

This trail guide was compiled by Allison Gillum, Regional Conservationist, and Sarah Kugel, Community Outreach Coordinator, serving at Wildlands Trust through the AmeriCorps MassLIFT program.

WILDLANDS TRUST

Wildlands Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving land and preserving the natural heritage of Southeastern Massachusetts. The Trust works to permanently protect and steward important habitats and landscapes, including woodlands and fields, ponds, coastal areas, agricultural lands, and river systems.

Wildlands Trust is a member supported organization. For more information please visit www.wildlandstrust.org.



AMERICORPS MASSLIFT

AmeriCorps is a national service initiative signed into law by President Clinton in 1993 with the purpose of engaging thousands of Americans of all backgrounds in service opportunities that help communities meet critical education, public safety, human, or environmental needs.

The Massachusetts Land Initiative for Tomorrow (MassLIFT) program was developed in 2010 through a collaboration of seven regional land trusts to meet critical community needs for land protection. Twenty AmeriCorps members serve at thirteen host sites spread across the state. Members initiate land conservation projects, monitor protected lands, expand local interest in conservation, and engage young people in service learning.

For more information please visit
www.mountgrace.org/ameri-corps-masslift



TRAIL GUIDE

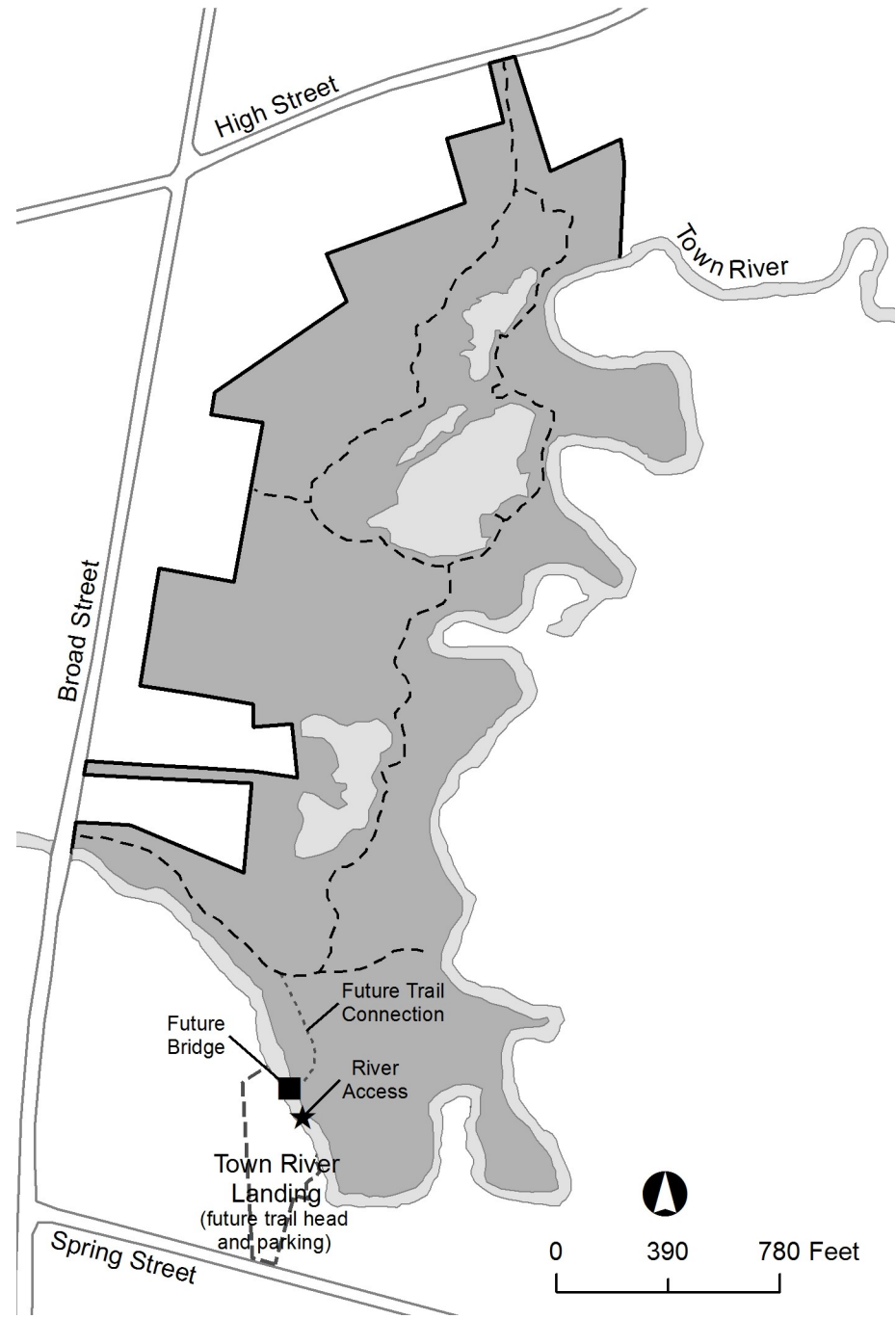
THE NUNCKATESSETT GREENWAY

BRIDGEWATER, MA
&
WEST BRIDGEWATER, MA



A network of land and water trails connecting the Town River and the Bay Circuit Trail to public conservation areas and urban centers





- Location:** Off Broad Street (Route 18)
- Area:** 75 acres
- Purchased:** Funded by Self-Help Grant Program, 1999
- Directions:** Route 24 to Exit 16A. East on Route 106 (2.2 miles). Slight right onto Route 28 South (2.7 miles). Turn left onto Broad Street (Route 18), continue 0.5 miles, trail head is on right immediately after the Town River.
- Parking:** There is no dedicated parking area for this site. With permission from management, there is potential parking in the shopping center off Broad Street. A new trail head and parking area is planned for Town River Landing in the next few years.

This site was an agricultural fairground with a grand exhibition hall from 1820 - 1875. In 1895, a local teacher, William Basset, Sr., purchased the land and founded the Bridgewater Brick Company. The company mined clay and produced bricks on the site. In 1913, Stiles & Hart Brick Company purchased the operation. Due to damage to the buildings in the hurricane of 1938, brick production ceased, but clay mining continued until after World War II. Today, you can still find mounds of defective bricks up to eight feet in height; evidence of this site's industrial past.

Nature has been reclaiming the clay pits for over 50 years. Pioneer trees such as aspen and cherry are being replaced by oak and maple. Skunk cabbage is the predominant wetland plant in the shaded interior wetlands. There are small areas of cattails in the river marsh at the eastern end of the property and there are large areas of phragmites, an exotic invasive plant, along some areas of the Town River.

Dense vegetation provides cover for deer, fox, and other small mammals. Water creates swamps, vernal pools, ponds, and a small brook. The Town River borders the property to the south and east; due to its meandering nature, the river border is over 7,000 feet long.

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INTRODUCTION

Today there is a vision and a huge effort across the state of Massachusetts to link hundreds of open spaces though: parks and trails; natural resource areas; and, important community features.

The Towns of West Bridgewater and Bridgewater embrace this vision with the goal of linking town-owned conservation areas to the nationally recognized Bay Circuit Trail and the historically important Nunckatessett (Town River) in order to satisfy diverse environmental, economical, educational, recreational, and social needs.

