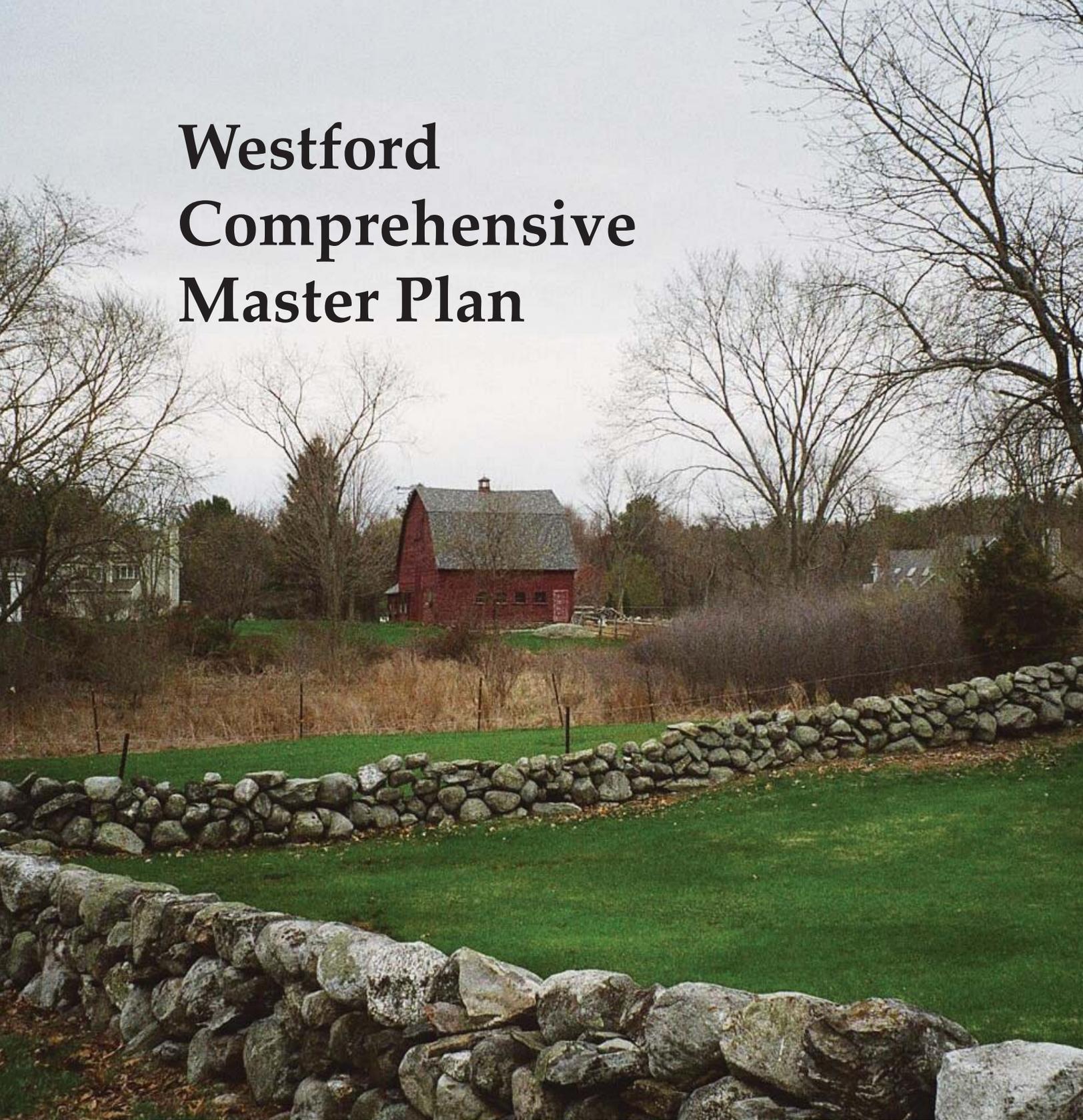


Westford Comprehensive Master Plan



Westford Planning Board
Westford Comprehensive Master Plan Committee
April 2009



Westford Comprehensive Master Plan

**Report Summary
April 2009**

Adopted by the Planning Board on April 21, 2009

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

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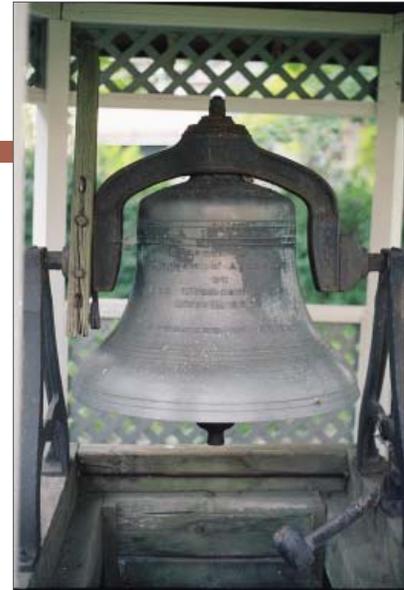
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1. Public Participation

The Planning Board provided many opportunities for Westford residents and businesses to participate in the development of this Comprehensive Master Plan.

- ☞ The Planning Board appointed a 15-member Comprehensive Master Plan Committee.
- ☞ The Planning Board sponsored neighborhood meetings in five locations and three community-wide meetings in November – December 2006. A summary of the community-wide meetings can be found in Appendix A, and a summary of the neighborhood meetings in Appendix B, of the Comprehensive Master Plan report.
- ☞ The Comprehensive Master Plan Committee conducted a community-wide survey in January 2007. A summary of the final results of the survey, as reported by the Committee in May 2007, can be found in Appendix C of the Comprehensive Master Plan report.
- ☞ The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) conducted a forum for businesses located in Westford in February 2007. This was followed by a business meeting and survey conducted by the Economic Development Subcommittee of the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee.
- ☞ The Comprehensive Master Plan consulting team met with Westford's department heads in March and June 2007, and subcommittees of the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee also met with department heads at various times throughout the planning process.
- ☞ The draft Comprehensive Master Plan, submitted to the Planning Board in March 2008, was posted on the Town's official website for review.
- ☞ The Planning Board opened the Public Hearing on the draft Comprehensive Master Plan on June 2, 2008 and continued its discussion of the Plan during eighteen public hearing dates, including two public forums.



Westford Academy Bell.

2. Community Vision

Westford wants to be a community that:

Appreciates its natural resources and open space.

- ☞ Cooperative working relationships between town boards, staff, and residents will inspire confidence in Westford's capacity to protect its land and water resources.
- ☞ Open space acquisition and land use regulations that guide development to areas designated for growth will be Westford's primary tool for protecting open space and natural resources, while treating landowners and developers fairly and protecting property values for all.



Russell Bird Sanctuary.

- ☞ The presence and diversity of native plants and animals, both common and rare, and the management of relevant research and scientific data, will demonstrate Westford's success at protecting wildlife habitat.

Celebrates and preserves its heritage.

- ☞ Westford Center will remain the cultural, institutional, and civic heart of the Town.
- ☞ An integrated approach to protecting the Town's architectural heritage, including regulations, policies, incentives, and public education, will make Westford a recognized leader in historic preservation.
- ☞ Our rich cultural heritage will be protected in an archives center where our historic town records will be safely and securely stored and readily accessible by town staff and the public.
- ☞ Westford's agricultural and historic industrial landscapes and its villages will be cherished and protected as irreplaceable public assets.



J. V. Fletcher Library, Westford Town Hall, Parish Center for the Arts.

Promotes and maintains a culture of appreciation of governance.

- ☞ Good communication, a cooperative spirit, and shared respect for roles and responsibilities will provide a positive climate for the work of Westford’s boards and committees.
- ☞ Support Westford’s municipal employees to create a productive work environment that fosters delivery of high-quality services.
- ☞ Town elections will attract a wide variety of candidates and encourage constructive community conversations about Westford’s present and future needs.

Works actively to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of all of its residents.

- ☞ A feasible, well-planned network of sidewalks, trails, and bicycle-safe routes will connect neighborhoods, villages, and business areas.
- ☞ Through public education, services, regulatory policies and programs, and by setting an example within local government, Westford will foster a clean, safe, and healthy environment for its residents.
- ☞ Accessible parks, fields, greenways, and waterways will encourage public use and enjoyment of Westford’s natural and recreational assets and promote healthy lifestyles for people of all ages.
- ☞ Through public education, regulatory policies, and infrastructure design and maintenance, Westford will promote a safe and efficient transportation system.



Stony Brook Bridge.

Supports the local economy and businesses.

- ☞ Pro-active planning, fair, efficient, predictable permitting procedures, and development incentives will encourage environmentally responsible and emerging industries and businesses to locate and stay in Westford.
- ☞ Local government, businesses, and residents will work together to define a common vision of Westford’s economy.
- ☞ Mixed-use development is being supported.



Forge Village.

Respects and promotes class and cultural diversity.

- ☞ Housing that meets the needs of many types of households and is affordable to a wide range of people will be available throughout the town.
- ☞ People who work in Westford, whether for the Town or local businesses, will also be able to live in Westford if they choose.
- ☞ Westford will take steps to ensure that its affordable housing regulations and affirmative marketing policies protect the civil rights of all people without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, family status, or disability.



Westford Housing Authority's senior housing development.

Values its public school system.

