

## Walk, hike, run and bike Devens

Visitors to the Massachusetts community of Devens get an immediate sense of its uniqueness. From the Route 2 entrance, winding roads lead through airy woodlands past significant manufacturing buildings to the community's center – Devens Commons, a retail and hotel area. Nearby is the former military post, now a 300-acre historic district of brick military buildings around a large and well-preserved parade grounds. Devens is unlike anything else in New England.

This setting offers ample opportunities for walking, running, hiking, and biking. Much of the perimeter of Devens is wooded, river-veined land lined with hiking trails. Runners can use sidewalks for several miles in all directions from Devens Commons. Bicyclists can loop around the main roads. The historic center of Devens is ideal for walkers.

In addition to walking, hiking, running and biking, Devens supports many kinds of active recreation. The area boasts expansive playing fields for soccer and lacrosse on the parade grounds, softball diamonds, and 18-hole courses for both traditional golf and “disc” (Frisbee-based) golf within walking distance of Devens hotels. Nature study opportunities are everywhere along the Nashua River and the trails that lace the woodlands.

## The setting

Fort Devens was decommissioned in 1996, and the U.S. Army conveyed large portions of the post's acreage to Massachusetts. The Commonwealth and the four towns that border Devens – Ayer, Harvard, Shirley, and Lancaster – developed a re-use plan for the non-military area. Much of the available land was open space and woodlands, so planning focused immediately on preserving the rich environment in the setting of the site: the wetlands and open water in the community's ponds and rivers, together with the surrounding habitat, vegetation, aquifer, and steep slopes. The plan preserved nearly 1,400 acres of open space and recreation lands – almost a third of the site's 4,400 acres.

The Nashua River traces the west edge of Devens, an area known as the Oxbow National Wildlife Preserve since 1974. The name “Oxbow” derives from the many U-shaped bends in the river as it courses its way to New Hampshire. The river is also a significant habitat for migratory birds along the Atlantic Flyway. Known for its rare plant species and animals such as the Blanding's Turtle, the river is lined with steep banks of sandy soil and interconnected marshes.

### HIKING TRAILS

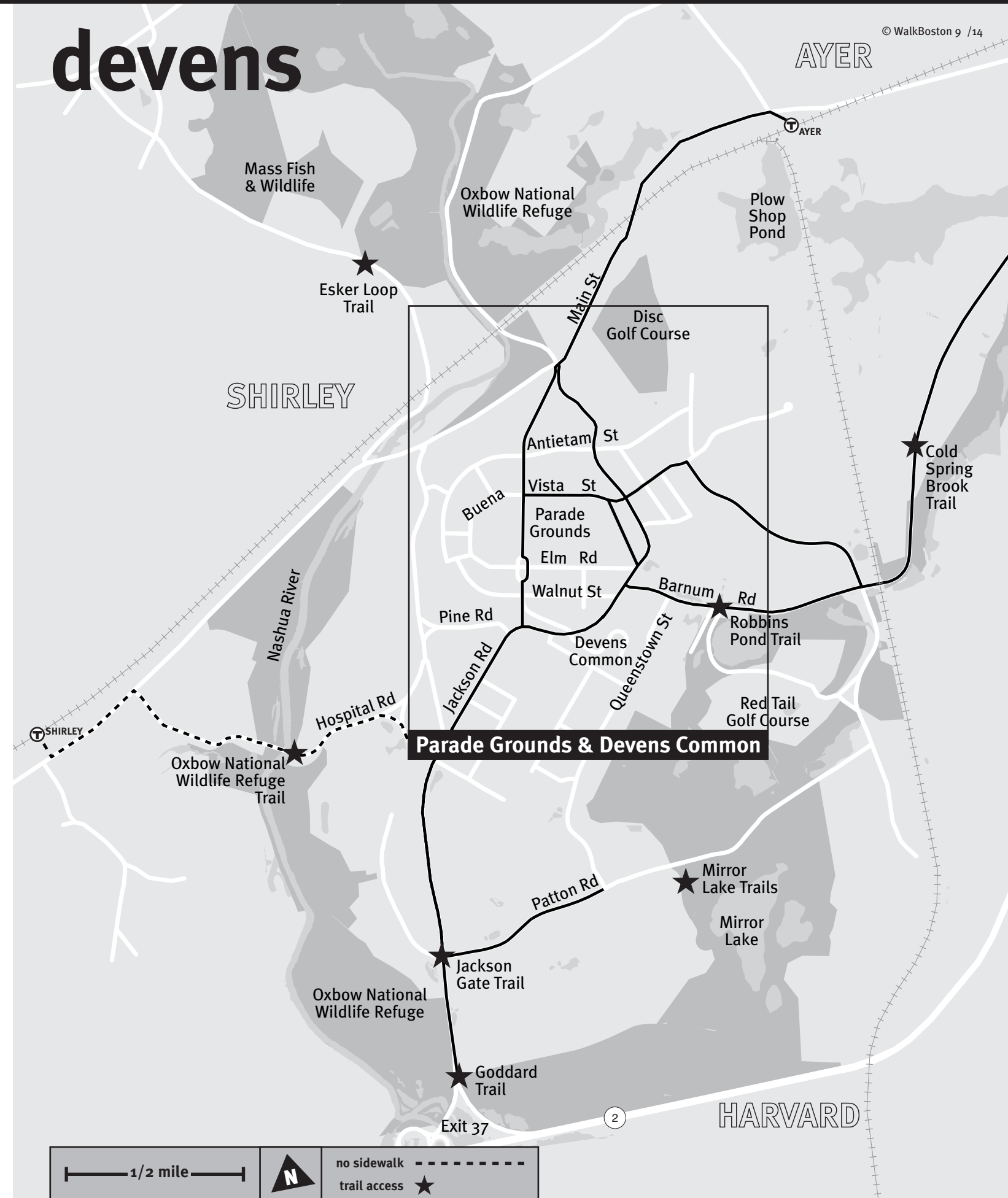
- **Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge Trail** along the Nashua River, shows off the pristine, shallow valley and provides a connection to the Goddard Trail via the Jackson Trail. 0.9 miles
- **Jackson Gate Trail** and the **Goddard Memorial Trail** form a continuous long route to the south edge of Devens. 1.8 miles
- **Esker Loop Trail**, being developed for self-guided nature exploration, will be somewhat strenuous. 1.4 miles
- **Mirror Lake Trails** pass on both sides of this kettle hole, formed when a large piece of the last New England glacier slowly melted away. 1.3 miles
- **Robbins Pond Trail** circles this shallow pond known for its plant life. 0.6 miles
- **Cold Spring Brook Trail** provides a brief hike away from the busy industries of Devens. 0.8 miles