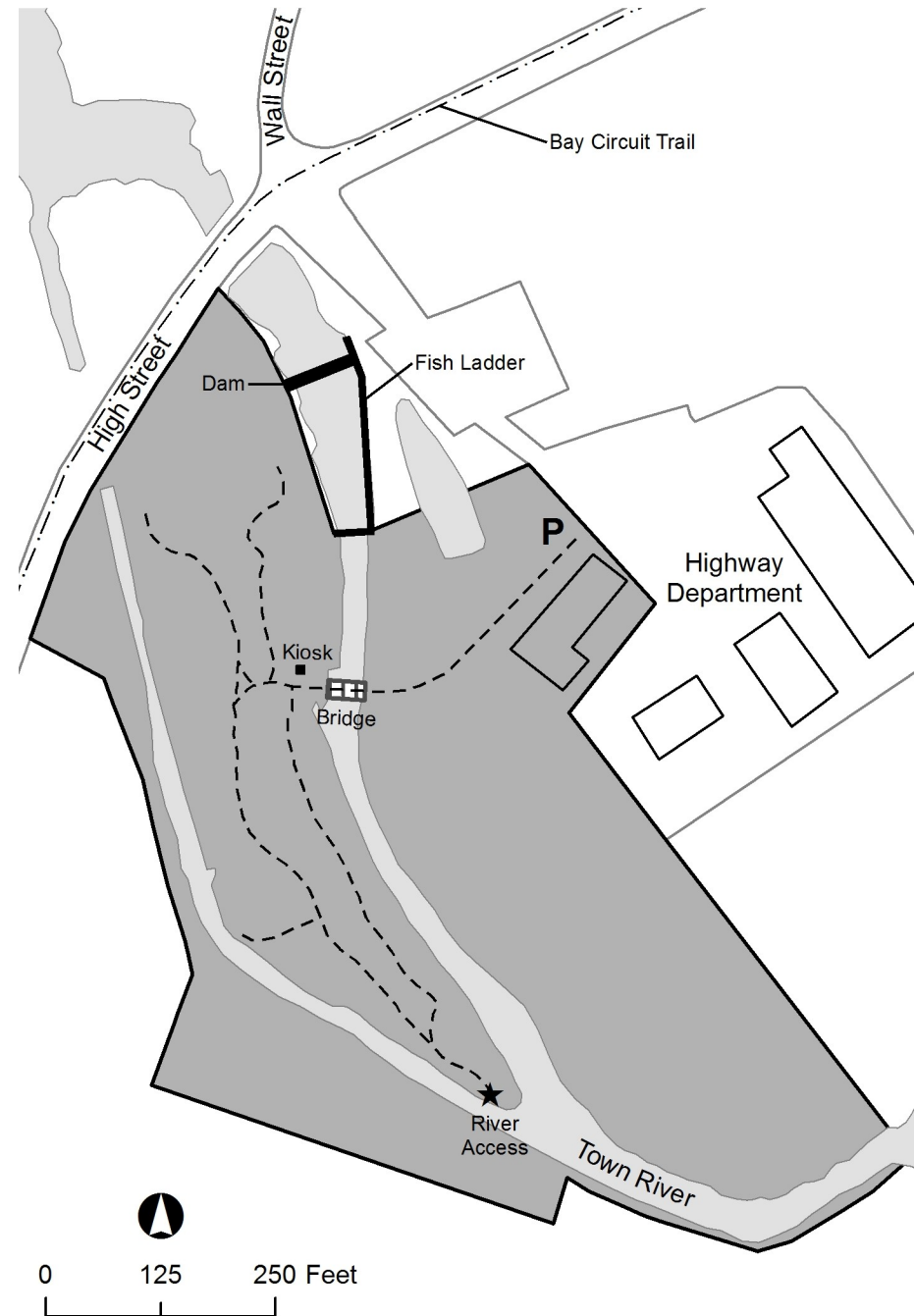
GREENWAYS

Greenways are corridors of land and water that link together natural, cultural and recreational resources. A riverfront walkway, a bicycle path, an urban walking trail connecting historical sites and neighborhood parks, a wildlife migration corridor, and a series of open spaces joined by trails are all examples of Greenways.

The Nunckatessett Greenway is a network of trail spurs connecting the Town River and Bay Circuit Trail to municipal and state conservation areas, historical sites, urban centers, school districts, Bridgewater State University, the Hockomock Swamp, and the Wild & Scenic Taunton River. Set aside for passive recreation by the Towns of West Bridgewater and Bridgewater, the Nunckatessett Greenway connects people to the natural world.

THE TOWN RIVER

Known today as the Town River, the Nunckatessett originates in the Hockomock Swamp. This meandering, 14-mile river corridor is one of the earliest areas of colonial settlement dating back to the mid-1600s. Before then it was home to the Pokanoket Nation, an ancient American civilization that existed in southern New England for thousands of years. The Town River, with several Colonial Era industrial sites on the National Register of Historic Places, flows through the centers of West Bridgewater and Bridgewater before converging with the Matfield River to form the Wild & Scenic Taunton River, now federally protected under the National Park Service.



- Location:** Off High Street
- Area:** 12 acres
- Gift of:** The Ladner and Brusseau Families, 1995
- Directions:** Route 24 to Exit 16A. East on Route 106 (2.2 miles). Slight right onto Route 28 South (1.8 miles). Turn left onto High Street (0.3 miles). Turn right at Bridgewater Highway Department main entrance. Continue 500 feet, park access is to the right, off Highway Department maintenance yard.
- Parking:** There is currently a small undefined parking area (4 to 6 cars) located between the ruins of an old iron works building and a pond.