- ☞ Continue its commitment to education while balancing the needs of all of municipal services.
- ☞ Provide high-quality education with optimum class sizes, qualified teachers, and advanced curriculum.
- ☞ Continue and enhance cooperative relationships between Westford schools and the town's cultural organizations.
- ☞ Provide quality school buildings with state-of-the-art technology.

3. Natural Resources & Open Space

Introduction

Natural resources and open space are linked so closely with Westford's identity and sense of place that they have served as consistent themes in town planning efforts for at least three decades. When residents speak of Westford's open space, they mention a wide range of images: working landscapes, forests, the town common, vistas, trails, and water. Westford depends on all of these resources for their ecological and scenic value. As Westford evolves, preserving its remaining open space will be important to the town's quality of life, the diversity and health of its natural resources, and its fiscal condition.



Westford's Hill Orchard.

Issues & Opportunities

Residents responding to the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee's survey in 2007 ranked protection of natural resources as their highest priority. Natural resource protection is a regional issue. The decisions and actions taken in one community can have lasting effects on the natural environment of an adjacent community. In order to facilitate the preservation of important natural resources such as water quality and quantity, wildlife habitats, and open spaces, Westford could expand its efforts to work with other communities and organizations in the region to identify common goals.

Preservation of water quality and wildlife habitats is important at the local level as well. Two areas of concern are the role of local water quality on the regional watersheds and potential degradation of surface water quality and habitats when the proportion of impervious surface increases above ten percent.

In addition, there are still missing links in greenway corridors and trail systems as well as an insufficient number of neighborhood or pocket parks scattered throughout the town, especially in areas with limited open land. Prioritizing the town's open space goals is a continuing effort needed to protect resources. Current economic conditions make it difficult for the town to complete outright purchases of all the land needed to achieve these goals. In addition, the increase in public open space has put a strain on the ability of town staff to manage and maintain these town assets. Limited municipal finances, together with rising real estate values, make it imperative that all means for land conservation and maintenance be pursued.

Accommodating both conservation and recreation interests will be very important in Westford's future open space planning efforts. Maintaining a balance between protecting land for conservation purposes and providing more active recreation opportunities

seems to be a growing debate in Westford. The town is an active, sports-oriented community and this, coupled with an increasing desire for year-round sports, has created demands for more recreation facilities. Westford is committed to providing well-maintained facilities and accessible programs for all of its residents. It will remain important to direct these activities to appropriate locations, away from sensitive environmental areas whenever possible.

The ability of town boards to safeguard Westford's long-term community interests would be enhanced if local bylaws incorporated the open space values and natural resource goals established in this Comprehensive Master Plan and Westford's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Comprehensive Master Plan Goals

0.1 Coordinate to the extent practical the work of town boards and departments to provide clean, safe, healthy, diverse, and vibrant natural surroundings, and enlist assistance from state and federal agencies to support the town's efforts.

0.2 Protect habitat for a diversity of native plants and animals.

0.3 Be prepared to acquire high-priority open space when it becomes available, with an emphasis on land in the watersheds of drinking water supplies and land with significant conservation and/or scenic value.

0.4 Encourage public use of Westford's open space and water resources by providing and maintaining trails, bicycle-safe paths and boardwalks to connect open space and recreation areas with each other and with residential neighborhoods.

0.5 Provide ongoing public education about the town's open spaces and the natural resources they are intended to protect.

0.6 Work with surrounding communities and NMCOG on regional approaches to protecting surface water and groundwater resources.

0.7 Engage developers as partners in protecting open space and natural resources and in providing recreation opportunities.

Recommendations

1. TAKE REGIONAL STEPS TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES.

☞ Work collaboratively with NMCOG and other towns within shared watersheds to promote or encourage new development projects to reuse previously developed land while preserving green space in order to minimize impervious surfaces and the resulting negative impacts on watersheds.

☞ Examine local and regional water supply demands and plan for balanced water use to avoid shortages and protect all water resources including private wells, surface water and groundwater.

☞ Continue and expand Westford's dialogue with neighboring towns regarding common natural resource/habitat/open space protection efforts, and to facilitate cooperation and joint action. The town should continue existing coordination efforts with NMCOG, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and communities within the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord (SuAsCo) region.

☞ Encourage regional bikeways and greenways to discourage vehicular traffic.

2. STRENGTHEN LOCAL BYLAWS, REGULATIONS AND POLICIES TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES.

☞ Identify and establish standards for those portions of town that are environmentally sensitive to development from various points of view: e.g. water supply, habitat preservation.

☞ Review zoning approaches to encourage growth in areas where existing infrastructure can support it rather than develop existing open space.



Flushing Pond.

- ☞ Encourage development of villages or mixed-use overlays to promote pedestrian, rather than vehicular, accessibility to services and resources.
- ☞ Monitor the effectiveness of Westford’s stormwater/low impact development (LID) bylaw, which promotes conservation of natural hydrologic conditions and stormwater recharge, and review the bylaw for consistency with the Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Stormwater Management Handbook and regulations.
- ☞ Clarify and strengthen conservation-related bylaws under the purview of the Conservation Commission.
- ☞ Provide realistic incentives for developers to contribute to the town’s open space goals, such as pedestrian and bicycle infrastructures and trail connections, wherever feasible.
- ☞ Continue to implement National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II requirements and DEP Stormwater Management Policy.
- ☞ Set standards commensurate with state standards on water quality and determine methods to achieve mitigation of problem areas.
- ☞ Revisit Westford’s Water Resource Protection Overlay District and amend it to include more specific performance standards.
- ☞ Develop a formal policy for notifying interested parties, included but not limited to town departments and conservation groups, when land is being removed from Chapter 61 status.
- ☞ Establish policies for tree protection, tree maintenance and tree replacement on town owned land and new subdivision and site plan proposals. Existing local regulations should be reviewed for opportunities to implement tree protection measures.

- ☞ Develop a formal policy for effective night time lighting practices, tailored to avoid light trespass and promote safety and energy efficiency.

3. EXPAND PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION PROGRAMS.

- ☞ Expand Westford’s water quality monitoring program to include monitoring of Great Ponds and other water bodies.
- ☞ Continue and expand local public education programs in environmental protection, environmental quality and public health, focusing on steps that homeowners and businesses can take to protect the town’s natural resources. Also tap into existing state and federal public education programs and materials from groups such as the Environmental Protection Agency, MA Department of Environmental Protection, and MA Department of Public Health. (*See also, Community Facilities & Services.*)

4. INCREASE LOCAL CAPACITY TO PROTECT AND MANAGE OPEN SPACE.

- ☞ Increase Westford’s local capacity to oversee its growing inventory of town-owned and town-maintained (e.g., conservation restriction trails) conservation land.
- ☞ Continue to maintain and update Westford’s inventory of town-owned land and lands with conservation restrictions, and maintain the inventory in a Geographic Information System (GIS) database which should include baseline data, property surveys, and property deeds.
- ☞ Prepare site-specific management plans for town-owned conservation lands, including town forest land. The plans should include, but not limited to, allowed uses and activities, trail maintenance, and habitat management, as appropriate.

5. CONSIDER ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES TO PROTECT OPEN SPACE.

- ☞ Explore new zoning options to protect important parcels such as a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaw, with designated sending and receiving zones.
- ☞ Research and update the Open Space and Residential Development (OSRD) bylaw and Flexible Development bylaw and provide clear direction both to town boards and developers.
- ☞ Continually reassess Westford’s priorities for acquiring or otherwise protecting additional conservation land. Criteria should include but are not limited to: determining specific areas where land should be conserved, identifying threatened natural resources, identifying parcels that would provide a link between existing conservation lands in order to create wildlife corridors, and limiting human impacts on natural environments such as along Stony Brook.
- ☞ Identify existing town-owned parcels that may be suitable for development as small pocket or neighborhood parks. (*See Housing and Neighborhoods, Recommendation #5.*)

4. Cultural & Historic Resources

Introduction

Historic resources include any physical remnant of a community's past. In Westford, they include artifacts associated with the town's agricultural, industrial, educational, and recreational past. Industrial villages, mill buildings, workers' housing, dams and ponds document Westford's manufacturing legacy, while barns, stone walls, and scenic fields provide a glimpse into what once was the town's dominant economy: farming. Granite arched bridges, walls and buildings, together with remnants of working quarries, attest to the significant role that granite played in defining Westford's identity. In addition, historic school buildings continue to serve the public, albeit in different ways, and Westford's early twentieth century summer cottages and bungalows around the lakes and ponds contribute to the unique identity of their neighborhoods. Other resources that portray Westford's rural past include its historic bridges, cemeteries, scenic roads, and railroad. These resources play a vital role in defining Westford's sense of place and provide residents with a tangible link to the town's past.

Issues & Opportunities

Westford values its historic resources. The town has approved several preservation-based bylaws, and while the bylaws provide fairly limited protection, they express Westford's appreciation of its historic character and create some initial steps toward resource protection. By adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA), Westford chose to provide much-needed funding for resource protection. Moreover, many of the recommendations of



Historic workers' housing, Orchard Street, Forge Village.

recent plans have been or are being acted upon by the town. This can be seen in the Historical Commission's work to prepare a town-wide archaeology inventory and update the historic resources inventory, and the Record and Archives Management Committee's recent conservation survey and use of CPA funds for scanning, microfilming, archiving, and otherwise preserving historical town records. However, the preservation of Westford's privately-owned historic resources has been accomplished primarily on a voluntary basis.

Westford has successfully preserved several of its historically significant properties. However, other private and public historical structures need to be preserved. For example, the town is confronted with a structurally deficient Town Hall that is uninhabitable, in addition to several vacant and/or underutilized properties, such as the historic fire stations in Graniteville and Forge Village. Westford is also losing its historical barns and other outbuildings. Westford needs to proceed cautiously with regards to all of these buildings and identify preservation strategies and funding sources that may be avail-

WESTFORD'S NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS		
Historic Name	Date Listed	# Properties
Historic Districts		
Brookside Historic District	January 23, 2003	26 contributing
Forge Village Historic District	May 2, 2002	280 contributing
Graniteville Historic District	January 17, 2002	171 contributing
Parker Village Historic District	December 27, 2002	12 contributing
Westford Center Historic District	August 28, 1998	155 contributing
Fairview Cemetery	January 12, 2005	26 contributing
Hillside Cemetery	December 6, 2005	36 contributing
Russian Cemetery	November 25, 2005	20 contributing
Westlawn Cemetery	January 5, 2005	18 contributing
Wright Cemetery	December 6, 2005	9 contributing
Individual Listings		
Henry Fletcher House and Barn, 224 Concord Road	September 30, 1993	1
John Proctor House, 218 Concord Road	February 4, 1993	1

Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission.

able for them. Collaborative efforts between town boards, departments, private property owners and local preservation organizations will be critical in determining the future preservation of these and other historic structures.

Westford's National Register Districts, listed above, are an important preservation tool. However, they do not protect privately owned historic buildings from inappropriate alterations. Westford has no legislation in place to prohibit inappropriate alterations to historic buildings. It also provides no incentives to owners to preserve the authenticity of their historic structures. The *Westford Reconnaissance Report* recommends designating Westford Center as a Local Historic District under M.G.L. c. 40C and Forge Village and Graniteville as Architectural Conservation Districts. Westford needs to complete a comprehensive cultural resource inventory. This inventory, in conjunction with a town-wide archaeological inventory, would provide the framework for future preservation activities in the community and serve a variety of town planning purposes, including not only activities of the Westford Historical Commission but also general planning review.

Westford's scenic roads are one of the most critical components of its visual identity. While it is complicated to balance public safety concerns with the protection of scenic roads and their associated attributes, allowing these resources to be altered with modern engineering designs would forever alter the

retained elements of rural, historic Westford. Another concern is that the existing scenic road bylaw cannot preserve scenic attributes that are located beyond the public right of way due to limited authority under the state Scenic Roads Act. Measures such as a scenic overlay (zoning) district with a no-disturb buffer along designated scenic roads could preserve these attributes. A no-disturb buffer would not prevent property owners from using their land.

The Records and Archives Management Committee was established in 2002 by the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen to create a records and archives management policy for town records, to find a suitable central location for the safe storage of historical records, and to address other preservation issues for town records. It has developed a records and archives management policy, supported efforts to accession or de-accession of town records, worked toward development of an Archives Center for the town, and used CPA funds for multiple projects for the preservation of town records and for making town records more accessible to the public. The Committee has already started to identify, preserve, and archive the town's existing permanent historical records. However, these tasks will need to continue long after the committee's work is completed because more permanent records are generated each year. The town will need to institute procedures to train staff in accessioning, storing, and preserving permanent town records for all town departments, boards, and committees.



Graniteville, Westford.

Comprehensive Master Plan Goals

C.1 Preserve, respect and enhance the historic resources and settings that make Westford visually physically, and historically unique.

C.2 Protect Westford’s historic and architectural heritage by identifying and instituting appropriate, broadly supported methods of historic preservation, including mechanisms for encouraging owner-preservation of existing historic structures.

C.3 Preserve Westford’s cultural heritage by identifying an appropriate location for an Archives Center and constructing it, and implementing preservation and conservation recommendations to stabilize and preserve Westford’s historic records.

C.4 Establish development review guidelines for preserving and enhancing existing architectural and historic character and resources.

C.5 Encourage new development in or near historical areas to conform to the architectural and historic character and context of Westford’s existing buildings.

C.6 Encourage neighborhoods to propose architectural conservation districts and provide incentives for owners of historic structures to seek alternatives to teardowns and substantial alterations to older historic structures.

C.7 Promote access to cultural production and cultural appreciation by supporting media, performing arts, applied arts, visual arts, and literary arts activities that celebrate Westford’s heritage, the arts, and life-long learning.

Recommendations

1. EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO HIGHLIGHT WESTFORD’S DIVERSE CULTURAL HERITAGE, BOTH PAST AND PRESENT.

☞ Complete a comprehensive cultural resource inventory.

☞ Promote public access to town cultural events.

2. TAKE ADDITIONAL STEPS TO PROTECT SCENIC ROADS.

☞ Complete a scenic roads inventory that includes descriptions and photo documentation of each

of Westford's scenic roads and identifies the character-defining features that should be preserved.

- ☞ Adopt specific design criteria relating to roadway improvements and alterations, and coordinate these procedures between the Highway Department and the Planning Board. This should include developing policies and standards for public road maintenance and reconstruction, including reconstruction of Westford's historic bridges and roadways over cow passes.

3. EXPAND THE WESTFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION'S ROLE IN TOWN PLANNING.

- ☞ Serve as a review resource on development proposals affecting historic resources.
- ☞ Encourage historic preservation-minded individuals to serve on review boards.
- ☞ Provide a primer on historic preservation to boards and commissions.
- ☞ Enhance the town's existing project review guidelines to include simple historic preservation checklists (if not already in place), such as protection of stone walls, bridges, foundations, landscapes, structures, archaeological sites, architectural characteristics and guidelines, scenic road preservation, and state and federal preservation guidelines.
- ☞ Establish policies and procedures for immediate notification of the Historical Commission when historic structures and foundations are threatened. Coordinate with Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Conservation Commission to apply these procedures during these Board's respective hearing processes.

4. FOCUS ON CRITICAL AT-RISK PROPERTIES.

- ☞ Create an inventory of historic homes and other buildings that may not lie within current National Register districts.

- ☞ Work with neighborhood groups to encourage pride in ownership of historical property.

- ☞ Create incentives for maintenance and/or improvements to historical structures such as encouraging preservation easements with non-profit organizations to create official protection of structures or have the Historical Commission offer plaques (for a fee) to property owners of historical structures.

5. INCREASE THE TOWN'S CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES.

- ☞ Consider hiring a part-time preservation-planner who could also serve as staff for the Westford Historical Commission.
- ☞ Consider collaborating with one or more neighboring towns to establish regional preservation planning capacity, including the possibility of shared staff.
- ☞ Continue investigating available state matching grant programs from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) as well as local CPA funds.

6. CONTINUE THE TOWN'S ACTIVITIES TO PRESERVE AND ARCHIVE ITS PERMANENT HISTORICAL RECORDS.

- ☞ Implement procedures and train appropriate staff members in the accessioning, storing, and preserving permanent historical records for all town departments, boards, and committees.
- ☞ Identify an appropriate location and construct a readily-accessible Archives Center to stabilize and preserve Westford's historic records.

7. SUPPORT THE CULTURAL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ANNUAL ACTION PLANS OF THE J. V. FLETCHER LIBRARY LONG-RANGE PLAN. *(See*

also, Facilities and Services, Recommendation #2.)

5. Land Use & Zoning

Introduction

Land use refers to the pattern of residential, commercial, industrial and institutional development in a city or town, along with open land, water resources and transportation features. A community's physical evolution can be traced through its land use history. In Westford, the built form of the historic villages differs from that of new neighborhoods and commercial areas. The differences can be attributed, at least in part, to zoning.

Cities and towns can take steps to shape development through mechanisms such as zoning and subdivision control, but regulation is not the only tool available to influence a community's future land use pattern. Infrastructure and utilities, open space acquisitions, and organizational tools such as local development corporations or special districts

also have an effect on private investment decisions. Furthermore, while it is tempting to focus all major growth management policies on the fate of vacant land, it is a mistake to overlook the role that redevelopment plays in a community's economy and visual character.

Issues & Opportunities

SMART GROWTH

Westford has expressed interest in a "smart growth" plan, yet it is not clear that people have the same ideas in mind when they mention "smart growth." Smart growth incorporates several principles: providing multiple transportation choices and a pedestrian-friendly environment, creating buildings and places that are inviting and distinctive, directing growth toward established areas while preserving open space and natural resources, making efficient use of land, mixing land uses, providing many types of housing, and making development requirements and permitting procedures fair, predictable and cost-effective.

Smart growth does not stop development. Instead, it directs growth toward centers of activity and relieves outlying areas from the burden of inappropriate land use change. In doing so, a smart growth plan reduces dependence on cars as a means of getting around and promotes the restoration of clean air.

USES OF LAND IN WESTFORD (2007)			
Class of Use	Acres	Class of Use	Acres
Residential		Industrial	
Single-family dwellings	6,635	Manufacturing, R&D	403
Two-family dwellings	115	Mining, Quarries	377
Three-family dwellings	18	Salvage	70
Multi-family dwellings	37	Public Utilities	90
Condominiums	633	Subtotal	940
Subtotal	7,438		
Commercial		Mixed Uses	
Hotels, Nursing Homes	36	Mostly Residential	91
Commercial Storage	13	Mostly Commercial	41
Retail, Restaurants	98	Subtotal	132
Auto-Related Uses	28		
Banks, Offices	117	Chapter 61, 61A, 61B	1,927
Services	21	Privately Owned Vacant Land	2,482
Commercial Recreation	166	Public, Non-Profit, Charitable	4,375
Subtotal	479	Subtotal	8,784
		TOTAL	17,773

Sources: Westford GIS Department, FY07 Parcel Database; Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

Westford faces obstacles to implementing a smart growth plan even though the town is ideally poised to succeed with smart growth initiatives. Some of the obstacles extend beyond the town's control, yet others plainly fall into the realm of local policy.

Pedestrian Accommodation. The town could make sidewalks a higher priority and work toward making Westford a place that encourages people to walk.

Mixed-Use Development. Westford could do far more to promote mixed-use development by updating its use regulations and reducing regulatory barriers.

Efficient Use of Land. Current zoning regulations force new commercial buildings to be set back at a considerable distance from the street. They also encourage inefficient land use by writing down the development potential of business-zoned property. This inefficiency is caused by low building coverage ratios, a suburban height standard of three stories for buildings in all of the business districts, and excessive parking requirements, especially for retail uses.

Housing Choices. Westford allows a limited mix of residential uses by special permit. It also requires developers to provide affordable units without any guarantee of additional density or other offsets that would help to reduce a developer's risk and the total cost of development. Moreover, multi-family housing is not a permitted use in any zoning district and even when it is allowed by special permit, Westford limits multi-family units to a maximum of five per building, except in the Mill Conversion Overlay District (MCO). The town also places significant limitations on the size of housing units other than single-family homes.

Zoning Blueprint. Westford's present zoning policies contemplate a blueprint for buildout that would divide ninety-one percent of the town's land into one-acre (40,000 sq. ft.) lots. While the Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) and Flexible Development bylaws encourage smaller lots and open space preservation, they are not designed to alter

Westford's overall buildout potential or induce a fundamental rearrangement of future growth. At best, tools like Westford's OSRD and Flexible Development regulations encourage more attractive and environmentally sensitive projects than conventional subdivisions.

Connectivity. Many features of Westford's zoning work to separate land uses instead of mixing them. For example, the town requires a 100' "no-disturb" buffer area between Flexible Developments or Senior Residential Multifamily Development (SRMD) projects and adjacent residential areas, landscaped buffers along the front and sides of developments in the Commercial Highway (CH) District, and generous buffers separating uses within most of the business and industrial districts. There do not appear to be any requirements for pedestrian connectivity between commercial areas and nearby neighborhoods. Most zoning districts require exceptionally deep front yard setbacks, too.

Transfer of Development Rights. Westford's villages, Route 110, and easternmost Route 40 could support a growth management strategy such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), but the zoning bylaw does not offer any TDR mechanisms. A challenge to instituting TDR in Westford is the absence of sewer service, yet some communities have developed small, district-oriented wastewater treatment facilities in an effort to accommodate some compact building forms and infill uses in established areas.

Fair, Predictable Permitting. One of the central tenets of smart growth is fairness and predictability in permitting. However, Westford's zoning sometimes makes it difficult for developers to anticipate how much they will be able to build or what it will cost to obtain permits and approvals from the town. For example, the MCO bylaw gives the Planning Board authority to set the maximum number of units in a Mill Conversion Project. Moreover, the regulations for a Major Retail Project and a Major Commercial Project call for a fiscal impact analysis and mitigation without any clear standards for determining what sort of mitigation the Town may require. Under Westford's present zoning, neither developers nor abutters can readily foresee what the town will require for many types of projects.

WESTFORD'S ZONING DISTRICTS

Use District	Abbreviation	Acres
Residence A	RA	17,142.0
Residence B	RB	936.2
Commercial Highway	CH	392.8
Business	B	61.7
Business Limited	BL	6.2
Industrial Highway	IH	473.3
Industrial A	IA	749.4
Industrial B	IB	76.6
Industrial C	IC	195.7
Industrial D	ID	32.6
Total		20,066.4

Source: Westford GIS. Total acres above exceed total acres in "Uses of Land in Westford (2007)" because the latter table excludes highways, local roads, and most water bodies.

ZONING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Westford would like fewer “franchise” businesses along Route 110 and more locally owned or unique stores, restaurants and services. To some extent, the absence of a “Westford identity” on Route 110 stems from the corridor’s proximity to the I-495/ Boston Road interchange, which makes the entire area highway-oriented. The resulting volume of highway traffic makes land on Route 110 attractive to commercial developers because they know they can lure regional and national chains that will pay high rents. Today, Route 110 in the vicinity of Boston Road is lined with chain retail establishments separated from the road by large parking lots. Many Westford residents probably shop on Route 110 even though the business district does not offer what they say they would like in their town.

Zoning changes alone are unlikely to influence the mix of businesses on Route 110 because the area has already evolved into a retail strip with fairly high-value improvements (regardless of their appearance). Westford may need to explore additional, more creative initiatives such as forming a local economic development corporation to acquire property in the commercial district and develop – or redevelop – space for very small businesses. However, even this would be a long-term strategy, and one that may require the town to invest some of its own financial resources in short-term financing for land acquisitions.

What is Transfer of Development Rights?

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a potentially invaluable tool for Westford to direct future growth. To achieve the major goals of the Comprehensive Master Plan, Westford would need to designate “sending” and “receiving” areas on an overlay district map.

Sending areas could include undeveloped land in critical areas of the northwest corner, Parker Village and parcels along Stony Brook, where “critical” means undeveloped land with biological significance near other, preferably protected open space, such as MIT’s property, land within Parker Village near the Nashoba open space, and Greenwood Farms; and land that protects water resources, such as wells and existing or potential aquifers, e.g., East Boston Camps and other nearby parcels.

Receiving areas could include portions of the Industrial A District along Route 3 and the commercial areas along Route 110. Additional receiving areas could include the villages, since they already have an established pattern of somewhat higher density than other areas of Westford, and parcels that have both obvious redevelopment potential and capacity to address multiple smart growth principles. For example, it may be possible to make the Mill Conversion Overlay District more effective if vacant or underutilized mills could be redeveloped with a guarantee of “received” density from other locations. If a TDR bylaw is feasible, rules and regulations to guide development within the receiving zones must be formulated and should be approved concurrent with TDR implementation.

DESIGN REVIEW

Westford has an opportunity to improve the visual appearance of commercial and industrial development by activating a formal design review process. Design guidelines convey general policies about the design and alterations of existing structures and proposals for new structures. Instead of dictating a single solution for all sites, design guidelines define a range of potential responses to a variety of issues and contexts. Design guidelines can help to establish a common understanding of the design principles that a community considers integral to maintaining its character and charm, including its historic build-

ing styles. In Westford, a design review process could help the Planning Board look beyond the site engineering and landscape planning considerations that are embedded in the Zoning Bylaw and consider elements such as the following:

- ☞ Respond to the physical environment and neighborhood context;
- ☞ Promote appropriate building massing, materials, and articulation;
- ☞ Create transition, where necessary, and bulk and scale of buildings;
- ☞ Reinforce positive form and architectural characteristics of the immediate area;
- ☞ Design appropriately proportioned buildings;
- ☞ Promote façade treatment of appropriate scale;
- ☞ Provide appropriate signage and lighting; and
- ☞ Minimize curb cut and related impacts.

The first step in inaugurating a design review process involves establishing an advisory Design Review Committee (DRC), with architects, graphic designers, and others interested in the design of the built environment. Their role would be to develop design guidelines through a participatory process open to residents, business property owners, developers and others. With design guidelines in place, the DRC would help developers and the Planning Board choose materials and an overall design vocabulary consistent with Westford’s goals for non-residential areas, particularly the commercial districts.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Westford has many opportunities to improve its residential zoning regulations to achieve sound planning goals, promote smart growth, and possibly reduce the attractiveness of Chapter 40B com-

prehensive permits to the development community. Some opportunities could include:

- ☞ A TDR bylaw that designates land with significant soil limitations, major tracts of forested or agricultural land, and land with scenic views as “sending areas,” and land in portions of the CH, Residence B (RB), Business (B), Industrial A (IA) and MCOB as “receiving” areas.
- ☞ Allowing multi-family uses mixed with commercial uses by right, and “free-standing” multi-family uses by special permit, in the CH and IA Districts, using maximum floor area ratio (FAR) requirements to regulate overall use intensity instead of a conventional approach to controlling density (units per acre or bedrooms per sq. ft. of land).
- ☞ Reducing barriers to small-scale multi-family uses by changing the eligibility requirements for conversion of existing dwellings. Westford allows conversion projects only for single-family homes that existed when the Zoning Bylaw was originally adopted, but this means a significant limit on the number of buildings that could be converted. The town could allow conversions of single-family homes over a certain age, e.g., 30 years, within the RB, B and IA Districts, and possibly within an overlay district that extends slightly beyond the boundaries of the existing RB zone. This would replace the fixed inventory of eligible properties with a “rolling” inventory.
- ☞ Taking an “adequate facilities” approach to managing residential density, such as allowing a base density standard for land with access to public water, a lower standard for land without access to public water, and higher density for projects that provide appropriate wastewater treatment facilities or sidewalks, or are located along major roadways.
- ☞ Replacing the existing affordable housing regulations with a comprehensive inclusionary zoning bylaw.

- ☞ Modifying the design standards that currently apply to Flexible Development, SRMD, MCOB, and Assisted Living Facilities by instituting environmentally sensitive landscaping standards, such as a prohibition against invasive species and requirements for drought-resistant plantings, and limitations on the percentage of a lot covered with turf.
- ☞ Amending Site Plan Review to include specific clearing and grading standards to protect land and water resources during construction.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Westford seems to be searching for balance in its long-range land use planning. Part of achieving this balance will require the town to provide opportunities for economic development and at the same time protect its character and the quality of life in neighborhoods adjacent to the commercial and industrial zoning districts. Toward these ends, Westford will need policies that provide for a diverse base of businesses in harmony with residential areas. Good businesses seeking to locate in a desirable town like Westford generally do not resist the scrutiny that comes with procedures such as design review or Site Plan Review.

Commercial Highway District. At present, the CH district contains no direct means to control project density and build-out, other than performance standards contained in Section 9.3.1 of the Zoning By-law. While the performance standards are important because they attempt to reduce the adverse impacts associated with large-scale development, the bylaw does not establish a maximum amount of permissible development. What Westford defines as “building area” is a maximum footprint requirement that excludes features such as gutters, chimneys, and cornices. However, the Zoning Bylaw does not establish a maximum floor area ratio (FAR).

The importance of establishing an FAR requirement in the CH district cannot be underestimated. This district has existing office and other commercial developments that appear to be fully developed, yet in actuality they may have expansion potential because

What is FAR?

The definition of **floor area ratio (FAR)** is the total gross floor area of a development expressed as a percentage of the lot. For example, an FAR of 1.0 would mean that on a 40,000 sq. ft. lot, a developer could create 40,000 sq. ft. of built floor area.

Unlike building footprint limitations, FAR considers more than the coverage of a lot by the first floor of a building. It considers the total gross floor area of all floors, thereby giving the public an actual sense of just how much can be built on a lot. For this reason, many cities and towns have FAR requirements today.

they have not maximized their full build-out under Westford’s traditional dimensional requirements. The Planned Commercial Development (PCD) special permit process enables developers to request approval of large projects without any governance by an FAR control. Additionally, if Westford wanted to limit the overall build-out that could occur in the CH zone, it could place some additional controls on Major Commercial Projects (MCPs), much like the maximum that applies to a Major Retail Project.

Most suburbs have FARs for commercial or industrial development of .50 or less, but modest FAR standards are not always appropriate. They can encourage excessive consumption of land, much like a very low building coverage ratio. Westford has to decide how much development it wants to encourage or allow in the CH District and other business districts, and tailor its FAR requirements accordingly.

Another opportunity for the CH District is the development of appropriately scaled multi-family housing on sites currently limited to commercial uses. Since the CH zone is becoming highly developed and visible, the addition of appropriately scaled and attractive multifamily housing may stop Route 110 from continuing to evolve as a strip development or an office park zone. It could be a place that invites people to live, work and play, and it also could help to achieve the aesthetic elements of the Route 110 Master Plan, balancing open space and attrac-

tive landscaping with the practical requirements for successful commercial developments.

Industrial Highway District. Opportunities to improve the Industrial Highway (IH) District may involve placing floor area ratio limits on uses permitted by right and within a Planned Industrial Development (PID). This would involve limiting the overall build-out of the district, however, and Westford should weigh the fiscal and employment consequences of such a decision.

Industrial A-D Districts. The IA District requires less than an acre of land for development and Westford could consider creating FAR controls for this district as well. Alternatively, the town could simply leave the IA District “as is,” as an old-fashioned kind of industrial district, since new development or alterations to existing nonresidential developments already require Site Plan Review. Since the Industrial B (IB), Industrial C (IC), and Industrial D (ID) zones occupy a very small amount of land, there may be no need to make adjustments or changes to them other than to consider standards to protect bordering residential property from more intensive non-residential land uses.

Off-Street Parking Requirements. Westford would be poised to promote a more attractive, environmentally appropriate development pattern in all of its nonresidential districts, but especially the CH District, by overhauling and updating its off-street parking requirements. Today, many communities in other parts of the United States have moved away from the tradition of imposing minimum parking requirements to establishing *maximum* parking requirements, i.e., setting a ceiling on the number of parking spaces permitted in a development.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND PERMITTING

Developers, property owners, local officials, and staff have said Westford’s permitting procedures are not coordinated as well as they could be. Lack of consistency and lack of timely information are the most oft-cited problems in Westford today. Town boards do not always apply the same standards to developments under review, and since communication between boards and committees is fragmented

and unpredictable, sometimes they cannot see the potentially conflicting directions they give to applicants.

Westford could hold concurrent development review meetings, particularly for large-scale projects and projects in environmentally sensitive areas. A scoping session – a type of “all boards” meeting held early in the development review process to identify potential issues and shared needs for peer review consultants – would benefit applicants and abutters alike, but it would especially benefit the officials with jurisdiction over a project. In addition, a point person (such as a land use coordinator or permitting coordinator) could help applicants identify permitting issues, understand the requirements of various boards, and help to facilitate communications between boards. Finally, electronic submissions of applications and plans and a well-maintained permit tracking system on the town’s website may help boards, applicants, and other interested parties find current information.

Comprehensive Master Plan Goals

- L.1** Establish development review and permitting policies that are fair, clear, and aligned with the goals of this Comprehensive Master Plan.
- L.2** Coordinate the work of boards and departments with permitting responsibilities in order to achieve consistency in the interpretation and administration of local requirements.
- L.3** Ensure that Westford’s land use and capital planning policies work together to enhance Westford villages and neighborhoods, and to strengthen connections between them.
- L.4** Encourage mixed-use development in and adjacent to the villages and along Route 110 and along Route 40.
- L.5** Investigate a TDR bylaw with designated sending and receiving zones.

L.6 Work with neighboring towns and NMCOG on planning, zoning, and development review for major projects that occur near municipal boundaries.

L.7 Encourage distinctive, high-quality architectural design in the commercial and industrial districts by adopting design guidelines, particularly for development and redevelopment along Route 110 and Route 40.

Recommendations

1. IMPROVE COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TOWN BOARDS AND OFFICIALS WITH DEVELOPMENT REVIEW RESPONSIBILITIES. *(See also, Economic Development Recommendation #3.)*

- ☞ Improve coordination within town government. Municipal boards, commissions, and stakeholders do not coordinate efforts as well as they might. Residents say that often, permitting authorities do not implement written recommendations from other boards and staff. At present, the Conservation Commission and Planning Board coordinate their efforts to some extent, but the Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Health, and Board of Selectmen could improve in this area.
- ☞ Establish and implement a process that requires at least one joint meeting of all boards that have jurisdiction to issue permits for any major retail project, planned industrial project, and other commercial or industrial uses requiring a special permit. The same boards should conduct joint hearings wherever possible.

2. REORGANIZE, UPDATE, SIMPLIFY, AND CLARIFY THE FLEXIBLE DEVELOPMENT BYLAW AND THE OSRD BYLAW AND CLARIFY AND IMPROVE UPON EXISTING BYLAW DEFINITIONS.

- ☞ Westford currently has two bylaws that relate, in different ways, to preserving open space by design and encouraging alternatives to conventional subdivision plans. The town should

consider consolidating them, retain the best provisions of each, and provide minimum performance standards for open space design (e.g., links, placement, access, and functionality for passive recreation and habitat values).

3. INVESTIGATE THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE LAND USE GUIDANCE PLAN CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT AND A TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS BYLAW.

- ☞ Westford should consider a new Rural Residential District in outlying areas of Westford, with a larger minimum lot area than required in RA and “cluster-by-right” regulations to encourage open space design in small developments.
- ☞ Allow vertical and horizontal mixed-use development in the CH District, possibly by designating one or more areas as Chapter 40R overlay districts or Priority Development Sites under Chapter 43D.
- ☞ Allow upper-story dwelling units in the B and BL Districts.
- ☞ Reduce the minimum lot area and minimum frontage in the B District to the average of existing B-zoned lots in order to reduce the number of non-conforming lots and structures.
- ☞ Establish design guidelines and a Design Review Committee to improve the appearance of development in Westford’s commercial and industrial districts.
- ☞ Develop and promulgate rules and regulations governing development within designated “receiving zones” as part of the enactment of any TDR development bylaw, so as to ensure effective growth management in these areas.

4. ADOPT LANDSCAPING TECHNIQUES TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES.

- ☞ Establish appropriate landscaping standards for commercial, industrial, mixed-use and multi-family developments. Standards should include prohibiting invasive species plantings, requiring a percentage of new plantings to be low water use, drought-resistant species, and limiting the percentage of a site that may be covered by turf.

5. IMPROVE CAPACITY TO TRACK AND REPORT LAND USE CHANGE, THE STATUS OF PROTECTED AND UNPROTECTED OPEN SPACE, LAND MANAGEMENT, IMPROVEMENTS TO WESTFORD'S MUNICIPAL PROPERTY INVENTORY, AND THE CONDITION OF MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL FACILITIES.

- ☞ Update Westford's land databases at least once a year, and preferably more often. Wherever possible, databases should be integrated to reduce the need for duplicate data entry and maintenance. Databases should be reviewed for accuracy, especially those with criteria for ranking importance or priorities, e.g., data used to track the Land Use Priorities report, or the town-owned land database and open space inventory database. These databases should be available to all committees and the general public.

6. Housing & Neighborhoods

Introduction

Housing is a double-edged sword: a community's most important built asset on one hand, and a highly charged issue on the other hand. Residents often think their communities have too much housing, and they cite traffic, loss of open space and rising school costs as evidence of overdevelopment. In an effort to control school spending, local officials just about everywhere work hard to curb residential growth, yet the techniques they choose sometimes lead to unintended consequences. Westford shares many of the same concerns about growth and change that one hears in other communities. "Too much growth" was a recurring theme during the 18-month planning process for Westford's 1995 master plan, and it was expressed both in public meetings and surveys for this Comprehensive Master Plan, too. Westford will continue to find it challenging to accommodate new housing development.

Issues & Challenges

Westford has grown considerably in the past 20 years and its supply of vacant land suggests that growth will continue well into the future, though probably at a slower pace. Today, Westford has approximately 4,600 acres of vacant or partially vacant residential land in private ownership. Not all of the land is developable, however. Local data indicate that 1,900 acres are probably developable and another 1,600 acres of partially developed land could support additional housing units. About 90 percent of the land is in the Residence A (RA) District. These estimates do not include unrestricted land owned by the town or MIT.



Historic home, Westford Center.

A master plan should include reasonable projections of growth potential for housing, business development and industry under existing zoning, both the total amount of new development and where the development may occur. Estimating the number of single-family house lots that could be created in the RA and Residence B (RB) Districts is fairly straightforward if people can agree on suitable buildout assumptions, but several factors could make any growth projections vulnerable to dispute:

- ☞ Westford allows single-family homes by right in four districts: RA, RB, Business (B), and Industrial A (IA). However, commercial opportunities in the two nonresidential districts will remove most of the land from the acres available for housing development, assuming favorable market conditions.
- ☞ Westford also allows single-family homes by special permit in two other districts, and oth-



Single-family homes in recently developed neighborhoods: Grassy Lane (left) and Kayla Drive (right).

er residential uses by special permit in all but Limited Business (LB). Buildout studies usually focus on uses permitted by right because they are predictable, but an argument can be made that any district with residential growth potential should be included in future growth estimates.

- ☞ Some amount of residentially zoned land will be developed as “hammerhead” lots, which are subject to a larger minimum lot area requirement than conventional lots. Hammerhead lots will tend to reduce the town’s total buildout potential.
- ☞ Westford will continue to purchase open space, just as it has since the 1995 master plan was prepared. Some buildout analysts include assumptions about future open space acquisitions; others make no open space adjustments.
- ☞ The status of land owned by public agencies and non-profit organizations is not always clear, and local and state records do not always agree. It is reasonable to assume that conservation land, public parks, and private land protected by conservation restrictions will remain undeveloped. However, some types of public property are not protected from a change in use. State and local governments have sold vacant land, former schools and other facilities as surplus property. Non-profit organizations also have disposed of property they no longer need. In Westford, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) controls a large holding in the northwestern part

of town and the land appears to be unprotected by any legally enforceable restrictions. While the town itself may sell surplus buildings and associated land in the future, or possibly some small, scattered-site lots for affordable homes, it seems unlikely that Westford would ever agree to sell a large parcel of publicly owned land for development.

- ☞ The recent approval of “Jefferson at Westford,” a fairly large Chapter 40B development, all but guarantees Westford’s eligibility for a two-year reprieve from other comprehensive permits. Nevertheless, Westford will continue to receive new comprehensive permit applications after 2010. The size and type of developments built under Chapter 40B are very difficult to predict. The 382-unit shortfall in Westford today could be eliminated by comprehensive permits or zoning approvals for 382 rental units, or by permits for as many as 1,527 homeownership units ($382/0.25=1,527$).

Westford’s last master plan (1995) estimated a single-family buildout potential of about 8,800 units: 3,269 new units on the 5,966 acres identified as usable land, plus the then-existing inventory of 5,530 single-family homes. As shown in the table on the next page, this estimate still seems valid if buildout potential is defined as additional single-family homes in districts where the town allows them by right.

GROWTH POTENTIAL FOR SINGLE-FAMILY HOME DEVELOPMENT

Zoning District	Vacant Land			Land with Existing Improvements		Additional Single-Family Homes		
	Parcels	Total Vacant	Dev. Acres	Parcels	Surplus Acres	Total Acres	Lots	Pct. In District
Residence A	465	2,760.4	1,717.7	136	1,517.06	3,234.8	2,096	93.1%
Residence B	118	65.0	29.2	4	54.47	83.7	88	2.4%
Business	1	0.9	0		0.00	0.00	0	0.0%
Industrial A	19	163.3	149.9	2	5.99	155.9	102	4.5%
Total	603	2,989.7	1,896.9		1,577.52	3,474.4	2,285	
						Existing Inventory	6,225	
						Total Buildout	8,436	

Sources: Westford Assessor's Office, FY 2007 Parcel Database; Westford GIS Department; Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Note: this table was prepared prior to the town's acquisition of the Stepinski land. Numbers may not total due to rounding.

Comprehensive Master Plan Goals

H.1 Support and preserve distinctive, cohesive neighborhoods by ensuring that new development, alterations to existing buildings, and redevelopment are compatible with surrounding homes in density, scale and design.

H.2 Encourage multi-family housing at an appropriate scale in the villages, in mixed-use developments on Route 110, and in mixed-use conversions of the Town's historic mills.

H.3 Improve connections within and between neighborhoods by providing sidewalks, bicycle paths and attractive streetscapes.

H.4 Provide enough affordable housing to meet Chapter 40B goals of either ten percent affordable housing or 1.5 percent land area dedicated to affordable housing by issuing comprehensive permits, adopting realistic development regulations, pursuing techniques to preserve older homes as permanently affordable units and use town-owned land to develop affordable housing.

H.5 Assure that local affordable housing initiatives receive their fair share of Community Preservation Act (CPA) revenue.



Historic housing in Forge Village.

Recommendations

1. CONTINUE TO ADDRESS WESTFORD'S VULNERABILITY TO COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT DEVELOPMENTS.

☞ Continue to work toward meeting the 10% affordable housing or 1.5% land area minimum under Chapter 40B by:

- ✦ Encouraging the Community Preservation Committee to fund affordable housing activities.
- ✦ Supporting developments that are consistent with this Comprehensive Master Plan's land use goals and the Westford Affordable Housing Plan.

☞ Remove the existing affordable housing requirement from the Flexible Development bylaw and

establish a new inclusionary zoning bylaw, with clear density or other cost offset regulations that encourage the creation of affordable housing.

- ☞ Consistent with the state’s Chapter 40B regulations, provide a streamlined comprehensive permit review process for developers proposing more than the minimum required number of affordable units in areas identified by the town as appropriate for higher-density housing. While offering additional affordable units should not guarantee that a developer’s application will be approved, it should be given serious weight in any decision-making process for sites or areas that Westford considers suitable for multi-family development.
- ☞ When feasible, pursue special legislation that would allow the town to “forgive” or reduce property taxes for property owners who rent units to low- or moderate-income families at monthly rents that comply with Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) requirements. As part of this effort, Westford could establish a ceiling on the number of exemptions or waivers granted per year so that an unreasonable tax burden is not transferred to other property owners.
- ☞ Maintain timely (five-year) updates of Westford’s Affordable Housing Plan so that it continues to qualify for approval under the Housing Production Plan program.

2. PROVIDE MORE WAYS TO DEVELOP BOTH AFFORDABLE UNITS AND MARKET-RATE UNITS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF A VARIETY OF HOUSEHOLDS.

- ☞ Allow vertical and horizontal mixed-use development in the Commercial Highway District.
- ☞ Support direct sponsorship of affordable housing construction where appropriate, and partner with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) where feasible for assistance with such initiatives.

3. TAKE ADDITIONAL STEPS TO PROTECT WESTFORD’S HISTORIC STRUCTURES, INCLUDING HOUSING.

- ☞ Make the demolition delay bylaw a more effective tool for the preservation of historic structures. For example, allow the Westford Historical Commission to stay the issuance of demolition permits for one year, and make more buildings eligible for protection under the bylaw.
- ☞ Consider establishing Neighborhood Conservation Districts in Westford’s villages.
- ☞ Seek opportunities to use CPA funds for projects that preserve historic homes and also create permanently affordable housing units.

4. INVEST IN SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN THE VILLAGES AND CONNECTING THE VILLAGES TO ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS.

(See also, Transportation and Pedestrian Circulation, Recommendation #1.)

5. SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE SMALL POCKET PARKS IN NEIGHBORHOODS INADEQUATELY SERVED BY OPEN SPACE OR RECREATION AREAS.

(See also, Natural Resources and Open Space, Recommendation #5.)

7. Economic Development

Introduction

Evaluating economic development issues can help Westford understand the economic inputs and outputs that support the annual town budget, provide employment opportunities for residents, and generate commercial activity for businesses. Westford has limited control over the Greater Lowell area economy, but it can 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 twenty or twenty-five percent, as recommended in the 1995 Westford Master Plan?
- ☞ Should Westford work to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses that reflect the town's character?
- ☞ Does Westford still want to encourage the use and reuse of its mills and 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?

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.

RECENT BUILDING PERMITS FOR NEW COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

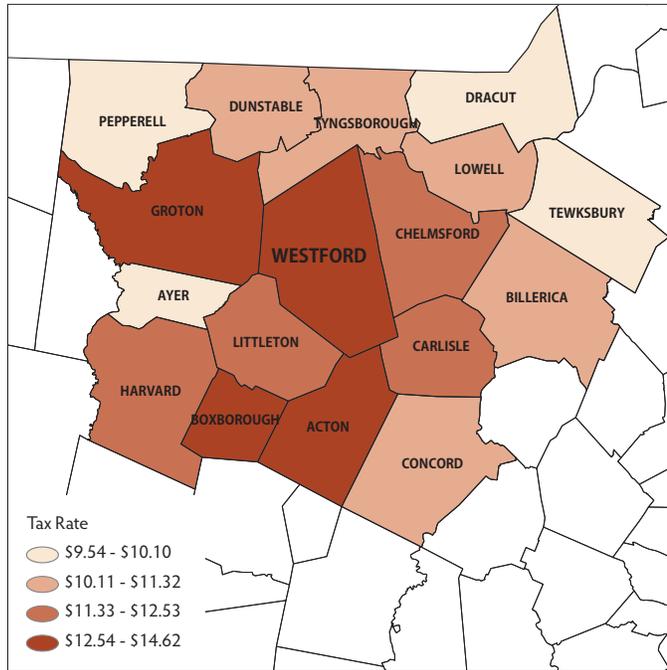
Issue date	Type	Address	Value	Purpose
5/5/03	Daycare building	26 Carlisle Road	\$ 710,000	Commercial building
4/28/05	Building	527 Groton Road	\$ 1,330,000	Commercial building
11/11/05	Building	28 North Street	\$ 642,000	Commercial building
5/23/06	Building (Walgreen's)	145 Littleton Road	\$ 1,786,153	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.

Property Taxes. Westford adopted a single tax rate of \$13.10 in FY 2007 for all real and personal property. The town also adopted a Small Commercial Exemption (SCE) for small commercial properties assessed for \$1 million or less. This effectively reduced the assessment of small commercial properties by ten percent and then taxed them at the higher rate of \$13.27. All other commercial property and all industrial properties were also taxed at the higher rate of \$13.27. The residential tax rate in Westford is higher than most surrounding communities. 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 Program (EDIP) and offer tax and economic incentives to attract new businesses.

RESIDENTIAL TAX RATES IN WESTFORD’S REGION (2007)

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue



Vacancies, Rents, and Regional Opportunities.

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 Master Plan’s vision statement anticipates that in the next ten years, Westford’s local officials, businesses, and residents “will work together to define a common vision of Westford’s economy.” This vision will need to reflect 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.

Comprehensive Master 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 create 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, Westford 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. In addition, the Committee could promote and support business forums in conjunction 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 land-locked 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. (See also, *Land Use Recommendation #1.*)

☞ 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 re-

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quirements 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.
- ☞ Further, Westford should designate a specific area within the Industrial Highway District as a Chapter 43D Priority Development Site and access 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 time frame for local boards to make a decision once a complete application has been submitted.
- ☞ In addition, Westford should hold biannual town board and committee meetings to review the state of the town and the goals of each board and committee, and to 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, 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, e.g., 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 Master Plan.

Working with the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, Westford can learn more about "Bio-Ready 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.

8. Transportation & Pedestrian Circulation

Introduction

Transportation systems play a major role in the efficient operations of a city or town. A multi-modal network is essential for safe, effective interaction between land uses. Society's auto-oriented tendency has led to a disproportionate emphasis on vehicular conditions and issues, but a community's transportation system encompasses much more than roadways. Sidewalks, bikeways, railroads, and trails contribute to a multi-modal network and help to form an effective system of moving people and goods to and from their destinations.



Route 110 in Westford.

A good transportation system also supports commerce. Severe traffic congestion and poor access and visibility can hurt retail businesses and commercial operations. In addition to access, transportation networks provide corridors for supporting the community's utilities and are a vital aspect of managing emergency services.

Issues & Opportunities

Westford enjoys the advantage of its proximity to two major regional highways, but it also bears the impacts of increasing traffic congestion from new development projects. The issues and opportunities described below are based on information received from the town, NMCOG, and MassHighway, interviews with local staff, and community meetings conducted for the Comprehensive Master Plan.

ISSUES

Cut-Through Traffic. Westford residents are concerned about cut-through traffic, mainly in a north-south direction to I-495 along Tyngsborough Road, Depot Road and Boston Road, which significantly increases traffic on local streets. This problem worsens when traffic on Route 1-495 or Route 3 is backed-up during the morning and afternoon peak hours. While it would be difficult to eliminate cut-through traffic entirely, improving conditions along minor arterials/major collectors such as Depot Road, Route 40 and Route 225 would help to keep cut-through traffic from residential neighborhoods.

Critical Traffic Areas. Poor geometry at some non-signalized intersections creates safety concerns. Some examples include Plain Road at Depot Road, Flagg Street at Robinson Road, and Tenney Road

CRASH HISTORY BY CRITICAL INTERSECTIONS

Intersection	2003	2004	2005	Total	Average
Groton Road (Route 40) / North Street	1	8	5	14	4.7
Groton Road (Route 40) / Keyes Rd / Nutting Rd	0	1	2	3	1.0
Groton Road (Route 40) / Dunstable Road	8	5	9	22	7.3
Groton Road (Route 40) / Tyngsboro Rd / Depot St	3	8	4	15	5.0
Groton Road (Route 40) / Forrest Road	1	3	0	4	1.3
Depot Street / Nutting Road	3	0	3	6	2.0
Depot Street / Burbeck Way	7	4	3	14	4.7
Depot Street / Plain Road	6	7	2	15	3.0
Forge Village Road / Cold Spring Road	4	6	3	13	4.3
Boston Road / Main Street	6	4	5	15	5.0
Boston Road / Lincoln Street / Hildreth Street	1	1	8	10	3.3
Boston Road / I-495 Ramps	37	26	30	93	31.0
Littleton Rd (Rte 110) / Concord Rd (Rte 225)	5	5	4	14	4.7
Littleton Rd (Rte 110) / Powers Rd	13	9	9	31	10.3
Littleton Rd (Rte 110) / Boston Rd / Carlisle Rd	21	35	42	98	32.7
Littleton Rd (Rte 110) / Tadmuck Rd	5	7	10	22	7.3
Concord Rd (Rte 225) / Powers Rd	5	6	9	20	6.7

Source: MassHighway Crash Report 2003 – 2005

at Dunstable Road. These tend to be high accident locations, and improving them should receive high priority attention from the town.

Capacity at Key Intersections. Westford is divided into two sections by I-495. Only three links via underpasses at Route 225, Boston Road and Tadmuck Road connect the northern section of Westford to the southern section, where major retail and office developments are concentrated along Route 110. This creates heavy turning traffic at these intersections, with Boston Road experiencing the most traffic. It is important to improve the other two links, including signalization at Tadmuck Road/Route 110 and Route 225 at Route 110. Provision of emergency vehicle detection and preemption is essential for fire engines arriving from the northern section of the town. Capacity should be provided at each of the three intersections such that additional traffic could be diverted through it in the event of emergency closure at any of the other links.

Traffic Signs. Some existing traffic signs do not conform to current Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) requirements. In particular, the letter size of street name signs is small, causing vis-

ibility and safety issues, and should be increased to comply with current state standards. The town should draw up a plan to systematically replace all non-compliant signs.

Pedestrian & Bicycle Accommodation. Lack of pedestrian and bicycle amenities in Westford, especially around schools and institutional locations, is a critical concern for the community. Sidewalks are mostly present along sections of a few roadways in the town center and in recently constructed residential subdivisions.

New Development. Planned commercial developments along Route 110 will have an impact on existing infrastructure.

Public Transportation. Lack of public transportation increases auto-dependency, even for short-distance trips.

Maintenance Costs. Roadway and sidewalk maintenance costs have increased in the past few years. Westford needs to create a priority projects list for repair and maintenance.

OPPORTUNITIES

Access. Westford has excellent access from highways and major roadways such as I-495, Route 3, Route 110, Route 225 and Route 40.

Conservation Trails. There is strong community interest in supporting trails and open spaces.

Public Transportation. There are opportunities to expand public transportation to Westford, but further study is required to evaluate the type, frequency and funding for such investments. At a minimum, the LRTA line along Route 110 can be extended to access commercial and retail uses along the corridor. Additionally, a Park and Ride facility along Route 110 could serve people who car-pool or vanpool to work, or commuters using bus services.

Mitigation. Numerous office and retail development projects are planned along Route 110. As these projects move into the construction phase, Westford has opportunities to mitigate the traffic impacts of these projects through roadway improvements funded wholly or in part by developers.



Lack of sidewalks in residential neighborhoods (Nabnasset).

Comprehensive Master Plan Goals

T.1 Provide sidewalks, trails and bicycle-safe routes that connect neighborhoods with villages, public facilities and schools, community institutions and open space.

T.2 Institute traffic calming measures wherever appropriate to reduce both the speed and volume of traffic on local streets.

T.3 Work with the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) and Westford’s business community to provide fixed-route bus service along Route 110.

Recommendations

1. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CIRCULATION PLAN.

In order to promote walking and bicycling as a viable alternative to automobile use, Westford must provide a safe and conducive environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Several comments received from participants during the Comprehensive Master Plan process indicate that sidewalk construction, especially around schools, is a priority for the town. To that end, Westford should implement the following recommendations:

- ☞ Form a permanent sidewalk committee under the joint direction of the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board. The committee would be

charged to develop and implement an updated sidewalk plan. To that end it would need to establish priority, recommend a funding mechanism (which could include a developer mitigation fund or capital outlay), obtain easements, and work with staff, residents, businesses and other boards as necessary to implement the plan.