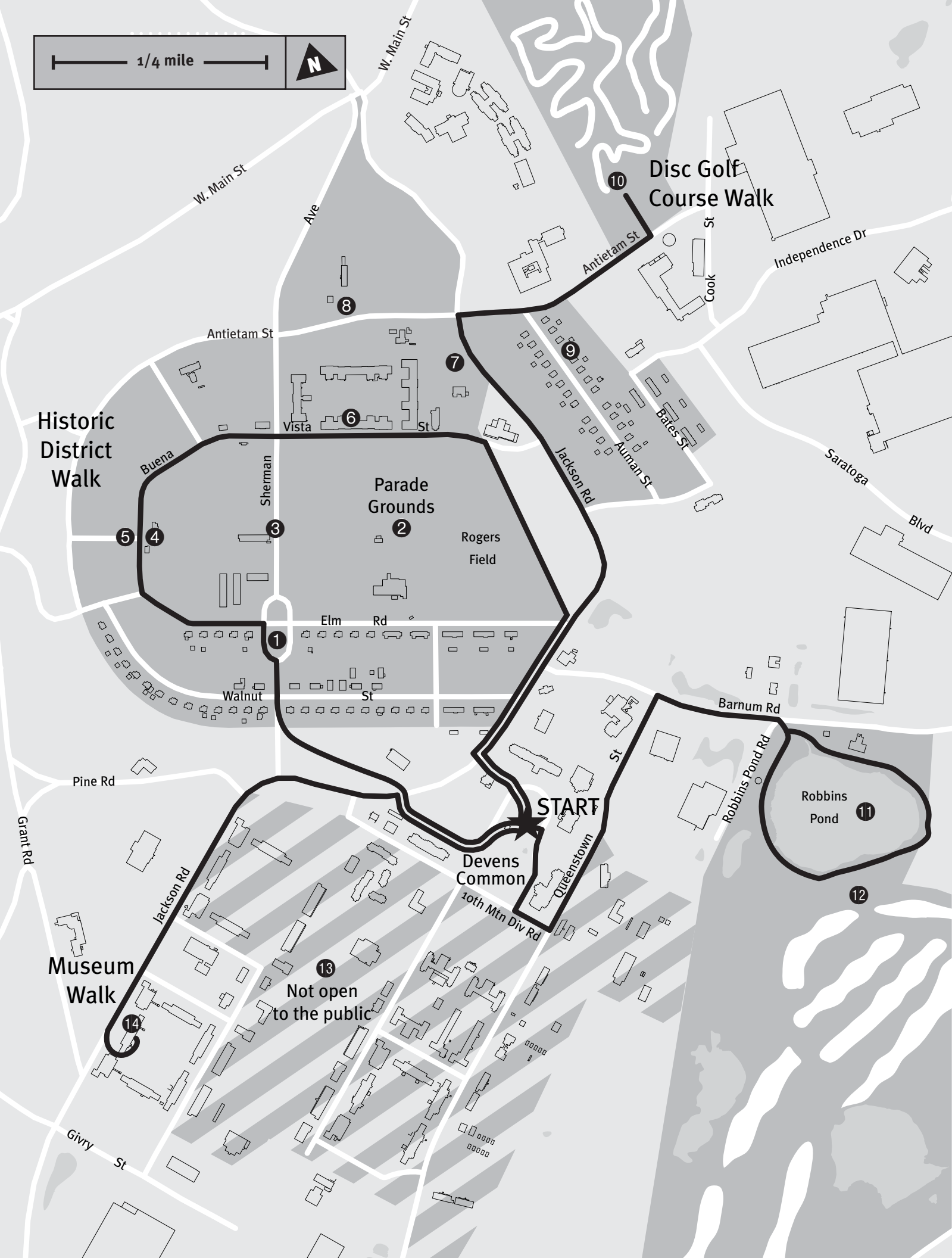
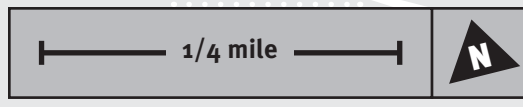
### RUNNING ROUTES