Established in 1691, the Bridgewater Iron Works at Stanley was the first to produce iron in the American colonies and by 1860 it had become the largest producer of iron in the U.S. During the Civil War it manufactured ammunition and iron siding for ships. The Iron Works industrial site was abandoned in 1988 and the land was donated to the Town of Bridgewater. Today a new forest is establishing itself on and around the ruins of the old stone and slate foundry building.

The Town River is the site's major surface water feature. It flows through the site, contained in the stonework of the canals that were once used to guide water to waterwheels that powered the mills. The river is still a canoe and kayak route that can be used to visit a chain of local open spaces including War Memorial Park upstream in West Bridgewater, and downstream the Stiles & Hart and Tuckerwood Conservation Areas. Because of the dam, one has to carry a canoe through the Iron Works Park. The River is popular for fishing as well, offering bass, trout, pickerel, yellow perch, crappie, and other fish. A fish ladder enables the passage of alewives in the spring.

The other major water resource is a small pond at the north end of the site that was once part of the system of waterways that provided power to the mills. Part of the pond is on the adjacent private property that also includes the dam and the fish ladder.

BAY CIRCUIT TRAIL

The 200-mile Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) is a permanent recreation trail extending through 34 towns in Eastern Massachusetts, linking parks and open spaces surrounding metropolitan Boston. Recognized nationally, the BCT travels through the Nunckatessett Greenway in West Bridgewater and Bridgewater. Promoting BCT stewardship is a goal found in both communities' Open Space and Recreation Plans.

