



## Westwood walking trail almost complete

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Westwood — Westwood will have a first-of-its-kind walking trail connecting Gay Street to Lowell Woods. The stone dust path will run along Gay Street from Thatcher to Fox Hill, and then along Fox Hill from Gay Street to Fox Meadow.

The new path will allow people to go safely from Thatcher Street all the way to Fox Meadow Drive on to a cart track into Lowell Woods.

Gilbane Building Company from Providence R.I. bought the property off Fox Hill Street and proposed not to have two sidewalks along Fox Meadow Drive as was originally planned. They thought one sidewalk would suffice, saying that it is not a high traffic area with "only" 22 houses. The Gilbane Building Company asked the Planning Board to eliminate one of the sidewalks.

The Planning Board agreed - on the condition that Gilbane construct a pedestrian path instead, which they did.

Westwood Town Planner Nora Loughnane is pleased with the cooperation of Gilbane.

"Gilbane came out with the Conservation Commission to make sure they were building the path appropriately," Loughnane said. "They would avoid taking down any more trees than were needed."

The Gilbane Building Company, responsible for its construction, is days away from finishing the project, according to Loughnane.

"They have used stone dust to keep it in a more natural state," Loughnane said.

The path will be five feet wide within the 10-foot wide easement behind an existing historic stonewall.

"The path is more for recreation than transportation," Loughnane said. "I don't imagine people would use it to come to and from school, but if you want to go for a walk, a nice bicycle ride or walk your dog, it is a pleasant route."

The environmentally sensitive project could be a first step to connecting the two centers of town.

Dave Atkins, chairman of the Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety Committee, thinks that many people will be enthusiastic about the path.

"This portion of the trail is small, but the potential to connect the town is huge. It is very recreational. Bikers can avoid a lot of roads and joggers and people from running clubs will be interested as well," Atkins said.

Ben Pincus, a Westwood Boy Scout, has undertaken as his Eagle Scout project a plan to make additional connections by coordinating cooperating with abutting residents and the Conservation Commission between Islington and Route 109.

The Sheehan fifth graders in the first LEGO League won an award for their research project on potential bike and walking trails in Westwood and recently led a walk-through tour of a potential path from the Starbucks on High Street, behind Westwood High School, through to Thatcher Street.

"If these trails can be connected, we have the potential for residents to walk or bike between High street and Washington Street. Parts of the trails in Lowell Woods are not very bike-friendly, but recreationally, they will open up miles of healthy exploration to all residents of Westwood. People could enjoy the beauty of their town as well," Atkins said.

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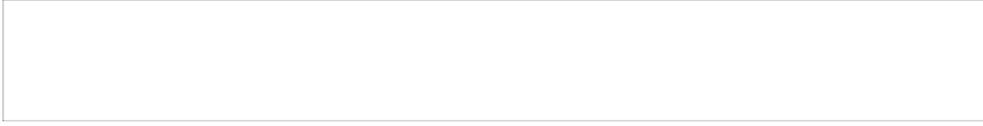
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