

# Mount Tom North Trailhead Park

**For many, many years**, for Easthampton Mount Tom has been 'so near, yet so far'. While there are ways to get up on to the ridge which forms the iconic backdrop to our city, they all require a drive to Holyoke or the sometimes reluctant consent of private landowners or the power company -- and a little local knowledge. And while the Holyoke side has seen several major land protection projects over the years, much of the hillside along East Street remains vulnerable to development; though, thanks to the landowners there, to date only a few intrusions dot the fields and forest along the mountainside. **But in 2017**, dramatic change seemed likely with filing of a plan for development of the northwest tip of Mount Tom into nine estate lots with an expected tenth covering the prominent knoll between the power line and East Street. **The City and Pascommuck Conservation Trust** have long targeted the slopes of Mount Tom for protection. In fact, 17 years ago they met with the late owner of the very same property slated for a subdivision, but were unable to come to an agreement. **This time around**, though it took a year of negotiation, thanks to Mark Wamsley and Kestrel Land Trust, unanimous support from the City of Easthampton's government (including the Parks Dept., city planner Jeff Bagg, the Community Preservation Committee and City Council, and -- definitely not least! -- a \$50,000 investment by Pascommuck Conservation Trust, an option on the property was obtained. That option bought time to assemble local, state, and non-profit funding. **Everyone has fingers crossed** for good news on the second major funding component which will complete the municipal and land trust appropriations: The City and Kestrel applied for state grants which should be announced before the end of the year. If all goes well, purchase of the land could happen as early as next summer, with the help of a modest amount of additional donations through Pascommuck and Kestrel. **Purchase of the land** will be followed by a second phase for design and fundraising to transform the property into Mount Tom Trailhead Park: Parking down at East Street, an accessible trail up to the glorious view from the spot where the previous owner's house stood, plus a picnic area and educational signs, and restoration of wildlife and plant habitat on the site. The plan is that hikers on the New England National Scenic Trail -- and everyone else -- will be able to enjoy and appreciate these 23 acres. **Once again, the 'Picnic Lot' and the 'Mountain Lot'** -- once part of the historic Eyrie House property -- will provide visitors and residents of Easthampton with easy access to Mount Tom's beautiful views, miles of trails, and unique natural treasures.

**2,000,000 BC: Mount Tom arose    1754: Easthampton formed    1861: Eyrie House built    1901: Fire    1902: Reservation created    2001: Protection efforts begin    2019: Land saved?**