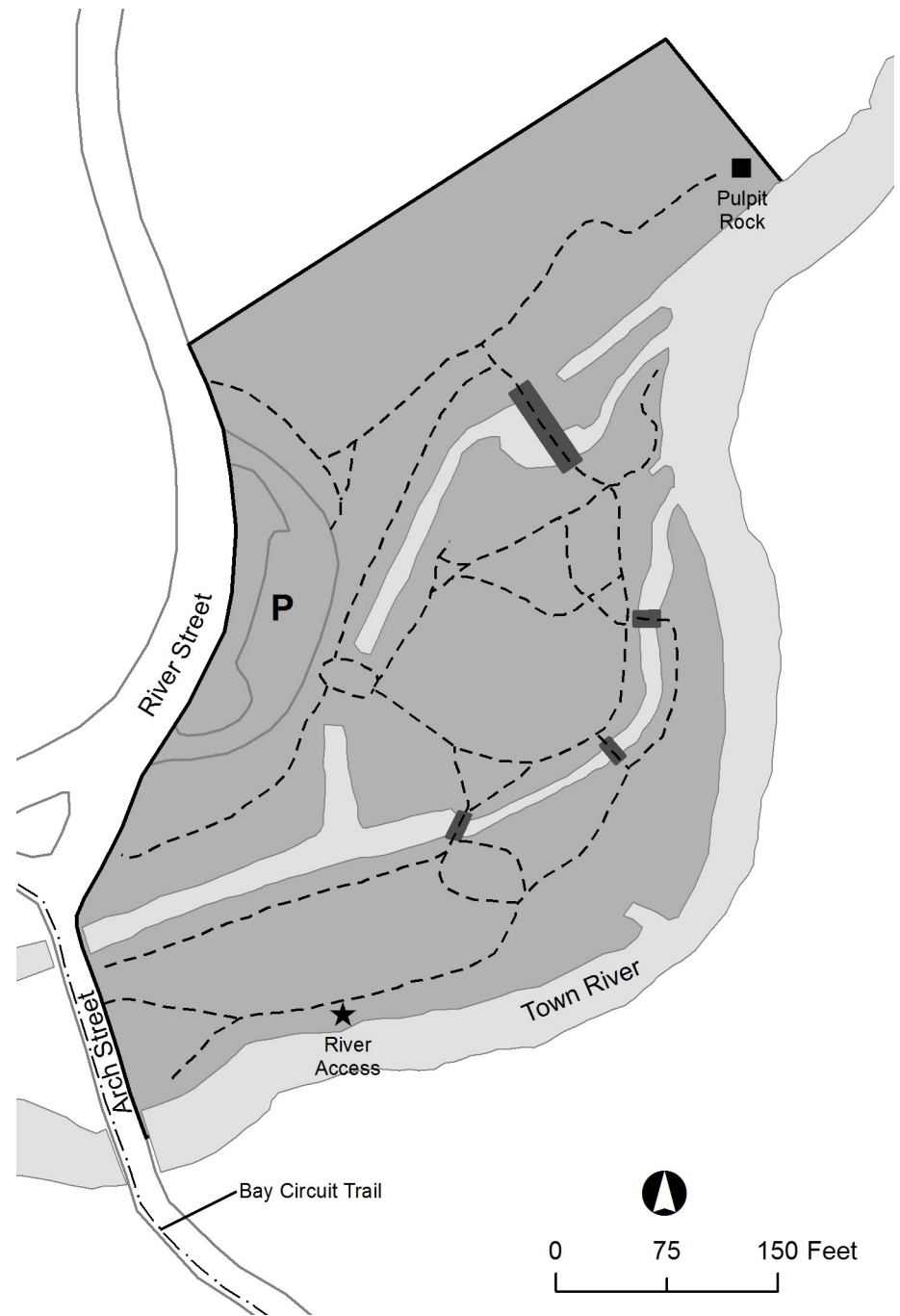
