



## The Riverwalk Trail Enhancement Project

### What is the Riverwalk Trail Project?

The Riverwalk is an existing wooded trail along the Sudbury River and the north-side of Mill Pond near downtown Ashland Center. Historically, trail access has been restricted due to traffic safety hazards at and near the VFW and Marathon Park, private land ownership at the Mill Pond end of the trail, and limited parking and accessibility. Mill Pond Park has been marginally accessible to people with disabilities, and no part of the trail was ADA-compliant. Enhancements to the trail eliminate many of the previous access issues, and the ADA improvements will allow those individuals with disabilities to enjoy a trail experience, something they are currently unable to do in Ashland.

### What trail enhancements have been completed?

- Handicap accessible observation platform at the northwest end of Mill Pond, handicap accessible parking and handicap accessible trail to the observation platform from Ponderosa Road (near the animal kennel);
- A large span pedestrian bridge across the Mill Pond inlet to Mill Pond Park providing direct access to the Bay Circuit Trail and Mill Pond Park; and
- Trail improvements, including privacy screening, behind homes along Sudbury Road.

### What is still being planned?

- Handicap accessible pedestrian bridge crossing the Sudbury River from behind the VFW on Pleasant Street to the Ashland Fish and Game on Ponderosa Road, and a trail extension from Marathon Park; and
- The creation of a spur trail from a proposed parking area at the Sudbury Road DPW secondary access.

### What are the benefits of the completed and planned improvements?

Overall, studies have shown the far-reaching benefits of trails: healthy recreation; safe and multi-modal transportation, including Safe Routes to School; conservation and preservation of open space; enjoyment of the environment with minimal impact; economic revitalization and increased property values due to a valued community amenity; enhanced quality of life; improved sense of community; and educational and historic preservation opportunities such as guided walks, science talks and educational kiosks.

Specific benefits of the Riverwalk Trail include:

- ***Access for people with disabilities:*** The ADA compliant pedestrian bridge, observation platform and trail from Ponderosa Road to the observation platform site provide access for people with disabilities.
- ***Enjoyment of nature and educational opportunities:*** The ADA compliant observation platform, located at a small cove of Mill Pond, provides an excellent location for nature lectures, outdoor science classes, observation of wildlife, enjoyment of the natural environment and general relaxation by residents of all ages.
- ***Ability to safely circumnavigate Mill Pond and enjoy more recreational activities:*** The large span pedestrian bridge across the Mill Pond inlet provides the ability to circumnavigate Mill Pond safely, primarily on public property with a portion of the trail on an easement through private property. The bridge and Mill Pond also allow for additional water-based activities such as boating, birding, wildlife viewing, and fishing.

- ***Mill Pond Park expansion and improved parking:*** The expansion of Mill Pond Park and the parking lot encourage increased use of the park, an amenity close to downtown.
- ***Connecting downtown and key recreation destinations:*** The trail extends pedestrian access to downtown Ashland and existing recreational areas (e.g., Gryncel Park, 2 boat launches along the Sudbury River, Mill Pond Park, recreation fields at the Ashland Fish and Game property and fishing pond, Marathon Park, and the VFW play area). When the proposed VFW bridge is completed, the trail will provide a direct link to the existing MBTA public transportation portal through the Marathon Park trail extension.
- ***Enhanced the Riverwalk section of the regional Bay Circuit Trail:*** In addition to its value as part of Ashland's open space and recreation facilities, the Riverwalk Trail is a vital part of the Bay Circuit Trail, a 200-mile regional trail extending through 34 towns in eastern Massachusetts. This permanent recreation trail and greenway corridor links parks and open spaces that surround metropolitan Boston from Ipswich and Newbury in the north to Duxbury and Kingston in the south. Ashland is a vital link in this trail. The Riverwalk makes the Ashland section of the Bay Circuit Trail more enjoyable, scenic and accessible, and makes Ashland a more desirable place to visit.

## An aerial view of the Riverwalk Trail:

