

Westford Comprehensive Master Plan

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**Westford Planning Board
Westford Comprehensive Master Plan Committee**

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7. Economic Development

INTRODUCTION

Evaluating economic development issues can help Westford decision-makers and town meeting understand the economic inputs and outputs that support the annual town budget, provide employment opportunities for residents, and generate additional commercial activities for the business community. Westford has limited control over the regional economy in the Greater Lowell area, but it can help set a direction for its own role in the regional economy. The benefits of debating Westford's specific economic development role through the Comprehensive Master Plan process are extensive, for the process has invoked question such as:

- ◆ Do the economic development goals of the 1995 Westford Master Plan still apply?
- ◆ Should the nonresidential tax base be increased to the twenty or twenty-five percent range, as recommended in the 1995 Westford Master Plan?
- ◆ Should the community work to retain existing businesses and to attract new businesses that reflect the Town's character?
- ◆ Does the community still wish to encourage the use and re-use of its mill buildings and to discourage commercial strip development?
- ◆ Will the community take a pro-active stance in encouraging the types of development it wishes to see on the larger vacant commercial and industrial parcels?

- ◆ Finally, does the community see a benefit in working with the private sector to improve the quality of life in Westford?

In 2004, the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) completed its first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in order to qualify the Greater Lowell region for federal funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The *Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008* summarized the economic conditions and needs of the Greater Lowell region – the City of Lowell and eight surrounding suburbs, including Westford – and provided updated information from Census 2000 as well as other federal, state, local and private data sources.

The CEDS included a vision statement and specific goals and objectives for the region, and a detailed action plan to achieve the goals and objectives. The ten regional goals focused on economic development, workforce development, education, affordable housing, racial and ethnic diversity, pockets of distress, quality of life, technology and financial investments. These goals reinforce that economic development includes many components. Westford's economic development goals should provide the foundation for broader regional economic development goals, but the town needs to determine the niche that Westford should fill within the regional economy and the specific identity that Westford should develop in order to attract the types of businesses it wants.

**TABLE 7.1
POPULATION GROWTH IN WESTFORD'S REGION**

City/Town	Total Land Area	Decennial Census Population				Estimated 2006	Change 2000-06
		1970	1980	1990	2000		
Acton	20.0	14,770	17,544	17,872	20,331	20,586	1.3%
Ayer	9.0	7,393	6,993	6,871	7,287	7,315	0.4%
Billerica	25.9	31,648	36,727	37,609	38,981	41,391	6.2%
Boxborough	10.4	1,451	3,126	3,343	4,868	5,073	4.2%
Carlisle	15.4	2,871	3,306	4,333	4,717	4,852	2.9%
Chelmsford	22.7	31,432	31,174	32,383	33,858	33,707	-0.4%
Concord	24.9	16,148	16,293	17,076	16,993	16,789	-1.2%
Dracut	20.9	18,214	21,249	25,594	28,562	29,385	2.9%
Dunstable	16.5	1,292	1,671	2,236	2,829	3,222	13.9%
Groton	32.8	5,109	6,154	7,511	9,547	10,585	10.9%
Harvard	26.4	2,962	3,744	4,662	5,230	6,051	15.7%
Littleton	16.6	6,380	6,970	7,051	8,184	8,648	5.7%
Lowell	13.8	94,239	92,418	103,439	105,167	103,229	-1.8%
Pepperell	22.6	5,887	8,061	10,098	11,142	11,412	2.4%
Tewksbury	20.7	22,755	24,635	27,266	28,851	29,418	2.0%
Tyngsborough	16.8	4,204	5,683	8,642	11,081	11,542	4.2%
WESTFORD	30.6	10,368	13,434	16,392	20,754	21,507	3.6%

Source: UMass Donohue Institute, MassBenchmarks. Harvard includes the local population only, omitting households at Fort Devens through 1990; Harvard Master Plan, 2002.

ECONOMIC STATISTICAL PROFILE

According to the Bureau of the Census, Westford's population increased 3.6 percent between 2000 and 2006. The town's estimated population as of 2006 was 21,507, for a population density of 703 people per sq. mi. Throughout Westford's region (Figure 7.1), population density ranges from 195 people per sq. mi. in Dunstable to 7,493 per sq. mi. in Lowell, with Westford, Tyngsborough and Concord at the midpoint.

Population Characteristics

POPULATION AGE

Available data sources suggest that Westford is following the same population age pattern found throughout the nation, as people born during the "Baby Boom" era (1946-1964) progress toward retirement. From 1990 to 2000, children under 18 accounted for forty-five percent of Westford's total population growth. While the under-18 population has stabilized and begun to decrease, the school-age population increased 15.8 percent during this period. The over-45 population is growing rapidly, with people in "empty nester" households making up an increasingly large share of the population. This trend can be seen in the change in Westford's median population age from 36.9 years in 2000 to

37.8 years in 2007. Although Westford tends to attract families seeking good schools for their children, the aging of the nation's population is happening here as well. As the last of the "Echo Boom" children move through the public schools, K-12 enrollments should decline somewhat and the age distribution of the total population will shift in favor of middle age and retiree householders. These conclusions are

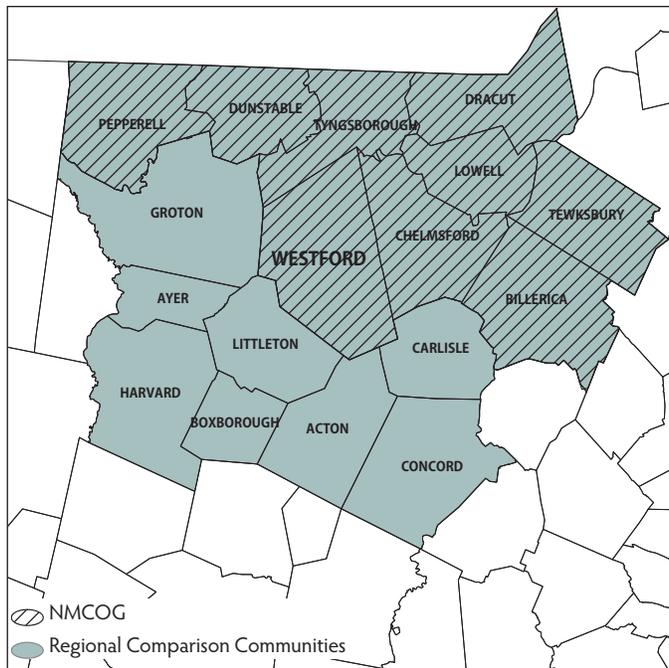


Figure 7.1. Westford region.

partially corroborated by space capacity projections from the Westford Public Schools, which show that over the next several years, the reserve capacity in most of Westford's school buildings will increase as K-12 enrollments decrease.¹

EDUCATION

Westford has a well educated population. Table 7.2 shows that sixty-five percent of its adult (over 25) population has completed college or beyond, and twenty-five percent hold a master's degree, doctorate or professional degree. These statistics make Westford similar to several nearby towns with a high wage-earning labor force and affluent households, though Westford trails communities such as Carlisle, Harvard, Concord, Acton and Boxborough for population percent with advanced degrees. Residential growth has clearly brought about change in the make-up of Westford's population, for in 1990, less than fifty percent of its adult residents had completed a college degree and just sixteen percent held a graduate or professional degree.² Educational levels increased throughout the region between 1990 and 2000, but the increase in persons with advanced degrees is more pronounced in Westford than any neighboring town.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) has developed population projections for the state, the

¹ Westford Public Schools, "School Capacity Report 2006-1016" [Electronic Version].

² University of Massachusetts Donohue Institute, "Educational Attainment for the State, Counties, Cities and Towns for the Population 25 Years and Older, 1990-2000," [Electronic Version], retrieved from MassBenchmarks, <<http://www.massbenchmarks.org/statedata/data.htm>>.