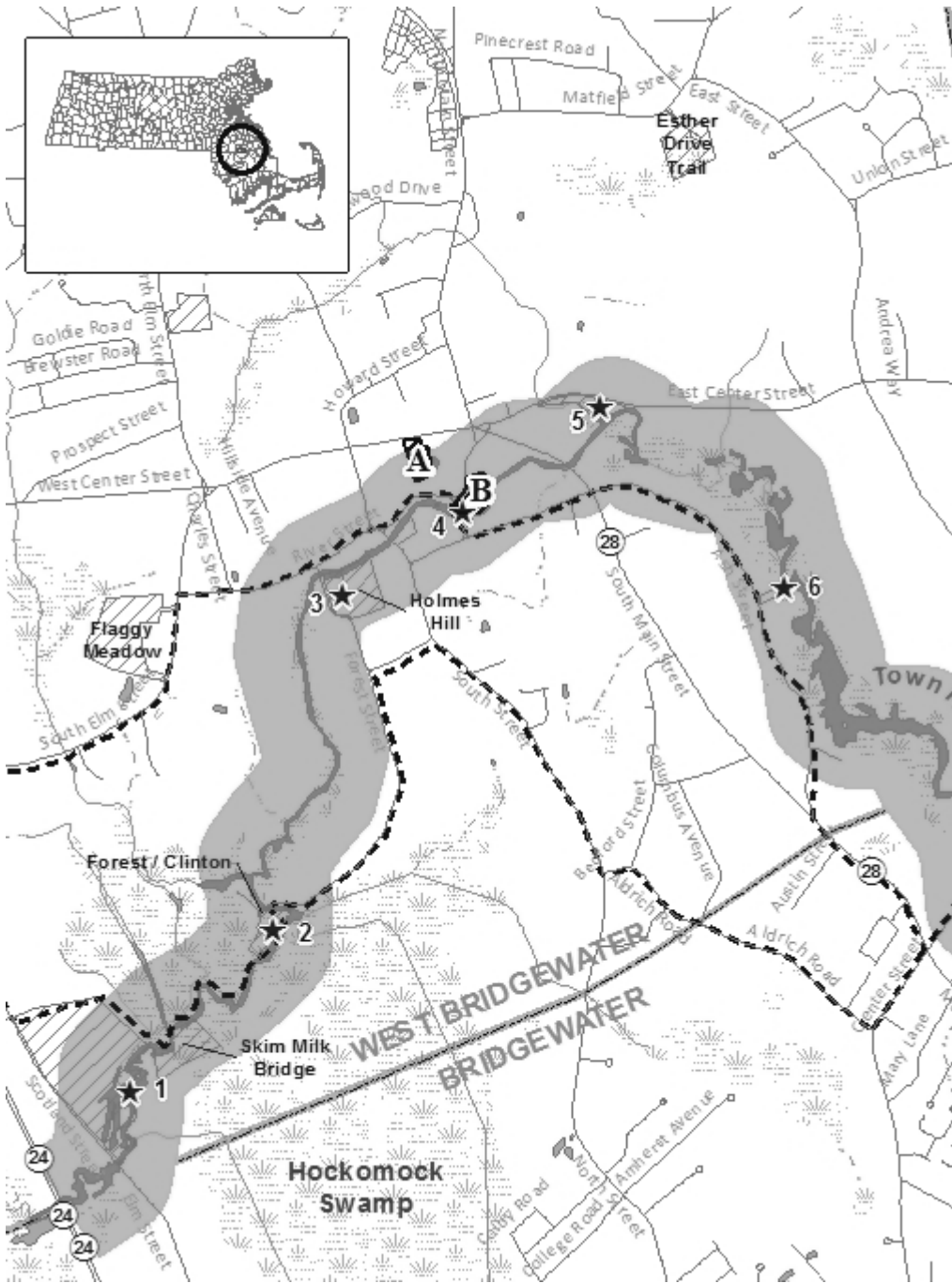
HOCKOMOCK SWAMP

As the largest remaining fresh-water swamp in Massachusetts, this 16,950-acre wetland is a protected Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a huge, 7.5 billion-gallon water reservoir. It is a unique and irreplaceable wildlife habitat, home to at least 13 rare and endangered species - a vast natural and scenic area, an oasis of peace and quiet. For thousands of years the Hockomock Swamp has remained close to primeval wilderness, a soggy, trackless woodland of white cedar, red maple, cat-tail marsh, small ponds and meandering streams.

During the Woodland Period, the Native Americans depended on this swamp as an abundant source of game. They believed that if they camped once a year in an area known to them as 'Mollie Ground,' the good spirits of the swamp would stay with them for the rest of the year. The significance of the Hockomock Swamp's archeological resources is enormous; small stone hearths 15" in diameter, a plummet stone fishing sinker, an ulu stone knife and other artifacts have been unearthed, indicating a very early civilization.

The Massachusetts Division of Fish & Game own approximately 5,000 acres of this swamp, providing public access to recreational areas along the Nunckatessett Greenway. The swamp is popular for hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, swimming, and for the observation and study of plants and animals.

The fertile agricultural fields adjacent to the Hockomock Swamp's wetlands, brooks, and rivers are of prime importance. West Bridgewater has used the Community Preservation Fund to secure permanent protection of 116 acres in the Town's first Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) agreement.



