



OPEN SPACE PROJECTS **BENEFIT SMALL CITIES**

“Planning for conservation is as significant as planning for development. Open space attracts visitors, residents and businesses, while the increased quality of life invites people to stay” ([Nashville Open Space Plan, p. 23](#)).

These towns and small cities are prioritizing open space (hotlinked)

North Adams,
MA

Allentown,
PA

Iowa City,
IA

Boulder,
CO

Dubuque,
IA

Columbia,
NC

Paducah,
KS

Northampton,
MA

Chimney Rock,
NC

Relevant Case-Studies of Open Space **& River Access Projects:**

Dubuque, Iowa - The *Port of Dubuque Master Plan* aimed to transform area into a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood. In 2002, a 90-acre riverfront revitalization project developed.

Population size: 58,253 in 2013, stable since 2000.

Why and how: Loss of several major employers in early 1980's & never recovered. One aspect of public planning process was redevelopment of the riverfront to help residents & visitors connect with the Mississippi River as people could not access it.

Funding: Combination of city, state and federal source; Dubuque County Historical Society & private investment.

Benefits: Voted one of the 10 best riverfronts by readers of USA Today 2014; named Best Small City to Raise a Family by *Forbes*; 2008 awarded “Most Livable Small City” in the United States by the U.S. Conference of Mayors; businesses are investing in the city; tourists continue to visit & access the river & learn about the town's history; there's a net gain of 1,923 jobs since 2006.

Paducah, Kansas - In 2005, the city created a riverfront redevelopment master plan, alongside investment in the arts community.

Population: 25,048 around 2010.

Why and how: Paducah is a large arts and culture center, but a number of the neighborhoods have been in decline since late 1980s and 1990s.

Funding: Secured federal & state funding (including from Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service).

Benefits: Nearly 400,000 people attended arts events in Paducah during 2007. Around a 55% drop in vacancy rates downtown & a dramatic improvement in the economy & quality of life.

Boulder, Colorado - Boulder Open Space Program now protects almost two-thirds of the Boulder Valley.

Population: 108,090 in 2016.

Why and how: Boulder began, in 1967, acquiring Open Space land to supplement parks land that it owned in and around the City by passing the first tax in the nation to preserve the space. Boulder residents have approved a sales tax increase 4 different times to protect land from overdevelopment.

Funding: Originally a 0.4% Open Space tax by an additional 0.33% & extended through 2018.

Benefits: Provides recreational opportunities for residents & visitors as well as a healthy & resilient ecosystem. A greenbelt in Boulder added \$5.4 million to the total property values of one neighborhood.

Burlington, Vermont – our neighbors! Open Space Protection Plan in 2014. The Burlington City Council passed a [Conservation Resolution](#) in 2017.

Why and how: The [Open Space Protection Plan](#) inventories open space lands & characterizing them with respect to natural areas, urban agriculture, parklands & green infrastructure.

Funding: The original Open Space Protection Plan has a number of accomplishments, including a Conservation Legacy Program & Fund. The conservation fund has been able to fund a number of positions & projects, as well as the funds needed for updating the Open Space Protection Plan.

Benefits: The commitment of Burlington's Open Space Protection Plan along with the Conservation Resolution "places Burlington among nationally renowned analogs places like Boston's Emerald Necklace & Philadelphia's Circuit Trails" (Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront).

Research states that open space provides & supports:

- ❖ Smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, improving community quality of life & guiding new growth in existing communities ([Smart Growth Principles, 6th dropdown section](#)).
- ❖ Social connections, neighborhood satisfaction & community attachment in urban settings. Cities with higher concentration of green spaces provide greater opportunities for happiness than places without green spaces ([NCBI, 2016, paragraph 8](#)).
- ❖ Return on investment for open space initiatives in Massachusetts: every \$1 invested in land conservation = \$4 in economic value of natural goods and services ([Trust for Public Land, pg. 40](#)).