TABLE 7.2
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER

City/Town	Highest Level of Education Achieved					Percent Graduate Degree
	Less than High School	High School Diploma	Some College	Associate or Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree	
Acton	302	1,519	1,613	5,489	4,577	33.9%
Ayer	565	1,632	1,028	1,288	489	9.8%
Billerica	2,840	9,501	5,210	6,471	2,019	7.8%
Boxborough	62	253	405	1,386	1,009	32.4%
Carlisle	20	140	255	1,502	1,229	39.1%
Chelmsford	1,654	5,266	4,180	8,278	4,276	18.1%
Concord	754	1,372	1,258	4,489	4,179	34.7%
Dracut	3,093	6,660	3,757	4,416	1,249	6.5%
Dunstable	107	453	321	608	348	18.9%
Groton	218	1,022	1,068	2,325	1,415	23.4%
Harvard	359	448	479	1,345	1,478	36.0%
Littleton	414	1,128	908	2,153	983	17.6%
Lowell	18,541	20,674	10,133	10,784	4,289	6.7%
Pepperell	484	2,191	1,382	2,177	741	10.6%
Tewksbury	2,407	6,376	4,237	5,187	1,675	8.4%
Tyngsborough	711	2,229	1,468	2,018	713	10.0%
WESTFORD	777	1,953	1,916	5,321	3,308	24.9%

Source: Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P37.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and cities and towns. EOT's approach is a share-basis methodology that allocates the statewide population projection according to a series of growth and employment assumptions. As a result, the state and regional projections are probably more reliable than the projections for individual cities and towns. Table 7.3 reports EOT's population projections for Westford and the surrounding communities. According to EOT, Westford is expected to grow by 19.5 percent between 2000 and 2010, 11.9 percent between 2010 and 2020, and 12.9 percent between 2020 and 2030. By 2030, Westford would rank behind Lowell, Billerica, Dracut, Chelmsford and Tewksbury for the largest population in the region. In contrast, Acton, which had a population count similar to Westford's in 2000, is expected to grow more slowly.

Population projections need to be used cautiously because several modeling methods are available and they do not produce consistent results. For example, the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER), now under the aegis of the UMass Donohue Institute, has published population forecasts for the state and each city and town through 2020. According to MISER's projec-

tions, Westford’s population will be 22,984 in 2010 and 24,197 by 2020.³

Households and Families

Westford has approximately 7,200 households: one or more people occupying a residence as a single house-keeping unit. In census terminology, the number of households in a city or town is the same as its number of occupied housing units. An increase in households almost always relates to an increase in housing. However, decennial household growth will exceed housing growth if some of the increase in housing demand was absorbed by units that lay vacant at the beginning of a decade. In fact, this happened in Westford and all of the surrounding towns between 1990 and 2000, though Westford’s 1990 housing vacancy rate was noticeably lower than that of Middlesex County or the state as a whole.⁴ The vast majority of household growth that occurred in Westford between 1990 and 2000 was attributable to new housing development.

Table 7.4 shows that Westford experienced significant household growth between 1990 and 2000. Regionally, Westford’s household growth rate was surpassed only in Boxborough (37.5%), Dunstable (33.4%), and Tyngsborough (31.2%). Since 2000, the rate of household growth in Westford has exceeded the rate of population growth, which is consistent with regional, state, and national trends. Although people often cite population statistics as evidence of residential land use change, household

³ University of Massachusetts Donohue Institute, “Total Population 1980-2020, MISER Projections,” [Electronic Version], retrieved from MassBenchmarks, <<http://www.massbenchmarks.org/statedata/data.htm>>.

⁴ Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1, Table H03; Census 2000, Summary File 1, Table H3.

**TABLE 7.3
POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR WESTFORD’S REGION**

City/Town	Census	EOT Projections by Decade		
	2000	2010	2020	2030
Acton	20,331	21,665	22,490	23,139
Ayer	7,287	7,875	8,373	8,930
Billerica	38,981	40,019	41,580	42,150
Boxborough	4,868	5,279	5,611	5,884
Carlisle	4,717	5,012	5,248	5,439
Chelmsford	33,858	34,923	36,680	37,500
Concord	16,993	18,354	18,804	19,147
Dracut	28,562	33,409	36,390	40,300
Dunstable	2,829	3,780	4,950	6,120
Groton	9,547	10,317	10,970	11,690
Harvard*	5,981	6,465	6,873	7,330
Littleton	8,184	9,671	11,080	12,461
Lowell	105,167	108,208	111,890	113,270
Pepperell	11,142	14,509	18,450	22,450
Tewksbury	28,851	30,915	32,080	33,270
Tyngsborough	11,081	13,430	15,230	17,400
WESTFORD	20,754	24,807	27,750	31,340

Source: Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 1 Table P1; Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Transportation. Figures courtesy of Northern Middlesex Council of Governments.

*Note: As the base year for future population projections, EOT used Harvard’s Census 2000 total population count, which includes group quarters populations at Devens.

**TABLE 7.4
HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES: WESTFORD, 1990-2007**

Period	Total Households	Total Families	Families with Children <18	Families with Children <18, Percent Households
1990	5,316	4,505	2,503	47.1%
2000	6,808	5,806	3,325	48.8%
2007	7,139	6,087	3,612	50.6%
Change 1990-2000	28.1%	28.9%	32.8%	
Change 2000-2007	4.9%	4.8%	8.6%	

Sources: Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1 Tables P02, P03, P016; Census 2000, Summary File 1, Tables P15, P34, P36; Claritas, Inc., Demographic Snapshot Report: Westford, Massachusetts.

statistics provide more important information about housing growth because households generate demand for housing units. In many ways, household characteristics act as a surrogate for the types, sizes, and prices of housing found in each community. This can be seen in Westford, where single-family dwellings account for eighty-nine percent of all housing units and eighty-six percent of all households are families: households of two or more people related by blood, marriage or adoption. Moreover, Westford’s recent growth has been attended by a higher rate of growth among families with children than households or families in general.

Income

PER CAPITA INCOME

Per capita income in Westford increased from \$21,878 in 1990 to \$37,979 in 2000, or 73.4 percent. In 1990, Westford had the highest per capita income in the NMCOG region, but lagged behind Carlisle, Concord, Acton, Boxborough, and Groton. In 2000, Westford still topped the NMCOG region and trailed Carlisle, Concord, Acton, Harvard, and Boxborough. Estimates for 2007 indicate that Westford has experienced an increase of 28.5 percent in per capita income since 2000. In Westford's region, the only community that qualifies for funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) on the basis of per capita income is Lowell, which had a Census 2000 per capita income of slightly more than 80% of the national per capita income.⁵

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

New growth has brought about noticeable changes in the economic position of Westford's households. In 1990, the *median household income* in Westford lagged behind that of Carlisle, Harvard, Concord, Dunstable, and Acton. By 2000, Westford's median household income ranked third in the region. Over time, the income gap between Westford, Harvard and Carlisle households has decreased. According to demographic estimates prepared by Claritas, Westford experienced the region's second highest rate of growth in median household income between 2000 and 2007. However, The Boston Globe recently published a study of towns in the Commonwealth and change in average household income between 2001 and 2005, citing data from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. According to the Boston Globe article, Westford experienced the second smallest increase in *average* household income compared with the other towns in the "mar-

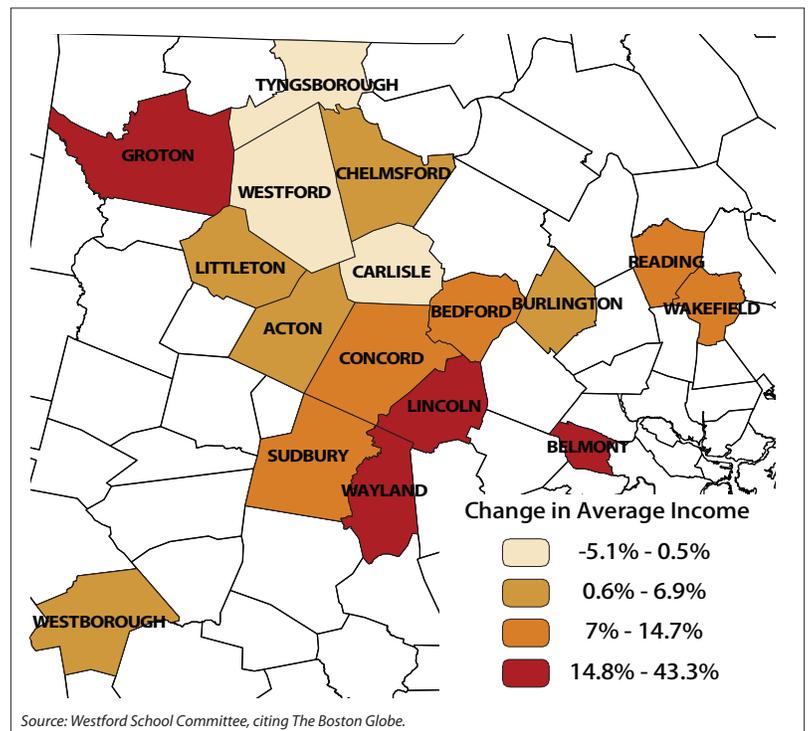


Figure 7.2. Change in Average Household Income, 2001-2005. Westford Public Schools Market Basket.

ket basket" communities tracked by the Westford Public Schools. Some of the market basket communities are located outside of Westford's region.

Median household income is a useful way of measuring local wealth, but it does not say much about the distribution of incomes within a community and throughout a region. More than half of Westford's households have incomes fairly close to the midpoint, which is different from the situation in all of the surrounding towns. Overall, the communities with the largest percentages of households with very high incomes -- \$250,000 or more -- include Carlisle, Harvard, Concord, and Boxborough, while the largest percentages of lower-income households exist in Lowell, Ayer, Dracut, and Pepperell. In contrast, Westford has a strikingly homogenous household income profile, with very few households in the lowest or highest income extremes.

POVERTY

Although Westford is not the most affluent town in the region, it has the lowest poverty rate (1.7 percent) of all seventeen communities. Others with very low poverty rates include Dunstable (1.9 percent), Harvard (2.1 percent), Carlisle (2.4 percent), and

⁵ Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, citing Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P82; and Claritas, Inc.

Boxborough (2.7 percent). The only communities that approximate the statewide rate (9.3 percent) include Lowell (16.8 percent) and Ayer (10.8 percent). The poverty rate for families in Westford, 1.3 percent, is composed almost entirely of single-parent households, including a roughly equal distribution of male-headed and female-headed families. This is not the case in other towns nearby, where female-headed families tend to make up the vast majority of families in poverty.⁶

The Economy

The components of the economy include the local labor force, employed residents, and unemployment rates. Overall, the economy has fared well since 2000, except for the period between 2001 and 2003 when the information technology and computer manufacturing industries were hit hard. In some cases, there has been a decline in the labor force and the number of employed residents, particularly between 2000 and 2005.

The local labor force has steadily increased in Westford, from 11,529 in 2000 to 11,783 in May 2007, for a modest increase of 2.2 percent. Unlike many neighboring communities, Westford did not experience a significant decline in its local labor force. The size of the local labor force in Westford is comparable to Acton and ranks sixth in the region behind Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Tewksbury and Dracut, as shown in Table 7.5.

TABLE 7.5
CHANGES IN LOCAL LABOR FORCE, 2000-2007

City/Town	2000	2005	2006	May 2007
Acton	11,639	11,592	11,723	11,751
Ayer	4,189	4,146	4,170	4,182
Billerica	22,085	22,261	22,385	22,447
Boxborough	2,876	2,956	2,982	3,052
Carlisle	2,496	2,521	2,540	2,551
Chelmsford	19,123	18,855	18,975	19,001
Concord	7,864	7,684	7,754	7,785
Dracut	16,290	16,246	16,342	16,391
Dunstable	1,673	1,811	1,823	1,829
Groton	5,155	5,532	5,576	5,724
Harvard	2,930	2,934	2,965	2,984
Littleton	4,549	4,709	4,753	4,757
Lowell	51,122	49,988	50,106	50,153
Pepperell	6,247	6,454	6,449	6,438
Tewksbury	16,622	16,475	16,556	16,552
Tyngsborough	6,325	6,347	6,381	6,391
WESTFORD	11,529	11,694	11,775	11,783

Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

TABLE 7.6
EMPLOYED RESIDENTS

City/Town	2000	2005	2006	May 2007
Acton	11,454	11,200	11,312	11,334
Ayer	4,090	3,934	3,973	3,981
Billerica	21,528	21,237	21,351	21,399
Boxborough	2,829	2,849	2,878	2,938
Carlisle	2,454	2,429	2,454	2,458
Chelmsford	18,713	18,099	18,197	18,238
Concord	7,712	7,410	7,484	7,499
Dracut	15,877	15,449	15,531	15,567
Dunstable	1,638	1,747	1,756	1,760
Groton	5,050	5,324	5,378	5,490
Harvard	2,878	2,829	2,857	2,863
Littleton	4,459	4,518	4,563	4,572
Lowell	49,514	46,764	47,015	47,122
Pepperell	6,101	6,186	6,179	6,214
Tewksbury	16,224	15,702	15,786	15,822
Tyngsborough	6,172	6,065	6,098	6,111
WESTFORD	11,323	11,247	11,307	11,333

Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS).

The number of employed residents, shown in Table 7.6, represents the total residents working, not the number employed by local businesses. The number of employed residents in Westford decreased by 0.7 percent between 2000 and 2005, but increased by 0.8 percent to 11,333 between 2005 and May 2007. As of May 2007, Westford ranked seventh in the region behind Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Tewksbury, Dracut and Acton (by 1).

Unemployment rates in Westford's region ranged from the two to three percent level in 2000 to the three to six percent level in 2007. The highest un-

⁶ Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Tables P89, P90.

TABLE 7.7
ESTABLISHMENTS, EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

City/Town	Establishments		Average Monthly Employment		Average Weekly Wage	
	2003 (Q3)	2006 (Q3)	2003 (Q3)	2006 (Q3)	2003 (Q3)	2006 (Q3)
Acton	832	819	8,985	9,638	856	863
Ayer	323	325	6,140	7,151	833	881
Billerica	1,181	1,181	22,679	22,897	\$1,000	\$1,172
Boxborough	164	159	3,181	3,623	2,245	2,247
Carlisle	146	133	1,079	969	698	718
Chelmsford	1,130	1,154	20,788	21,350	916	1,055
Concord	930	924	12,464	12,785	975	1,042
Dracut	581	596	4,822	4,888	608	716
Dunstable	55	55	284	282	545	581
Groton	249	252	2,873	3,395	800	794
Harvard	184	184	1,008	1,041	718	747
Littleton	349	345	5,134	4,865	1,166	1,112
Lowell	1,876	1,936	32,059	32,974	787	859
Pepperell	213	233	1,472	1,440	604	615
Tewksbury	819	817	15,766	15,417	1,046	1,040
Tyngsborough	355	376	4,609	4,391	557	625
WESTFORD	665	651	10,866	11,334	1,275	1,358
State	205,211	208,821	3,131,033	3,197,357	\$860	\$950

Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, ES-202 Reports.

employment rate in the region is in the City of Lowell, which has had an unemployment rate in the six percent range since 2003. Westford has generally had a higher unemployment rate than the other communities, ranking behind only Lowell (six percent), Dracut (five percent), Ayer (4.8 percent), Billerica (4.7 percent), Tewksbury (4.4 percent) and Tyngsborough (4.4 percent).

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Statistics reflecting the condition of the business community include the number of establishments, average monthly employment, average weekly wage, projected employment, and the composition of industries in a community. Instead of illustrating a community's economic health, these statistics indicate the health of the business community. Table 7.7 compares the number of establishments, average monthly employment, and average weekly wage in the seventeen communities and the state for the third quarters of 2003 and 2006. The number of establishments in Westford decreased from 665 in the third quarter of 2003 to 651 in the third quarter of 2006, for a 2.1 percent decline. In other communities nearby, the results were mixed: the number of establishments stayed the same or increased or decreased slightly, while the number of establishments for the state as a whole increased by 1.8 percent. Westford

ranked seventh regionally for total number of establishments.

The average monthly employment of establishments in Westford increased by 4.3 percent between the third quarter of 2003 (10,866) and the third quarter of 2006 (11,334), more than twice the statewide rate (2.1 percent). Communities such as Dunstable, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, Carlisle and Littleton experienced a decline in the average monthly employment during the same time period. As of the third quarter of 2006, Westford ranked sixth in the region for average monthly employment, trailing only Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Tewksbury, and Concord.

The average weekly wages in Table 7.7 illustrate that Westford employers pay high wages relative to the rest of the region. Westford ranks second in average weekly wages, behind only Boxborough. The average weekly wage increased from \$1,275 in the third quarter of 2003 to \$1,358 in the third quarter of 2006, for a 6.5 percent increase. Even though the average weekly wage increased by 10.5 percent for the state as a whole, the average weekly wage in Westford for the third quarter of 2006 was nearly 1.43 times the statewide average weekly wage for the same period. Within the region, the average weekly wage

decreased in Tewksbury, Groton, and Littleton between the third quarter of 2003 and the third quarter of 2006.

Table 7.8 reports employment projections for each community in 2010, 2020 and 2030. The projections were developed by the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT). According to EOT, employment in Westford is expected to increase by 30.5 percent between 2000 and 2010, 6.7 percent between 2010 and 2020, and 9.6 percent between 2020 and 2030. In 2030, Westford is expected to rank fifth in employment levels within the region, trailing only Lowell (45,170), Billerica (28,930), Chelmsford (25,100) and Tewksbury (19,930). Even though Westford and Acton had comparable employment levels in 2000, EOT estimates that by 2030, Westford will have nearly 5,000 more workers than Acton.

Table 7.9 summarizes industry composition changes in Westford between 2001 and 2006. It shows that the number of establishments in all industries increased by 4.4 percent, with most of the increase occurring in the service-providing domain. Sectors showing the greatest growth in establishments included

TABLE 7.8
LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS, 2010-2030

City/Town	Actual		Projections	
	2000	2010	2020	2030
Acton	11,090	11,272	12,011	12,614
Ayer	6,006	8,143	8,444	8,600
Billerica	26,632	28,796	29,450	28,930
Boxborough	2,248	2,338	2,484	2,602
Carlisle	906	821	807	794
Chelmsford	22,801	24,670	25,430	25,100
Concord	12,946	13,131	13,644	14,053
Dracut	9,019	10,451	11,940	13,990
Dunstable	692	923	1,180	1,790
Groton	2,988	4,049	4,198	4,280
Harvard	1,041	1,409	1,461	1,490
Littleton	6,189	6,801	7,208	7,546
Lowell	34,705	39,990	43,420	45,170
Pepperell	1,571	1,770	1,920	2,000
Tewksbury	17,266	19,370	19,860	19,930
Tyngsborough	4,293	5,203	5,740	6,200
WESTFORD	11,485	14,987	15,990	17,530

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census 2000; projections by Mass. EOT

construction, other services, and professional and business services. Average monthly employment decreased by 9.5 percent between the first quarter of 2001 and the fourth quarter of 2006, largely due to a 68.7 percent decrease in manufacturing employment. With employment gains in the information (49.3 percent), professional business services (35.7 percent), education and health services (13.9 percent) and leisure and hospitality (7.4 percent) sectors, the service-providing domain increased its share of total employment from 64.2 percent in 2001 to 84.1 percent in 2006.

TABLE 7.9
INDUSTRY COMPOSITION: WESTFORD

Description	Establishments		Average Monthly Employment		Average Weekly Wage	
	2001 (Q1)	2006 (Q4)	2001 (Q1)	2006 (Q4)	2001 (Q1)	2006 (Q4)
All Industries	615	642	12,461	11,283	\$1,160	\$1,470
Goods-Producing	109	111	4,467	1,792	1,224	1,230
Construction	61	73	328	368	831	927
Manufacturing	44	36	4,136	1,294	1,255	1,320
Service-Providing	506	531	7,995	9,491	1,125	1,515
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	139	135	1,753	1,775	1,367	1,699
Information	27	20	1,340	2,001	1,820	2,331
Financial Activities	34	45	429	238	924	880
Professional and Business Services	157	166	1,680	2,280	1,398	1,891
Education and Health Services	48	52	1,554	1,770	606	859
Leisure and Hospitality	45	46	950	1,020	285	338
Other Services	48	59	140	177	498	567

Source: ES-202 Reports.

The average weekly wage increased from \$ 1,160 in 2001 to \$ 1,470 in 2006, for an overall increase of 26.7 percent. This increase was largely accomplished through an increase in average weekly wages in the service-providing domain, from \$ 1,125 in 2001 to \$ 1,515 in 2006 (34.6 percent), which in turn reflects increases in average weekly wages for the education and health services (41.7 percent), professional and business services (35.3 percent), information (28.1 percent) and trade, transportation and utilities (24.3 percent) sectors. In the fourth quarter of 2006, the highest average weekly wage was in the information sector while the lowest was in the leisure and hospitality sector.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Doing Business in Westford

An assessment of a community’s economic development potential should include a determination of the assets and liabilities it brings to the business community. Identifying community assets and liabilities should be done in consultation with members of the business community because they have the best understanding of what will attract new businesses and what will keep them away. Accordingly, the Comprehensive Plan’s public participation process included the Westford Business Form, a special outreach effort to the business community conducted by NMCOG. The Westford Business Forum coincided with a series of community and neighborhood meetings sponsored by the Westford Planning Board and Comprehensive Master Plan Committee (CMPC). To encourage participation, NMCOG invited more than 900 Westford businesses and conducted additional outreach through the Greater Lowell and Nashoba Valley Chambers of Commerce. The meeting’s purpose was to hear directly from business owners about their impressions of doing business in Westford.

At the Westford Business Forum, NMCOG facilitated a SWOT (Strengths,

Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis that gave business representatives a chance to express their ideas, concerns, suggestions, and recommendations within a familiar framework. When asked about the strengths of doing business in Westford, business participants mentioned the town’s favorable location, single tax rate, highly educated labor force, household wealth, reasonable cost of living compared with Boston’s west suburbs, favorable rents, and overall quality of life. They also said Westford has weaknesses as a place for doing business. For example, they cited Westford’s slow development review process, complicated zoning, requirement for a monetary gift to the town as a condition of obtaining permits, lack of trained volunteers on boards and committees; failure to implement previous master plans; inconsistent staffing at the town level; lack of outreach to the business community; and lack of sewer service and other infrastructure to expand the community’s economic base. These comments largely matched the results of a business survey sponsored by the CMPC’s Economic Development Subcommittee.

Infrastructure

The Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008 and the town’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan include information about the existing infrastructure in Westford.

WATER SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

The Westford Water Company was established in 1907 by a group of local businessmen to protect the health of Westford Center residents. The town purchased the company in 1956. Today, the municipal

**TABLE 7.10
WESTFORD’S PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES**

Source Name	Source I.D. Number	Location
Forge Village Well Field	3330000-01G	Forge Village Road
Nutting Road Well	3330000-02G	Nutting Road
Depot Road Well	3330000-03G	Depot Road
Country Road Well	3330000-04G	Country Road
Forge Village II Well	3330000-05G	Forge Village Road
Howard Road Well Field	3330000-06G	Howard Road
Cote Well	3330000-07G	Beacon Street
Fletcher Well	3330000-08G	Concord Road

Source: Westford Water Department.

water supply and distribution system serves approximately seventy-five percent of the population and most commercial users. Drinking water is drawn from the eight gravel-packed wells listed in Table 7.10. Medium-yield aquifers underlie fifteen percent of the town and high-yield aquifers, only four percent. Within the high-yield aquifer system, the neighborhoods near Forge Village and Lake Nabnasset are among Westford’s most densely developed areas.

In 2003, Westford brought two new water treatment facilities on-line with capacity to treat 5.2 million gallons per day (gpd). The storage tanks and 124.6 miles of water main serve most of the central and northern sections of town, with limited service to the area south of Route 110. The storage tanks have a combined total capacity of 4.85 million gallons. As shown in Table 7.11, Westford withdrew 573 million gallons of water from its water supplies in 2006. A buildout analysis prepared by NMCOG in 2000 projected a demand of 2.41 million gallons per day.

Westford’s drinking water quality is generally good. The new treatment facilities have reduced iron and manganese levels. However, on July 13, 2004, perchlorate contamination was discovered at the Cote well, and three days later the well was taken offline. The well resumed service in 2006 with a resin filtration system that removes perchlorate, and Westford continues to work with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to monitor this issue.

DEP prepares a Source Water Assessment Report (SWAP) that evaluates the susceptibility of public water supplies. The key issues noted for Westford include the need for continued monitoring of roads and other activities in Zone I areas, and the need to work with neighboring communities to protect Zone II areas.

**TABLE 7.11
WESTFORD WATER CONSUMPTION, 2002-2006**

Month/Year	Gallons of Water Withdrawn (Millions)				
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
January	35	35	46	37	38
February	31	33	39	31	43
March	36	37	38	36	40
April	41	36	44	39	43
May	87	64	56	47	52
June	74	46	70	67	58
July	75	81	74	77	70
August	76	64	74	77	73
September	68	68	62	64	49
October	50	51	52	44	44
November	35	45	41	36	35
December	35	49	40	38	36
Total	609	612	635	594	573

Source: 2006 Annual Report, Town of Westford

**TABLE 7.12.1
QUARTERLY METERED 3-STEP WATER RATES (ALL METER SIZES)**

Step	Usage	Rate/100 cubic feet	
		Residential	Non-Residential
1st Step	1 to 2,500 cubic feet	\$2.71	\$3.82
2nd Step	2,501 to 10,000 cubic feet	\$3.62	\$4.09
3rd Step	>10,000 cubic feet	\$4.94	\$4.34

Source: Westford Water Department.

**TABLE 7.12.2
QUARTERLY FIRE PROTECTION RATES**

Size Serviced by	Rate
2" Line	\$11.00
4" Line	\$63.00
6" Line	\$182.00
8" Line	\$387.00
10" Line	\$696.00
12" Line	\$1,124.00

Source: Westford Water Department.

**TABLE 7.12.3
CUSTOMER SERVICE RATES**

Service and Labor	Charge
Penalty Charge	\$10.00
First Hour Per Man (Min)	\$50.00
Each ½ Hour Thereafter Per Man	\$25.00
After Normal Working Hours Per Man	\$75.00

Source: Westford Water Department.

**TABLE 7.12.4
RATES FOR OTHER CHARGES**

Service	Fee
Meter Test	\$25.00
Meter Turn On/Off	\$40.00
Fire Flow Test	\$400.00
Transfer Fee	\$25.00
Backflow Device Test	\$50.00

Source: Westford Water Department.

Susceptibility ratings of moderate to high were assigned to the Zone II protection areas for Westford's wells. The wells are located in an aquifer with a high vulnerability to contamination due to the absence of hydrogeologic barriers (e.g., clay or bedrock), which could prevent contaminant migration.

In 1996, Westford adopted a new Water Resource Protection District bylaw that protects not only existing public water supplies, but also the Stony Brook aquifer from which all municipal water is drawn. The bylaw delineates three water protection sub-districts. Within these districts, Westford prohibits uses that may threaten the aquifer and limits some uses to a special permit from the Planning Board.

- ◆ District 1 equates to existing DEP Zone I recharge areas;
- ◆ District 2 consists of all DEP Zone II and Interim Wellhead Protection Areas for municipal wells (including municipal wells in neighboring communities) along with surrounding high- and medium-yield aquifers; and
- ◆ District 3 consists of areas beyond District 2 that drain into a Zone II.

Much of Westford's remaining developable land is not easily serviced by town water. Today, about one-fourth of Westford's population relies on private wells. Table 7.12 reports the Water Department's rates for residential and non-residential customers, effective January 1, 2008.

WASTEWATER DISPOSAL

Westford has no municipal sanitary sewer system to serve residential or commercial properties. All sanitary waste is treated by on-site sewage disposal systems. Some commercial properties, several large residential developments, and a school complex near the Town Center have package treatment plants. On May 7, 2005, Westford Town Meeting approved funding to extend the Abbot School sewer line to the town center in order to serve the Town Hall, the Police and Fire Stations, the Roudenbush Community Center and the J.V. Fletcher Library. The absence of public sewer in Westford is per-

haps its most significant development constraint. Westford is one of the largest communities in the Commonwealth entirely regulated by Title V. Soil conditions are generally most conducive to development along the I-495/Route 110 corridors, and most of the larger commercial developments with package treatment plants are located in this area. The potential for developing sewer capacity or for purchasing such capacity from another municipality remains very low over the next decade.

OTHER UTILITIES

Westford's other public utilities include electric service provided by U.K.-based National Grid; natural gas in some portions of town, from KeySpan Energy Delivery; and telephone service by Verizon and several competitors. Many of these companies also offer DSL service, internet access and wireless service. Westford is also served by Comcast, which provides analog and digital cable TV, high speed (broadband) internet access, web hosting, and e-commerce for businesses.

National Grid provides electric service in Westford. It offers technical assistance and incentives to encourage energy efficiency. The Custom Project Program provides incentives of up to seventy-five percent of the cost of improvements for existing facilities.

For small business customers with an average demand use of 200 kilowatts or less per month, National Grid will provide a free energy audit and report of recommended energy efficiency improvements. The utility will pay eighty percent of the cost of installation of energy efficient equipment, and the business can finance the remaining twenty percent interest free for up to twenty-four months. Upgrades available through the program include lighting, energy efficient time clocks, photo cells for outdoor lighting, occupancy sensors, programmable thermostats, and walk-in cooler measures. The Design 2000plus program offers technical and financial incentives to large commercial and industrial customers that are building new facilities, adding capacity for manufacturing, replacing failed equipment, or undergoing major renovations.

KeySpan Energy Delivery, a subsidiary of National Grid, provides natural gas service for the town. Companies receive natural gas delivery and assistance regarding incentives and energy services. KeySpan offers an Architect/Engineer Program to assist companies in planning new construction or rehab projects. It also offers the following programs for commercial customers:

- ◆ **Commercial High Efficiency Heating Program:** Provides cash rebates to customers for the installation of high-efficiency gas heating and water heating equipment. Rebates are available to multifamily and commercial-industrial customers to help reduce the incremental cost difference between standard and high-efficiency heating equipment.
- ◆ **Building Practices and Demonstration Program:** To showcase the energy savings that can be achieved with new or underutilized commercially available technologies, KeySpan will help pay to install such improvements. Eligible technologies include energy recovery devices, combustion controls, building energy management systems, desiccant units, infrared space heating equipment, and infrared process heating equipment. The company selects approximately ten demonstration projects in New England annually.
- ◆ **Commercial Energy Efficiency Program:** Designed to provide support services and financial incentives to encourage multi-family, commercial, industrial, governmental and institutional customers to install energy efficient natural gas related features. Energy audit services are available for customers needing assistance in estimating energy savings. Participants typically include small- to medium-size commercial customers or large customers with relatively simple energy efficiency projects. Engineering services are used to evaluate more complex projects that involve technologies associated with mechanical and/or process equipment. KeySpan will cost-share these services with the customer. Prescriptive rebates are available for common energy efficiency measures installed after completion of an energy audit. Customer

incentives are available for projects that demonstrate the use of natural gas more efficiently than industry practices, and/or more efficiently than the minimum building code requires. Incentives are available covering up to fifty percent of project costs, capped at \$150,000 per site and/or project.

- ◆ **Economic Redevelopment Program:** ERP is an energy efficiency program for commercial customers in state-designated economic target areas to help reduce costs and improve productivity and competitiveness. There must be a customer commitment to provide at least fifty percent matching funds. Only measures that exceed existing building energy code requirements are eligible. Maximum funding per project is \$100,000.
- ◆ **Green Buildings Services:** Keyspan Business Solutions supports commercial and industrial customers in their efforts to conserve energy usage and to implement the latest “green” technology initiatives.

Comcast, Verizon and similar service providers offer telecommunication services throughout town. Presently, Comcast Corporation is the sole cable operator in Westford. General telecommunication services, provided over media other than cable, are available through other broadband competitors. Such services include Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), internet access, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and local and long distance telephone service. Approximately eighty percent of Westford has coverage for cellular phone service.

Commercial and Industrial Zoning

Westford’s zoning regulations provide for eight commercial and industrial zoning districts. These zones account for approximately ten percent of the town’s entire land area: Business (B), 61.9 acres; Business Limited (BL), 6.2 acres; Commercial Highway (CH), 388.6 acres; Industrial Highway (IH), 476.3 acres; Industrial A (IA), 749.4 acres; Industrial B (IB), 72.4 acres; Industrial C (IC), 195.7 acres; and Industrial D (ID), 32.6 acres. Together, Westford’s commercial

and industrial districts include 1,983.04 acres of land.

BUSINESS DISTRICT (B)

Business District zones exist throughout town, primarily in the villages. The following uses are allowed within the district by right:

- ◆ Childcare
- ◆ Religious uses
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Retail sales to the general public
- ◆ Retail sales of dairy products
- ◆ Funeral Home
- ◆ Hotel
- ◆ Restaurant
- ◆ Business or professional office
- ◆ Printing/newspaper
- ◆ Non-profit membership club
- ◆ Personal services
- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel

Uses allowed by special permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals include the following:

- ◆ Conversion of a dwelling
- ◆ Essential Services
- ◆ Hospital/clinic
- ◆ Nursing home
- ◆ Research by a non-profit educational entity
- ◆ Winter recreation
- ◆ Golf course
- ◆ Major commercial
- ◆ Cemetery
- ◆ Motor vehicle repairs and services

- ◆ Horse riding academy
- ◆ Place of amusements or assembly
- ◆ Adult day care

The minimum lot area for development within the Business District is 40,000 sq. ft., with minimum lot frontage of 200 feet. The maximum building height allowed within the BD is 40 feet (3 stories).

BUSINESS LIMITED DISTRICT (BL)

Business Limited District (BL) zone is principally confined to the Graniteville neighborhood. The following uses are allowed within the district by right:

- ◆ Childcare
- ◆ Religious uses
- ◆ Restaurant
- ◆ Business or professional office
- ◆ Movie theater
- ◆ Personal services
- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel
- ◆ General service establishment

Uses allowed by special permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals include the following:

- ◆ Conversion of a dwelling
- ◆ Essential Services
- ◆ Research by a non-profit educational entity
- ◆ Major commercial project
- ◆ Adult day care

The minimum lot area for development within the Business Limited District is 100,000 sq. ft., with minimum lot frontage of 200 feet. The maximum building height allowed within the BL is 40 feet (2 stories).

COMMERCIAL HIGHWAY (CH)

The Commercial Highway District covers nearly the entire length of Route 110. The following uses are allowed within the district by right:

- ◆ Religious uses
- ◆ Child care
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Greenhouse or nursery farm stand
- ◆ Veterinary hospital or clinic
- ◆ Retail sales to the general public
- ◆ Retail sales of dairy products
- ◆ Retail sales or leasing of motor vehicles
- ◆ Funeral Home
- ◆ Restaurant
- ◆ Business or professional office
- ◆ Non-exempt education use
- ◆ Non-profit membership club
- ◆ Indoor motion picture theater
- ◆ Personal services
- ◆ General service establishment
- ◆ Commercial parking lot
- ◆ Research/office park
- ◆ Light manufacturing with not more than 4 employees
- ◆ Wholesale trade
- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel

Uses allowed by special permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals include the following:

- ◆ Assisted living facility
- ◆ Essential Services
- ◆ Hospital/clinic
- ◆ Boarding, renting and sale of animals on parcels less than 5 acres

- ◆ Boarding, renting and sale of horses on parcels less than 5 acres
- ◆ Major retail project
- ◆ Retail sales to industrial or commercial buyers
- ◆ Research by a non-profit educational entity
- ◆ Hotel
- ◆ Indoor and outdoor commercial recreation
- ◆ Planned commercial development
- ◆ Adult entertainment establishment
- ◆ Body art establishment
- ◆ Major commercial project
- ◆ Cemetery
- ◆ Motor vehicle repairs and services
- ◆ Commercial communications and television tower
- ◆ Wireless communications facility

The minimum lot area for development within the Commercial Highway District is 40,000 sq. ft., with minimum lot frontage of 200 feet. The maximum building height allowed within the CH is 40 feet (three stories).

PLANNED COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS (PCD)

Any tract of land of 200,000 sq. ft. or more in a Commercial Highway District may be developed as a PCD. The same uses permitted within the Commercial Highway District are allowed within a Planned Commercial Development.

INDUSTRIAL HIGHWAY (IH)

Industrial Highway zoning exists in pockets along Route 110 corridor and on Liberty Way. The following uses are allowed within the district by right:

- ◆ Religious uses
- ◆ Child care
- ◆ Municipal parking lot or garage
- ◆ Agriculture

- ◆ Retail sales to industrial and commercial buyers
- ◆ Retail sales or leasing of motor vehicles
- ◆ Business or professional office
- ◆ Indoor motion picture theater
- ◆ General service establishment
- ◆ Commercial parking lot
- ◆ Research/office park
- ◆ Sawmills and wood processing
- ◆ Light manufacturing
- ◆ Light manufacturing with not more than 4 employees
- ◆ Wholesale trade
- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel

Uses allowed by special permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals include the following:

- ◆ Assisted living facility
- ◆ Essential Services
- ◆ Retail sales to industrial or commercial buyers
- ◆ Major retail project
- ◆ Research by a non-profit educational entity
- ◆ Major commercial project
- ◆ Cemetery
- ◆ Motor vehicle repairs and services
- ◆ Warehouse
- ◆ Planned industrial development
- ◆ Wholesale underground fuel storage
- ◆ Commercial communications and television tower
- ◆ Wireless communications facility

The minimum lot area for development within the Industrial Highway District is 100,000 sq. ft., with minimum lot frontage of 250 feet. The maximum

building height allowed within the IH is 40 feet (three stories).

PLANNED INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (PID)

Any tract of land of 400,000 sq. ft. or more in an Industrial Highway District may be developed as a PID. The same uses shall be permitted in a PID as are permitted in an Industrial Highway District.

INDUSTRIAL A DISTRICT (IA)

Industrial A Districts are found along the northeasterly portion of Route 40 near the Route 3 interchange and in Graniteville. The following non-residential uses are allowed within the district by right:

- ◆ Religious uses
- ◆ Child care
- ◆ Municipal parking lot or garage
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Retail sales to the general public
- ◆ Retail sales of dairy products
- ◆ Funeral home
- ◆ Hotel
- ◆ Restaurant
- ◆ Business or professional office
- ◆ Printing establishment/newspaper
- ◆ Non profit membership club
- ◆ Personal service establishment
- ◆ General service establishment
- ◆ Research/office park
- ◆ Quarrying/mining
- ◆ Sawmills and wood processing
- ◆ Light manufacturing
- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel

Uses allowed by special permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals include the following:

WESTFORD COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

- ◆ Conversion of dwelling
- ◆ Open Space Residential
- ◆ Flexible Development
- ◆ Cemetery
- ◆ Assisted living facility
- ◆ Essential Services
- ◆ Hospital or clinic
- ◆ Winter commercial recreation
- ◆ Horseback riding academy
- ◆ Place of amusements or assembly
- ◆ Golf course or golf club
- ◆ Major retail project
- ◆ Adult day care
- ◆ Research by a non-profit educational entity
- ◆ Major commercial project
- ◆ Cemetery
- ◆ Warehouse

The minimum lot area for development within the Industrial A District is 40,000 sq. ft., with minimum lot frontage of 200 feet. The maximum building height allowed within the IA is 40 feet (four stories).

INDUSTRIAL B DISTRICT (IB)

Industrial B District zones are exclusively located in Forge Village. The following non-residential uses are allowed within the district by right:

- ◆ Religious uses
- ◆ Child care
- ◆ Municipal parking lot or garage
- ◆ Business or professional office
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Personal services
- ◆ Research/office park
- ◆ Light manufacturing

- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel

Uses allowed by special permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals include the following:

- ◆ Single-family residence
- ◆ Conversion of dwelling
- ◆ Assisted living facility
- ◆ Cemetery
- ◆ Essential Services
- ◆ Hospital or clinic
- ◆ Winter commercial recreation
- ◆ Horseback riding academy
- ◆ Place of amusements or assembly
- ◆ Golf course or golf club
- ◆ Major commercial project
- ◆ Adult day care
- ◆ Warehouse
- ◆ Planned industrial development
- ◆ Motor vehicle services and repairs
- ◆ Nursing home

The minimum lot area for development within the Industrial B District is four acres, with minimum lot frontage of 300 feet. The maximum building height allowed within the IB is 40 feet (four stories).

INDUSTRIAL C DISTRICT (IC)

Industrial C District zones are located in the north-east section of town, adjacent to the Chelmsford and Tyngsborough town lines. The following non-residential uses are allowed within the district by right:

- ◆ Religious uses
- ◆ Child care
- ◆ Municipal parking lot or garage
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ General service establishment

- ◆ Business or professional office
- ◆ Research/office park
- ◆ Quarrying/mining
- ◆ Light manufacturing
- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel

Uses allowed by special permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals include the following:

- ◆ Single-family residence
- ◆ Conversion of dwelling
- ◆ Open Space Residential
- ◆ Flexible Development
- ◆ Assisted living facility
- ◆ Essential Services
- ◆ Major commercial project
- ◆ Warehouse

The minimum lot area for development within the Industrial C District is 100,000 sq. ft. with minimum lot frontage of 250 feet. The maximum building height allowed within the IC is 40 feet (three stories).

INDUSTRIAL D DISTRICT (ID)

Industrial D District is located along the Tyngsborough town boundary. The following non-residential uses are allowed within the district by right:

- ◆ Religious uses
- ◆ Child care
- ◆ Municipal parking lot or garage
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Business or professional office
- ◆ Printing establishment/newspaper
- ◆ General service establishment
- ◆ Research/office park
- ◆ Quarrying/mining

- ◆ Wholesale trade
- ◆ Light manufacturing
- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel

Additional uses, allowed upon the issuance of a special permit by either the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals, include the following:

- ◆ Assisted living facility
- ◆ Essential Services
- ◆ Major commercial project
- ◆ Warehouse

The minimum lot area for development within the Industrial D District is 200,000 sq. ft. with minimum lot frontage of 250 feet. The maximum building height allowed within the ID is 40 feet (three stories).

MILL CONVERSION OVERLAY DISTRICT (MCO)

The Mill Conversion Overlay District allows for the conversion of Westford’s historic mills, thereby preserving the character of residential and commercial neighborhoods. The MCO promotes diverse housing opportunities with a mix of compatible uses such as commercial, retail or office uses. It includes the following parcels:

- ◆ The Abbott Mill on Pleasant Street consisting of Map 53, parcels 11, 15, and 110;
- ◆ The Abbot Worsted Mill on North Main Street consisting of Map 30, parcels number 68, 69,70, 71, 72 and 73;
- ◆ The Sargent Mill on Broadway Street consisting of Map 62, parcels 35 and 36; and
- ◆ The Brookside Mill on Brookside Road consisting of Map 70, parcel 117.

Within the MCO, a mill conversion project may be constructed under a special permit and site plan approval from the Planning Board. Existing buildings may be expanded if the expansion is consistent with the historic character and scale of the structure. Upon approval of the Planning Board, new buildings may be constructed only to the extent necessary

to provide for essential services such as a wastewater treatment plant.

HOME OCCUPATIONS

In addition to Westford’s commercial and industrial zoning regulations, the town allows home occupations as an accessory use by right in all nonresidential districts except IC, ID and BL, and by special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals in the two residential districts (RA and RB). Eligible home occupations include professional services such as a physician, lawyer, architect, engineer, accountant, real estate broker, insurance broker or similar occupations. The zoning bylaw limits home occupation uses to a maximum of one-third of one floor of a dwelling unit.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

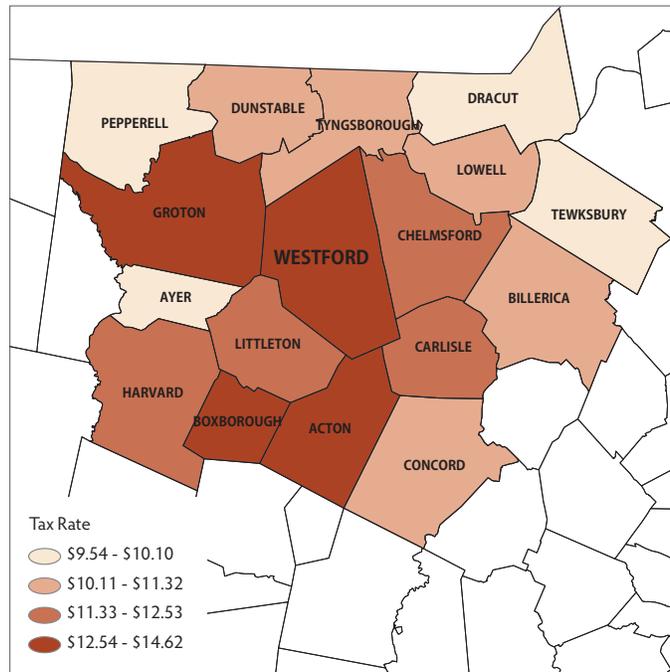
Commercial and Industrial Activity

Since Westford’s last master plan was completed in 1995, commercial and industrial construction has not kept pace with residential construction. Even though one of the goals of the 1995 Master Plan was to increase Westford’s non-residential tax base from seventeen percent in 1995 to twenty or twenty-five percent, the non-residential tax base had decreased to 16.5 percent by 2003. This trend has continued because non-residential property accounts for just 13.2 percent of the total tax base in FY 2007. A similar pattern has occurred throughout Eastern Massachusetts since the mid-1990s, mainly because new housing development and rising home values caused the residential tax base to increase more rapidly than the non-residential base.

Property Taxes. Westford adopted a single tax rate of \$13.10 in FY 2007 for all real and personal

Figure 7.2. Residential Tax Rates.

Source: Department of Revenue.



property. In addition, the town adopted a Small Commercial Exemption (SCE), which was designed to benefit small commercial properties assessed for \$1 million or less. This action effectively reduces the assessment of commercial properties of \$1 million or less valuation by ten percent and then taxes these properties at the higher rate of \$13.27. All other commercial property and all industrial properties are then taxed at the higher rate of \$13.27. The residential tax rate in Westford is higher than most surrounding communities, as shown in Figure 7.2. Only Acton (\$14.62), Boxborough (\$13.87) and Groton (\$13.77) have a higher residential tax rate. Although Westford’s commercial and industrial tax rate is lower than that of Billerica, Lowell, Tewksbury, Acton, Boxborough, Groton and Littleton, it is important to note that several of these communities participate in the state’s Economic Development Incentive

**TABLE 7.13
BUILDING PERMITS FOR NEW COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS**

Issue date	Type	Address	Value	Purpose
5/5/03	Daycare building	26 Carlisle Road	\$ 710,000	Commercial building
4/28/05	Building	527 Groton Road	\$ 1,330,000	Commercial building
11/11/05	Building	28 North Street	\$ 642,000	Commercial building
5/23/06	Building (Walgreen’s)	145 Littleton Road	\$ 1,786,153	Commercial building
7/18/06	Building (3 retail units)	139 Littleton Road	\$ 385,000	Commercial building
10/1/06	Building (Hampton Inn)	9 Nixon Road	\$ 4,000,333	Commercial building

Source: Westford Building Department.

TABLE 7.14
COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

Property Address	Proposed Use	Size Of Building (Sq. Ft)	Date Approved
9 Powers Rd	Day Care Center	11,600	9/9/1997
137 Littleton Rd	Commercial (Chili's Restaurant)	5,532	10/5/1998
Westford Tech Park (Bldg 2, Lot 2)	Office	131,894	11/9/1998
Westford Tech Park/ Littleton Rd (Bldg 10, Lot 10)	Office	251,200 (2 Bldgs)	3/22/1999
228 Littleton Rd	Office – Primrose Plaza	25,000 And 2,200	4/20/1999
142 Littleton Rd	Commercial-Moran Shopping Center	24,710	7/10/2000
137/145 Littleton Rd (WTP Bldg 9)	Office/Restaurant	81,500 S.F ; 205 Seat Restaurant	2/19/2002
Littleton Rd WTPW Phase Ii	Office	725,000 (6 Office Bldgs)	4/27/2005
Littleton Rd WTPW Phase II	Office	400,000 (3 Bldgs & WWTF)	4/27/2005
Littleton Rd WTPW Phase II	Office	325,000 (3 Bldgs And WWTF)	4/27/2005
4 Lane Dr Primrose Park Phase V	Office	32,000	6/4/2001
7 Liberty Way	Office	34,616	6/4/2001
WTP (Bldg 11)	Office	70,000	5/21/2001
5 Liberty Way	Commercial	40,400	7/21/2003
160-174 Littleton Rd	Retail/Commercial Market Basket	777 (Control Building for WWTF)	5/3/2004
527 Groton Rd	Retail/Office	23,000	12/20/2004
Westford Tech Park Lot 9	Retail/Office (Walgreens)	15,000 Retail, 7,500 Retail, 35,000 Office	11/15/2005
130 Littleton Rd	Retail	8,280	7/31/2006
310 Littleton Rd WTPW Phase I	Office/Research Development	75,000	3/20/2006
8 Carlisle Rd	Retail (Pets, Pets, Pets)	2,592	9/5/2006
5 Tech Park Dr	Commercial/Office (Hampton Inn)	64,192	7/31/2006
Boston Rd/Littleton Rd	Cornerstone Square Lifestyle Shopping Center	232,560 (Proposed)	Denied (2/19/2008)

Source: Westford Planning Department.

Program (EDIP) and offer tax and economic incentives to attract new businesses.

gether with the estimated construction cost of each project.

Permits and Project Approvals. The Westford Building Department has issued 34 building permits for new commercial buildings since 1995. It is unclear whether this includes additions to existing buildings. Most of the permits were issued in 1999 (7), 2000 (12) and 2006 (9). Table 7.13 provides a summary of recently issued building permits to-

Table 7.14 lists commercial and industrial development projects approved by Westford Planning Board since 1995. These 22 projects created more than 2.5 million sq. ft. of office, R&D, and retail space. The retail businesses include Chili's Restaurant, Walgreen's and the Hampton Inn. Currently, a proposed lifestyle center known as Cornerstone Square

is being reviewed by town boards and other permitting agencies. However, the Planning Board recently denied Cornerstone Square's special permit application and the project's future is unclear.

Vacancies. There is currently an estimated vacancy rate ranging from seventeen to twenty-three percent in the I-495 market and asking rents are slowly increasing from \$17.27 per sq. ft. to \$18.05 per sq. ft. As rents in Boston, Cambridge and Route 128 rise and vacant space there is absorbed, more companies will move into the I-495 market where they can find ample land and adequate infrastructure to meet their needs. The market is expected to continue its recovery throughout 2007 and 2008, as there is no sizable speculative construction planned. Biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies are seeking additional space in the I-495 market area.