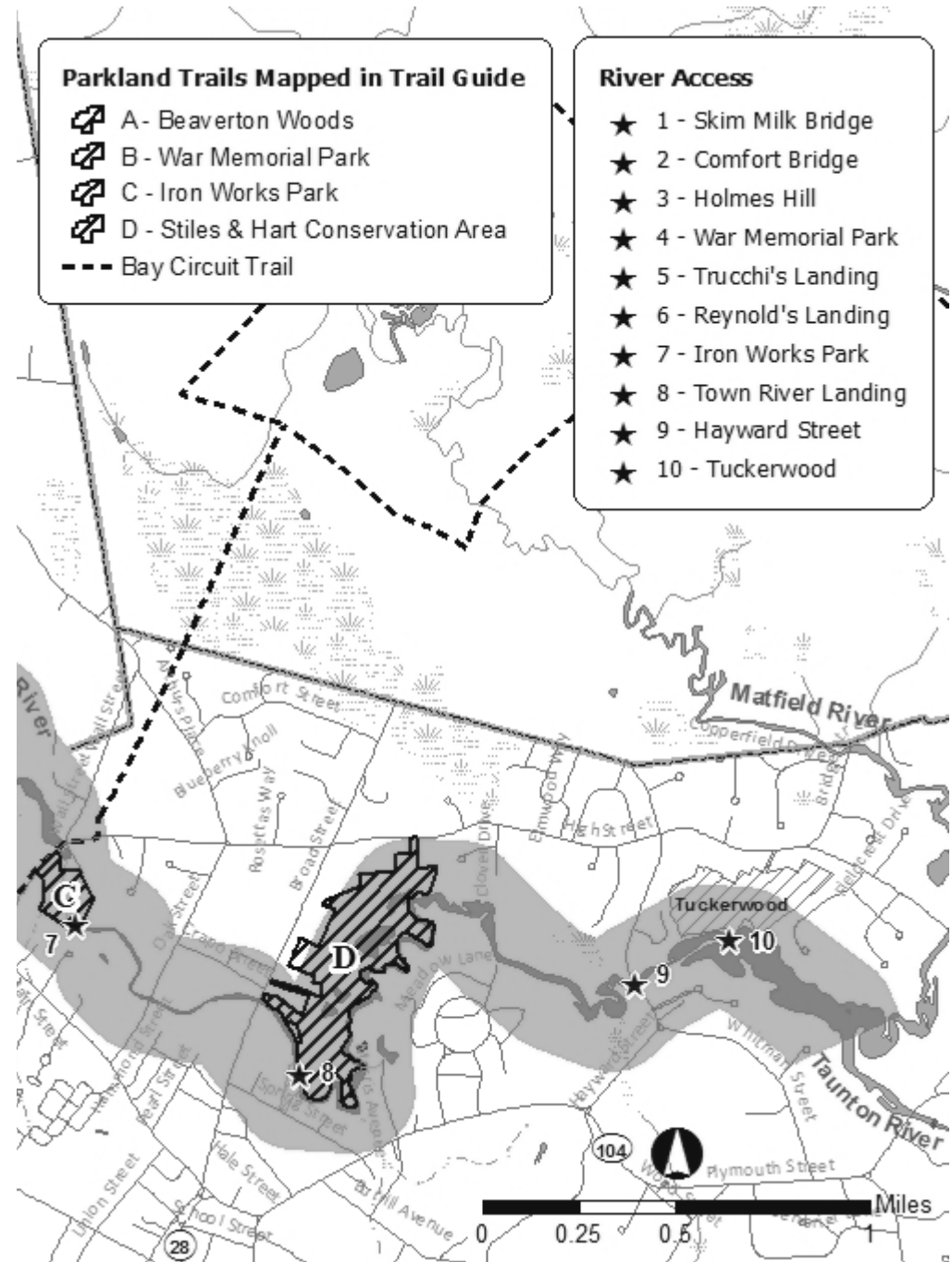
- Location:** Off River Street
- Area:** 4.87 acres
- Purchased:** Works Project Administration (WPA), 1936
- Directions:** Route 24 to Exit 16A. East on Route 106 (2.1 miles). Turn right onto Central Square (250 feet). Turn right onto River Street, continue 0.1 miles, park entrance on left.
- Parking:** There is a large parking area (10+ cars) located at the park entrance.

One of the most important historic sites in West Bridgewater, War Memorial Park commemorates the Town's industrial heritage. It is regarded as the country's first "industrial park," where shovels, nails, and other farming tools were produced in the late 18th century. During the Industrial Era there were up to 13 different water-powered mills located at this site. Weirs and dams along the Town River that were used by the mills and factories in this area are still intact.

Pulpit Rock, the site of the very first sermon preached by Reverend James Keith in 1663, is located in the northeast portion of the Park overlooking the Town River.

In 1936, the property was purchased for \$2,000 from the Ames Family as part of a WPA project to establish a historical park on this site. Landscape architect Evelyn Johnson designed War Memorial Park. The Park was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.

War Memorial Park provides access to Triple Arch Bridge, a historic bridge which connects to Arch Street on the opposite side of the Town River. The Park is open to the public and provides easy and accessible walking trails, benches to sit and relax, and a beautiful vista of the Town River.



- Location:** Off West Center Street
- Area:** 4 acres
- Gift of:** The Richards Family, 2006
- Directions:** Route 24 to Exit 16A. East on Route 106 (2 miles). Trail head on right, across the street from the West Bridgewater Council on Aging Senior Center.
- Parking:** There is no dedicated parking area for this site. There is public parking located across the street at the Senior Center and Howard Elementary School.

Al Richards was the former owner of the Beaver Nursery and Garden Center. In conjunction with a 'Name this Park Contest' in the local public schools, the Conservation Commission chose a student's suggested *Beaverton Woods* as the name of this new parkland site.

The Beaverton Woods trail connects the Howard Elementary School, the Council on Aging Senior Center, and the West Bridgewater Public Library to the Town River, the Bay Circuit Trail, and War Memorial Park.

Beaverton Woods provides a level trail over bog bridges, through a mixed forest dominated by oak, maple, and white pine. The trail offers scenic views of adjacent farmland, and leads to a small pond, used as an outdoor classroom for local high school and university students. The trail also leads out to River Street, providing a beautiful vista of the Town River.

