



Photo by Dick Simmons

### The Economic Case for Open Space at the Hawthorne-by-the-Sea Property

*"To often we hear that communities cannot afford to 'grow smart' by conserving open space. But accumulating evidence indicates that open space conservation is not an expense but an investment that produces important economic benefits... **open space protection does not 'cost' but 'pays.'**" ~ The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space – Trust for Public Land (TPL)*

One of the options discussed for the Hawthorne property includes the addition of storefronts along Humphrey Street as a way to revitalize Swampscott's downtown area. But is adding more businesses really the solution to revitalizing this part of town?

Or would adding a beautifully designed park be a better solution? The TPL's report, as well as many other studies, finds that "new parks have invigorated downtown businesses and neighborhood economies." If the goal is to bring people to the downtown area, a park and public plaza with native plantings and gardens, play structures, and seating areas in which to enjoy the spectacular water views of Nahant Bay and the Boston skyline, is what is needed, not more storefronts blocking off Swampscott's waterfront.

*"When combined with the ability to deliver healthier and happier communities, the powerful impact parks and recreation has on economic activity highlights the fact that park and recreation agency offerings are not merely a "nice-to-have" luxury government service. Instead, parks and recreation transform our cities, towns and counties into vibrant and prosperous communities for all." ~ The Economic Impact of Local Parks - National Recreation and Parks Associations (NRPA)*

Our town is also looking into the feasibility of turning the current Hadley School into a boutique hotel and restaurant. A park can only help make such an enterprise a success. You only have to consider what attracted many a summer visitor and supported many a hotel and guest house at the turn of the last century – it was Swampscott's location on the coastline of Massachusetts. Now, as then, people seek amenities like proximity to the ocean when choosing where they'd like to vacation.

And the economic benefits go beyond revitalizing the downtown. Research has consistently demonstrated that homes and properties located near parklands have higher values than those located farther away. Higher home values not only benefit the owners of these properties, but also add to the tax base of local governments.

*"Too many community leaders feel they must choose between economic growth and open space protection. But no such choice is necessary. Open space protection is good for a community's health, stability, beauty, and quality of life. It is also good for the bottom line"*

The bottom line is that the economics support making the Hawthorne-by-the-Sea property and inviting public green space.