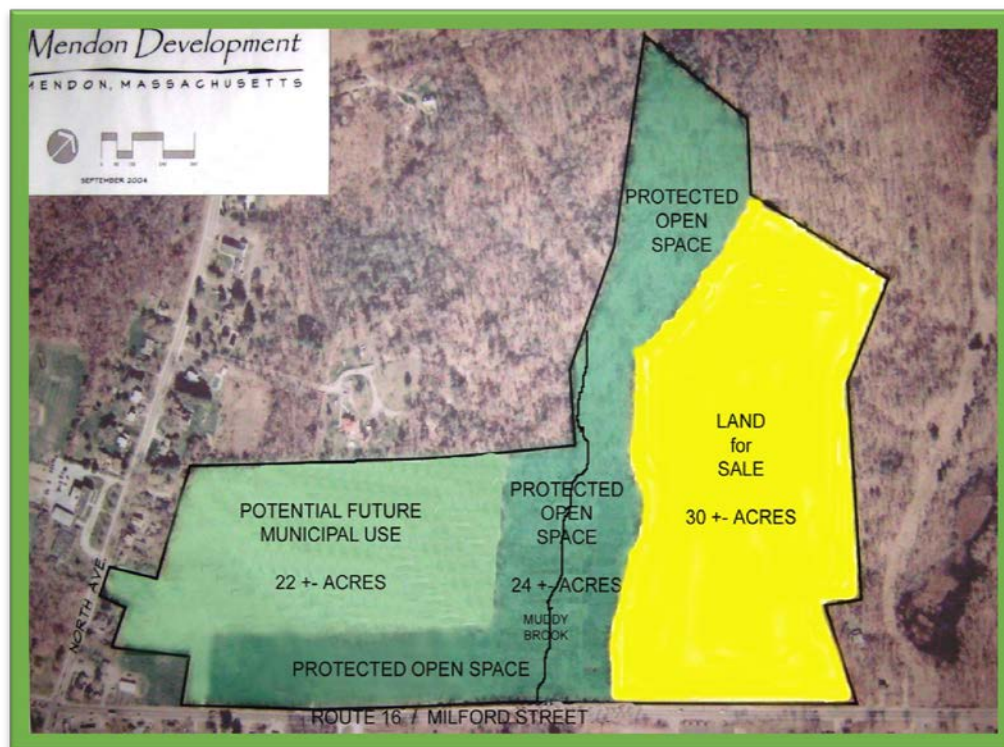


Introduction: History of the Land Purchase

In 2004 the Town of Mendon purchased a 76- acre parcel of land along Milford Street (Route 16) and North Ave. Funding was provided through the CPA and general town funds and gained voter approval. For more than 50 years this land operated as an apple orchard owned by the Taft Brothers.

The purchase was based on the anticipation that it could provide the Town with land for future needs including municipal buildings, athletic fields and / or open space for recreation. When it was purchased, the 24-acres along Route 16 and Muddy Brook was designated as protected open space, with a 6-acre portion along Route 16 reserved for agriculture. It was intended to preserve the historic nature and vista of the Hilltop Village of Mendon.



As the Town continues to work towards a comprehensive “best plan” for this land we are looking ahead to incorporating safe pedestrian access along Route 16 and North Ave. In addition, there is an opportunity in the unbuildable section of the Muddy Brook Wet Meadow Area to establish a pollinator garden. This project will focus on improving access to this open space for the use and enjoyment of our community.

Why Establish a Pollinator Garden in this Protected Open Space?

As you can imagine each year the Town loses many acres of land to new development. As forested areas are cleared away there is significant habitat loss not just for animals but plants and pollinators native to our area. Over the years there has been growing concern regarding the decline of our native bee population and other native pollinators not just here but throughout the state and region. Some bumble bees in the northeast including *Bombus terricola*, *Bombus pensylvanicus* and *Bombus affinis* have suffered a significant decline over the past ten years. Along with the loss of forested areas the increased use of pesticides has a growing negative impact as well.

Why We Need Pollinators:

Of the 1,400 crop plants grown around the world that provide all of our food and plant based industrial products almost 80% require pollination by animals.

- More than half of the world's diet of fats and oils comes from animal pollinated plants (palm, canola, sunflower etc.)
- The work of bees and other pollinators result in larger, more flavorful fruits and higher crop yields.
- More than 150 food crops in the US depend on pollinators, including almost all fruit and grain crops.
- The USDA estimates that crops dependent on pollination are worth more than \$10 billion per year. ~US Forest Service

Familiar Crops That Depend on Pollinators:

Apples, Peaches, Plums, Pears, Black and Red Currants, Alfalfa, Okra, Strawberries, Onions, Green Beans, Cherries, Celery, Figs, Fennel, Quince, Carrots, Cucumber, Cantaloupe, Watermelon, Boysenberries, Beets, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage, Brussels Sprouts, Bok Choy, Turnips, Peppers, Eggplant, Raspberries, Elderberries, Blackberries, Clover, Cranberries, Tomatoes and Grapes and squash and potatoes.

Native Plants – Why is it Important to Restore Native Plants?

Native plants are indigenous species of land and water plants that naturally occur in a particular region, ecosystem and habitat. North American native plants are those that were present prior to European settlement.

- Flowering plants produce breathable oxygen. With the increased burning of fossil fuels and destruction of vital forests carbon dioxide levels are rapidly increasing in the last century. Pollinators are key to restoring some of those native landscape plants. (USFS)

- Flowering plants purify water and prevent soil erosion. Pollinators are instrumental to making sure these plants can reproduce. (USFS)
- Providing a healthy native plant base for these pollinators gives scientists and entomologists the opportunity to track their presence and study the possible causes for their population decline. Installing Pollinator Gardens can help increase their populations and return some of the native plant material lost from development.

The Taft Orchard Pollinator Garden Proposal



Throughout the United States there is a growing trend to reintroduce home and community gardens. In Mendon we have several small-scale produce growers as well as fruit orchards. North Ave is home to a new community garden that was launched several years ago. Farmers in our community offer a host of products and many participate in local farmers markets. We are fortunate to have locally grown food available and expect to see this trend continue to grow.

Part of their ongoing success will depend on the presence of pollinators in the environment. In an effort to help these growers and to aid in the sustainability of our native flora and fauna we are planning to establish a pollinator garden located in the Muddy Brook Open Space area. This area will be cleared of some invasive plant material in order to support a greater variety of native plants.

This project will take approximately 5 years to completion. Components of the project will include the following:

- Removal and management of invasive species of plants and trees
- Development of pathways and trails in and out of the pollinator meadow

- Nature observation areas along Muddy Brook and the Taft Orchard Meadow
- Two boardwalk areas - one that will allow access over the wet areas of the meadow and a second boardwalk and footbridge over Muddy Brook
- Plantings of native shade and flowering trees and shrubs
- Planting native perennials to provide ongoing blooms and color throughout the seasons
- Plantings will focus on providing necessary pollen and nectar for our native pollinators

The goal of this project is to restore the native flora and fauna that has been lost locally. It is a great opportunity to partner with schools and organizations in our community to teach the importance of creating a healthy balance in the environment. There are many opportunities available for volunteers including clearing trails, building boardwalks, building animal and bee habitats, planting, educating the public and enjoying a remarkable open space that is diverse and full of extraordinary wildlife.