



FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN GREENWAY

Belmont Citizens Forum • Citizens of Lexington for Conservation • Waltham Land Trust • Mass Audubon

March, 30, 2018

To Whom it May Concern:

The Friends of the Western Greenway, which is made up of the citizens of Waltham, Lexington and Belmont, is opposed to the use of the Storer Conservation Land or the Chesterbrook Woods for construction of a new Waltham High School. Both of these properties are part of a regional greenway, known as the Western Greenway, which consists of over 1,300 connected acres of undeveloped land in the three communities. The properties are joined together by a regional trail, the Western Greenway Trail, which runs through both Storer and Chesterbrook Woods.

The greenway is an irreplaceable and unique regional amenity, improving the quality of life for the residents of all three communities. The uniqueness of the Western Greenway lays in that multiple undeveloped properties are interconnected. This enhances the value of the entirety for people and wildlife over isolated parcels that are islands in a sea of development. The value of each property is multiplied by its connection to the other greenway properties. The loss of any single property is a much larger loss to the value of the remaining intact greenway. Were the Waltham High School be located on the conservation lands, as proposed, it would be the first instance of land in the Western Greenway being lost to development since the greenway was established nearly 20 years ago. A highly unfavorable precedent.

Our group has contributed thousands of volunteer hours creating this outstanding regional resource, building trails, boardwalks and bridges in Waltham as well as maintaining them. We understand that Waltham has to make difficult decisions in locating its new high school. Destroying irreplaceable conservation land whose value is enhanced by being part of this distinctive regional greenway, is we believe, unwise and should not be considered.