- **Jackson Road** is paralleled by a safe concrete sidewalk between Devens Commons and Patton Road. 1.4 miles
- **Barnum Road** connects the center of Devens via sidewalk to Robbins Pond [0.4 miles], Cold Spring Brook Trail [1.5 miles] and the Ayer rotary [2.6 miles].
- **Parade Grounds** offer continuous, safe off-road sidewalks under trees in the center of the post. 1.4 miles.

### CYCLING LOOPS

- **Jackson/Patton/Barnum** traces Jackson Road, Patton Road and Barnum Road. 4.5 miles
- **Parade Grounds A** follows a circular route around the horseshoe-shaped Parade Grounds on Walnut and Antietam Streets. 1.9 miles
- **Parade Grounds B** follows Elm Road and Buena Vista Street. 1.4 miles





## Walks in Devens

The hotels and shops at Devens Commons focus on a gazebo, the start of four walks:

### OLD FT. DEVENS PARADE GROUNDS: 45 MINUTE LOOP

The heart of the old military post is a large oval Parade Grounds, surrounded by rows of trees and Georgian Revival red brick structures. The formal layout, with its origin in the early 20th century city layout concepts, is now protected as the Fort Devens Historic District.

1 **Memorial Circle** honors veterans and surrounds a plaque honoring Fort Devens' first commander, Colonel William A. Smith.

2 **Rogers Field** is a 44-acre formal parade ground, where the Army trained soldiers and held ceremonial parades or reviews of soldiers' fitness for battle. Its 11 soccer and lacrosse fields serve regional sporting events, and the name honors U.S. Rep. John Rogers. The Bob Eisengrein Community Center, named for a pioneering Devens resident, is near Memorial Circle.

3 **The Parade Grounds Flagpole** marks a central axis that divides Rogers Field in half. It played a central role in formal military exercises and parades on the field. The adjacent Warrior Memorial is dedicated to those who died in World War I and World War II. The Korean and Vietnam Wars Memorial, an engraved marble column, is dedicated to those who fought in Korea and Vietnam.

4 **Former Post Commander's Residence** is directly west of the flagpole, at the end of rows of pine trees.

5 **Foreman Garden** is named for Fort Devens's first commander, Colonel Albert W. Foreman.

6 **Vicksburg Square**, a barracks for rank and file troops, is a group of four multi-story structures with a central open space once used for recruits' recreation.

### DISC GOLF CENTER: 20 MINUTES ONE-WAY

7 **The Sweetheart Memorial** remembers couples separated when men left wives, fiancées, and girlfriends to fight in World War I.

8 **The United Native American Cultural Center** is the focus of many Native American events promoting cultural enrichment and education through a sharing of crafts, artwork, voices and traditional ways. Information at [www.unacc.org](http://www.unacc.org)

9 **Auman Street** is lined with small historic homes originally used by the families of servicemen and women.

10 **The Disc Golf Courses** encompass a hilly and wooded 36 links from 130' to 530' between tees and target baskets. Each link follows golf rules, with the familiar 'par' to indicate progress. Participants can buy championship discs at Hawks Nest Disc Golf Shop, 210 West Main Street in Ayer, just outside the Verbeck [north] Gate of Devens. Playing is free.

### ROBBINS POND: 15 MINUTES ONE WAY

### THE RED TAIL GOLF CLUB: 25 MINUTES ONE WAY

11 **Robbins Pond** is named for Marcus M. Robbins, a Medal of Honor recipient. Trails offer good pond views.

12 **Red Tail Golf Club**, open to golfers of all abilities, is named for native red-tailed hawks. Set in a picturesque landscape, the course is a leader in sustainable course design and management. It was designated the first Audubon International Signature Sanctuary golf course in New England. 978.772.3273.

### FORT DEVENS MUSEUM: 16 MINUTES ONE-WAY

13 **The Army Reserve Training Enclave** provides training for combat. Three Army Reserve units are stationed here along with one Marine Regiment.

14 **The Fort Devens Museum** highlights the post's enormous role in the defense of the nation during the 20th century, as the induction and training center for more than 1,000,000 New Englanders, the home to prisoner-of-war camps during both World Wars, the site of Dr. Robert Goddard's early liquid-fuel rocket tests, and ground zero during the Great Influenza Epidemic of 1918. The base was the U.S. Army Security Agency's principal training facility for nearly 25 years.

## About this map & WalkBoston

This map is a joint endeavor of MassDevelopment and WalkBoston to attract people to use Devens' extensive recreational space. For information on events or walking tours, contact [www.devenscommunity.com](http://www.devenscommunity.com) 978.772.8875

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MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE