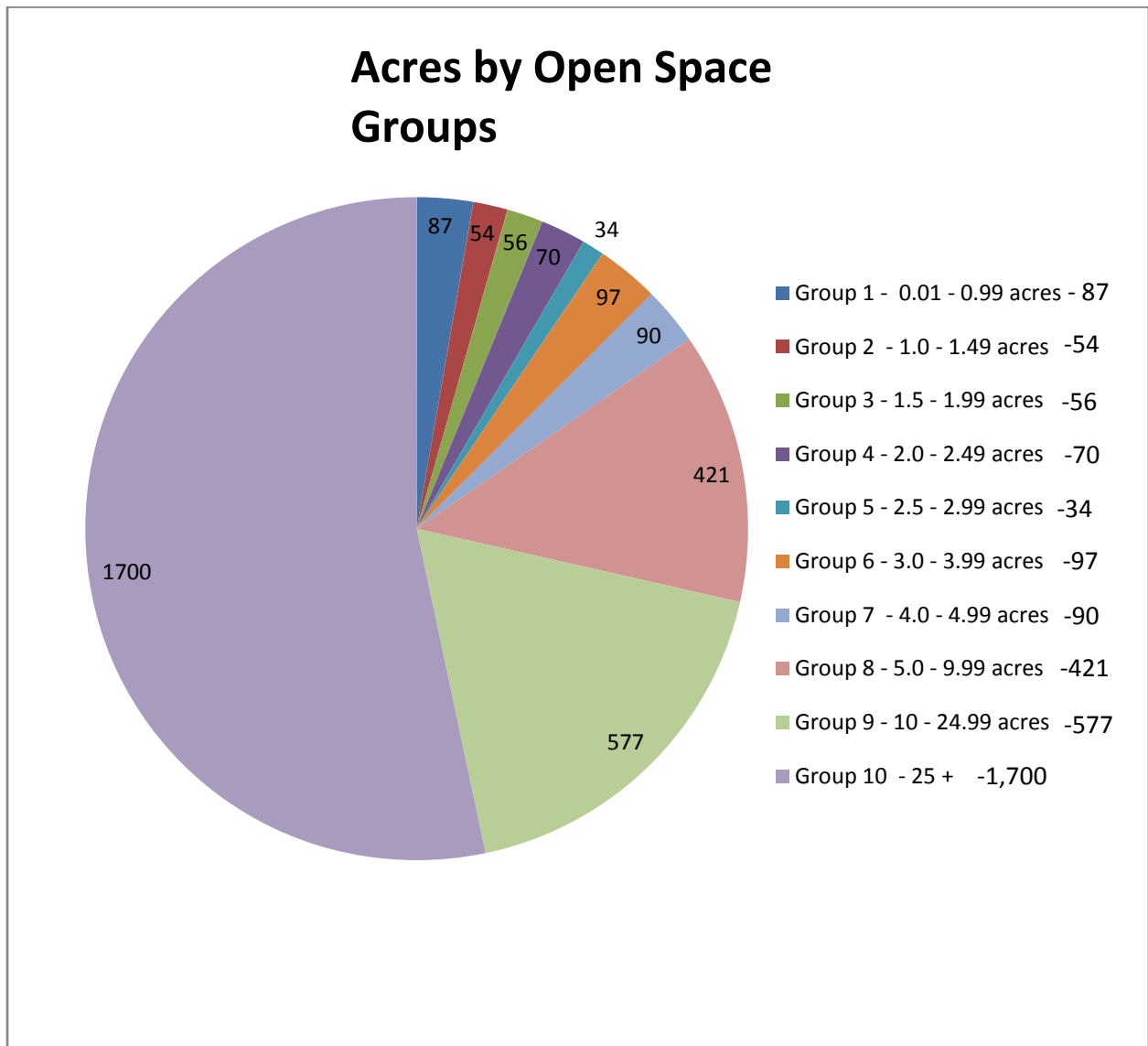
### Parcel Qty by Open Space Groups



### Parcel Acreage

When the same parcel groups are calculated based parcel size, Group 1 comprising over 55% of Milford’s parcels contribute only 2.49% of the open space or 78.9 acres of the open space area we enjoy.

Not surprisingly, the Groups 8, 9 & 10 are the largest segments comprising our open space holdings. These parcels are concentrated north of the Post Road with several important exceptions. The Eisenhower Park, Orchards Golf Course and Solomon properties are over 330 acres combined. South of the Post Road the largest properties are Charles E. Wheeler Wildlife Management Area of 585 acres and Silver Sands State Park at 290 acres.



## Draft Summary:

Dan Thomas, John Hangen, Meghan McGaffin, and the City Clerk's department have all been a tremendous help throughout this research process. With over 20,000 parcels in the City, the previous efforts documenting the open space was a great benefit.

This first pass at the data will need to be reviewed by the various interested stakeholders. It is currently in an Excel Workbook format. Reporting has been accomplished using Pivot Tables within Excel.

Three additional parcel types are not included and will need to be added to this before a final review.

- First, approximately thirty nine PA-490 Agricultural properties representing about 263 acres will be added. These are privately owned and are an important agricultural resource that should be included.
- Secondly, condominium developments need to be reviewed for any DROS as part of their development. GIS does not currently reflect this.
- Conservation Restrictions / Easements deserve further deed and map research and inclusion into this report. Some have been documented but not all have been identified at this time.

Each of the parcels should also include two additional pieces of data that is not currently included, flood zone and hurricane surge inundation, if applicable. Each parcel will need to be reviewed within GIS to confirm.

Once parcel updates and corrections are resolved, an Open Space parcel map will need to be updated to reflect the updated information. Mapping this information will be valuable for future open space greenway corridor planning and potential acquisition criteria.

Each parcel's zoning, Assessor Use and POCD land use classification has been documented in addition to the DROS status. A future report on these distinctions will be provided for review.

Prioritizing the open space parcels will be important for creating individual open space parcel management plans on select parcels. The identification of open spaces within the watershed sub-regions will be helpful for that management and potential acquisition planning.

Finally, each parcel was reviewed and captured up to 28 data points.(30 Data Points after the Flood Zone and Surge Inundation data is included.) A hard copy file has been created for each parcel or groups of related parcels that will help provide a continued source of reference. Files are stored in a 5 drawer cabinet in my office. Each file is listed by street address and Map Block and Parcel ID.