Balance Between Economic Growth and Quality of Life

The Comprehensive Plan's vision statement anticipates that in the next ten years, Westford will "develop and promote a common vision between businesses, residents and town government" and "develop a public/private partnership that advocates for a balance between economic growth and quality of life." This vision reflects input from the business community at the Westford Business Forum and the business survey conducted by the CMPC's economic development subcommittee. Westford's business community sees opportunities, threats and specific needs in achieving a balance between economic development and the quality of life in Westford.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ◆ Examine zoning requirements for continuity/common vision
- ◆ Clear and comprehensive bylaws that provide certainty for land owners
- ◆ Investigate traffic improvements along Route 110/develop a long-term plan
- ◆ Provide more lane capacity and pedestrian accommodations

- ◆ Examine Route 40 in terms of future development (particularly 110 acres near Route 3)
- ◆ Create a forum for businesses
- ◆ Identify a person to serve as the town's economic development point of contact
- ◆ Redevelopment of vacant mills for specialty retail and neighborhood commercial businesses

THREATS

- ◆ Businesses leaving/no replacement of similar quality
- ◆ Competing with other communities that offer better business resources
- ◆ Negative attitude of town's people toward business
- ◆ Continuous change to regulations (signs and vernal pools)
- ◆ Lack of tax incentives and economic incentives
- ◆ Length of permitting process
- ◆ Lack of outreach to businesses
- ◆ Lack of effort to retain existing businesses (particularly high tech)
- ◆ Public perception concerning convenience of services vs. growth policy

WAYS TO INCREASE SUPPORT FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

- ◆ Spend money on professional planning staff/retain planning staff
- ◆ Treat applicants in a professional manner
- ◆ Changes in regulations shouldn't always be more restrictive

- ◆ Establish Zoning Bylaw Review Committee
- ◆ Provide adequate time for healthy review of zoning bylaw changes by the community
- ◆ Establish unifying vision/motto; provide information on businesses and locations
- ◆ Town leaders need to educate community relative to the importance of business
- ◆ Promote convenience/contribution in taxes and employment opportunities
- ◆ Create a stronger Master Plan Implementation Committee

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- E.1** Develop a public/private partnership among town government, the business community and town residents that advocates for a balance between economic growth and quality of life.
- E.2** Encourage commercial investment along Routes 110 and 40, as well as in the villages, in a manner consistent with traditional design specifications for the community.
- E.3** Improve the permitting process to increase efficiency, consistency and provide accepted development guidance to the residential and business community. Work to improve communication and education on all existing planning documents to affect community acceptance and/or approval.
- E.4** Designate and publicize a point-of-contact at Town Hall to work with the residential and business community.
- E.5** Identify and secure economic development incentives for the retention and expansion of emerging industries in the high technology sector.

- E.6** Attract “green” (environmentally responsible and emerging) industries to the community and institute design guidelines that promote sustainable development and encourage energy conservation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Westford needs a common vision among businesses, residents and local government on the town’s future economic development direction. To accomplish this goal, there needs to be greater communication and willingness on the part of the town to incorporate the views and opinions of businessmen and residents into future plans. Developing a legitimate public/private partnership would significantly improve communication between local officials and the business community. The improvement in communication will help identify opportunities to increase private investment and create jobs, and document differences of opinion that need to be addressed.

1. DEVELOP A PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP.

- ◆ To establish a working relationship with the business community, Westford should establish an Economic Development Committee of seven members, including a representative from the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board, three business representatives and two local residents. The Economic Development Committee’s principal purposes will be to collaborate with the business community on an ongoing basis and to address economic development policies, and common interests (such as traffic) and projects. By balancing economic growth with maintaining the quality of life, the town will be able to address its financial and employment needs and still preserve the community character that has attracted residents, businesses and visitors to Westford.

The Committee should facilitate communication between businesses and residents to establish goals for achieving a reasonable shared tax base while offering goods, services and employment opportunities that add value and compliment the community. The Committee also could promote and support business forums in conjunc-

tion with NMCOG and the three Chambers of Commerce that serve the business community. Partnership arrangements should extend beyond town lines, too, so that Westford can work cooperatively with adjacent communities, such as on the IBM expansion project with Littleton. Finally, the Committee could make recommendations on zoning changes that would ensure consistency across town boundaries.

2. ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT ALONG ROUTES 110 AND 40.

- ◆ Commercial investment in Westford should be targeted for Route 110, Route 40, and the traditional village centers. In particular, commercial investment along Route 110 and Route 40 should be targeted for the best use. Infrastructure improvements, such as those related to traffic, need to be financed with federal and state funds and private investment by developers. Mixed-use proposals should be considered for these commercial corridors and be consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

In addition, the potential reuse of the granite quarries along Route 40 should be examined, taking into consideration any environmental issues associated with the reuse options. Businesses should be identified for the landlocked industrial parcels adjacent to Route 3. Finally, Westford should prepare a Development Master Plan for the Route 40 area based on the evaluation of available resources and a review of current zoning.

3. IMPROVE THE PERMITTING PROCESS AND COMMUNICATION.

- ◆ Westford should work with NMCOG to streamline the local permitting process in accordance with *A Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting*, published by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA). The ultimate objective of a streamlined permitting process is one that is clear and easy to follow so that property owners, businessmen and developers understand the requirements of

each board and commission in order to receive permits.

- ◆ The town should appoint a point-of-contact for the permitting process, either from existing staff or by hiring a permitting coordinator. The staff person should prepare an overview of permitting requirements for the town as a whole and for individual boards and commissions. Billerica has already developed model documents, and NMCOG is developing additional materials for other communities through its expedited permitting technical assistance project.
- ◆ Further, Westford should designate a specific area within the Industrial Highway District as a Chapter 43D Priority Development Site and access up to \$100,000 in planning funds through the Interagency Permitting Board. The town should review other recommendations in the *Best Practices* report and determine other changes that could be made so that property owners, business owners, and developers have a better understanding of the timeframe for local boards to make a decision once a complete application has been submitted.
- ◆ The town should hold bi-annual town board and committee meetings to review the state of the town, goals of each board and/or committee and introduce new members.

4. DESIGNATE AND PUBLICIZE A POINT-OF-CONTACT AT TOWN HALL.

- ◆ In conjunction with the first and third recommendations, the business community needs a point-of-contact at Town Hall. This goes beyond simply knowing what steps to take in the local permitting process; it addresses who can speak for the town. In most communities, the town manager or mayor serves as point-of-contact for the business community, but sometimes the chief assessor, community development director or planner serves this role. In Westford, however, there is general confusion within the business community about the appropriate officials to meet with at Town Hall. Westford should have

an official liaison for the business community: the town manager, or planning director.

The designated point-of-contact should work with the Economic Development Committee to develop an outreach program to encourage new businesses to move to Westford, and to establish a “One Stop Shop” for new businesses. In addition, the Committee and business liaison should identify infrastructure barriers to the expansion or relocation of small- and medium start-ups and businesses. In addition, the Committee should explore economic opportunities in the family entertainment and cultural areas, building upon a strength already enjoyed in Westford and the Merrimack Valley. Focusing on the creative economy, along with Lowell and other communities in the Merrimack Valley, could create additional opportunities for economic growth in Westford.

5. IDENTIFY AND SECURE INCENTIVES FOR EMERGING HIGH-TECH INDUSTRIES.

- ◆ In developing the Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2004-2008, NMCOG identified industry clusters in the Greater Lowell region based on their higher Location Quotients (LQ) compared with the national economy. The principal industry clusters identified were Computers and Communications Hardware, Diversified Industrial Support, Healthcare Technology, Innovation Services, Textiles & Apparel and Software and Communications Services. However, since the publication of the report, other industries such as biotechnology and nanotechnology have begun to grow in the region and they represent the emerging technologies in the area. Westford needs to complete a similar analysis to identify the target industries that it should work to attract.

As part of its effort to attract private firms, Westford needs to investigate the opportunities available under the state’s Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) in order to make Tax Increment Financing (TIF) arrangements with expanding companies. The

availability of these resources will help Westford be on equal footing with its neighbors in attracting businesses. The town also needs to identify additional sources of private investment for the community and region. As exemplified by IBM’s expansion in Littleton, employment opportunities in neighboring towns can be almost as beneficial as having companies locate in Westford.

6. ATTRACT “GREEN” (ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE AND EMERGING) INDUSTRIES AND INSTITUTE DESIGN GUIDELINES.

- ◆ An additional target industry being promoted by the Commonwealth is the “green” industry. The town should explore developing partnerships with UMass-Lowell and Middlesex Community College to expand opportunities in the high-technology area, such as “green” industries, alternative energy businesses and biotech firms. These industries have special requirements that may require changes in the local zoning bylaws and Comprehensive Plan.

Working with the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, Westford can learn more about “BioReady Communities,” the efforts of towns such as Billerica that have attracted biotech firms, and how to make the necessary adjustments in zoning and other regulations. Similarly, “green” industry has specific requirements that will need to be addressed locally. However, the support of state government and the higher education institutions in the region will provide the necessary technical assistance for Westford to compete for businesses within this emerging industry.