



To: Swampscott Select Board

I am writing on behalf of the Swampscott Conservancy as a follow-up to the recent Hawthorne Idea Exchange during which the Town invited recommendations from the public on the future use of this signature piece of property.

While we understand that public access to those portions of the property adjacent to the coastline must be included in any future plans, given lack of open space in Swampscott, it is our belief that the whole parcel should be designed and developed as open green space for the enjoyment of public.

As the Town's Open Space & Recreation Plan notes, "Swampscott's coast is one of its greatest resources." It's fair to say that Swampscott's coast is the primary attraction and identifier for many, if not all, of the Town's residents. People enjoy living close to the ocean and having access to the waterfront. You just have to consider that people of all ages stroll, run, or bike year-round along the Lynnway from Kings Beach to Nahant, or around the pathway at Fort Sewell in Marblehead, to realize that fact.

Unfortunately, over the years, access to Swampscott's coast -- and open space in general -- has decreased significantly, giving way to more and more development. In some cases, as with the Concordia Condos, even views to the ocean are totally blocked.

Swampscott's waterfront is something that makes this town different from many other communities. If the focal point of Swampscott was only Vinnin Square, it would not be any different from so many other towns with strip malls, Marshalls stores, and Stop & Shops.

What makes Swampscott unique is its seacoast -- it gives its residents a "sense of place."

Instead of a paved parking lot and imposing structure blocking views of the ocean, there could be a park and public plaza with native plantings and gardens, play structures, and, of course, seating areas to enjoy the spectacular views and memorable sunsets of Nahant Bay. In fact, at the Town Meeting approving purchase of the property, an artist's rendering presented such a park-like vision as one option for the property -- **and this vision is likely why many voted in favor of buying the land.**

Any suggestion that this property should be used for any type of development should be rejected. It is far more important that it be, as expressed by the Select Board, “property that generates memories, not money.”

This property is the gateway to the Town, it should be a welcoming park, not a parking lot or another waterfront building. Moreover, suggestions that the Town should build a conference center, or a boutique hotel really isn't viable. Since COVID, and growth of Zoom meetings, there is much less demand for in-person conferences, not to mention that it is unlikely people would travel to Swampscott for a conference, given Boston is a more accessible and appealing forum for such conferences. A more likely spot for a conference center or boutique hotel, if one was to be considered, is across the street at the Hadley site – though again, as noted, it is unlikely this would be a profitable endeavor for the town.

If the concern is focused on money, it must be kept in mind that parks can generate financial returns, including increasing property values, that are often many times greater than the money initially invested into the project, even when maintenance costs are factored in. See, [conservationtools.org/guides/98-economic-benefits-of-parks](https://conservationtools.org/guides/98-economic-benefits-of-parks) and [hrq-inc.com/5-economic-benefits-of-parks-and-recreational-facilities/](https://hrq-inc.com/5-economic-benefits-of-parks-and-recreational-facilities/)

In sum, we believe that this property should be green open green space to be enjoyed by all, thereby strengthening Swampscott's connection to the waterfront and its identity as a seacoast community and increasing the quality of life of its residents and their descendants.

Sincerely,

Tonia Bandrowicz, President  
Swampscott Conservancy