- ☞ Prioritize sidewalk construction based on a set of criteria that reflect the importance of an area to the overall town’s pedestrian network. For example, the criteria should include providing sidewalks on roads leading to schools and areas of high pedestrian activity, such as in the commercial areas along Route 110, and filling in gaps in existing sidewalks. In addition, improvement to existing sidewalks within the villages and new ones connecting the villages to adjacent neighborhoods should be considered. *(See also, Housing & Neighborhoods, Recommendation #4.)*

- ☞ Adopt the Massachusetts Safe Routes to Schools Program to promote walking to and from school. This is a national program that promotes walking as a healthy lifestyle for school-age children and will require the availability of sidewalks around Westford’s schools.

- ☞ Enhance and publicize the town’s existing pedestrian trail network. Clearly identify and delineate existing trail easements, especially on private property to avoid conflicts between homeowners and the trail users. Provide signage along the trails.

- ☞ Adopt a policy to provide on-road bicycle accommodation on the major thoroughfares by increasing shoulder widths when roadways are reconstructed. Adopt a minimum shoulder width per MassHighway guidelines for the particular roadway classification.

- ☞ Continue existing policy requiring construction of sidewalks in new subdivisions. Consider the construction of sidewalks on only one side of

a subdivision road where feasible, and require that an equivalent length of sidewalk be constructed in another area in town where needed. This kind of strategy could help to extend sidewalks to critical areas that need pedestrian amenities without additional cost to the developer.

2. ADDRESS CRITICAL TRAFFIC LOCATIONS.

- ☞ Provide safety and operational improvements at the Route 40 intersections with Oak Hill Road. Traffic signals are warranted at these locations and would improve safety and intersection capacity. Provide pedestrian and bicycle accommodation with any proposed improvements.

- ☞ Study and implement improvements at Plain Road and Depot Street intersection. Realignment of the approaches, clear identification of the major road and traffic signalization, if warranted, should be considered.

- ☞ Update and implement the Route 110 Master Plan and use it as a framework for regulating all development within the corridor. Adopt policy to mandate compliance.

- ☞ Implement recommendations of Route 110 Master Plan, including the addition of through and turning lanes and the installation of traffic signals at Route 110/Tadmuck Road. Require developers to construct some of the improvements as part of traffic mitigation for new developments.

- ☞ Provide emergency vehicle detection at all existing and proposed traffic signals in Westford. Advanced detection on certain roads such as the Boston Road may be necessary to clear traffic from the path of emergency vehicles and improve response time.

- ☞ Identify deficiencies and improve the geometry, roadway width and pavement surfaces of main travel corridors in Westford in order to reduce traffic through residential neighborhoods.



- ☞ Upgrade traffic signage in the town to conform to current state and federal standards. Institute a sign inventory program that documents location, type, and condition as well as conformance to current standards of each sign on the Town’s roads. Adopt a policy of planned replacement and upgrades based on the results of the sign inventory.

3. REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND ENCOURAGE ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) involves measures that aim to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles by providing a variety of travel options. These measures include carpools, vanpools, guaranteed ride home, preferential parking, public transportation, and walking, bicycling and on-site services. The Westford Zoning Bylaw requires submission of a TDM for proposed developments over 25,000 square feet or generating peak hour trips in excess of 20 trips. It is not clear how these measures are implemented. Westford needs to adopt a policy to enforce and monitor the implementation of TDM measures to effectively reduce peak hour trips on the affected roadways. The following are some TDM measures that Westford could adopt.

- ☞ Establish mass transit service:
 - ✦ Support public transportation by extending the existing LRTA fixed route bus service from Chelmsford into Westford on Route 110. The Board of Selectmen is currently considering this action to demonstrate the public’s commitment to alternatives to single vehicle occupancy. It would connect employment centers on Route 110 to train and bus stations with regional connections.
 - ✦ Encourage employers to provide subsidies to employees to encourage ridership.
 - ✦ Investigate the feasibility of extending such bus service to other areas if supported by density and ridership.

- ✦ Encourage use of private shuttle bus services by employers
- ☞ Establish Traffic Management Associations (TMAs):
 - ✦ Work with businesses on Route 110 to establish Transportation Management Associations with the purpose of providing alternate commuting options. Alternatives may include carpooling, vanpooling, and guaranteed ride home. TMAs group together several employers who implement these measures and are able to offer broader services over wider geographic areas than individual businesses.
 - ✦ Encourage or require businesses with a certain number of employees to join the TMAs.
- ☞ Adopt parking policies to reduce automobile use:
 - ✦ Review existing zoning requirements for minimum parking for possible reduction in the number of required parking spaces.
 - ✦ Provide incentives to employees such as preferential parking spaces for carpooling, and vanpooling.
- ☞ Provide pedestrian connections between offices and retail areas:
 - ✦ The close proximity of offices and retail stores along the Route 110 corridor offers a great opportunity to reduce vehicular traffic between the various land uses.
 - ✦ Implement the sidewalks recommendations contained in the Route 110 Master Plan.
- ☞ Encourage employers to offer to their employees flexible work hours that would result in a reduction in peak hour trips

4. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO MANAGE TRAFFIC IN WESTFORD.

- ☞ Investigate the feasibility and benefits of establishing a park-and-ride facility in Westford near the I-495 ramps or on Route 40 near Route 3. Shuttle services could take riders to nearby train/bus stations. This could also be meeting place for carpooling or vanpooling.

- ☞ Adopt a policy that requires traffic monitoring of developments after opening. Monitoring could consist of annual traffic counts over a specific period, as determined by the Planning Board.

- ☞ Provide directional and informational signs to improve circulation in Westford Center. Clear directional signs will help to minimize confusion.

- ☞ Improve development review and permitting procedures.

- ☞ Establish a formal process for roadway and traffic-related design review that would require sign-off by the Town Engineer and the Highway, Police and Fire Departments. This should be integrated into the Planning Board's procedures for site plan review and special permits.

- ☞ Consult with Town Counsel about options to integrate a review of potential roadway and storm water drainage impacts within the endorsement process for "Approval Not Required" (ANR) lots.

9. Community Facilities & Services

Introduction

Public facilities and services reflect choices about the kind of community residents want to live in and their ideas about local government's responsibility for their quality of life. A community facility is any municipal property that has been developed for a public purpose, such as a town hall, library or school. It also includes local utilities such as public water service, and parks, playgrounds and cemeteries. Together, public buildings, land, infrastructure, and equipment make it possible for municipal employees, boards, and commissions to conduct public business and provide services for the public good.

Issues & Opportunities

Municipal Services. Westford has a number of facility needs that will be difficult for the town to address in the near term unless residents are willing to change their spending priorities. Each year, town meeting appropriates funds for a wide range of municipal services, and it seems clear that residents want the services or they probably would decline to pay for them. However, the annual cost of operating local government and repaying debt for schools and other facilities has reduced Westford's financial flexibility. One issue that Westford needs to confront is whether it can afford all of the services that residents want while other issues remain unresolved, often for many years. Establishing service priorities could help Westford set policies to guide the development of each year's operating and capital budgets.

Public Safety. Westford is a fairly large town with low-density development policies that contribute to the high cost of local government. From the effect of adding new subdivision roads to Highway



Westford Fire Department Headquarters.

Department's duties to the challenges of providing public safety in outlying parts of town, Westford is poised to spend more than many towns spend on basic municipal services. The town needs to make the staffing and facility needs of its Fire Department a high priority, and since Westford has a new fire department study in hand, it also has information to move forward.

Capital Improvements Plan. Although Westford has a capital budget and the basic framework for a capital plan, the town does not have a well-defined Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) or a transparent, inclusive process for developing one. A CIP is essential to the success of implementing a community's

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fiscal policies. Moreover, it is an essential building block in any system of impact fees – which are very difficult to impose under Massachusetts law and virtually impossible to impose without a well-documented plan. Westford may find that developing a CIP would help town officials make decisions about major capital projects in a timely, well-informed way, and also help the community at large reach consensus about capital spending priorities.

The CIP needs to account for new construction needs as well as improvements to existing structures. The most immediate need is to resolve the problem with displaced town staff due to the failed Town Hall structure. While most survey respondents agreed that Town Hall should remain in the center of Westford, it is clear that the existing Town Hall cannot house as many departments as before. A decision must be made regarding future locations of town functions and staff, and whether an annex to the existing Town Hall or a different location is the best option. Another consideration is whether and where to build a new fire station to serve the area south of Route 110.

Records Management. Local governments have record-keeping and records retention requirements that many towns, including Westford, are not prepared to address. Westford continues to struggle with finding an appropriate storage environment for its archives. On a day-to-day level, the Records and Archives Management Committee has been a resource to town departments, providing a records management policy and holding a records management workshop and several clean-up days at Town Hall in recent years. The greatest challenges faced by town employees to implement records management strategies are time and space. Due to limited staffing, there is little time to organize records (eliminating duplicates between departments, separating archives from active records) once projects are complete. There is also inadequate space to store archived records.



Millennium School, home to the School Department's administrative offices and temporary home to several departments that had to be relocated from Town Hall after the building was declared unsafe in December 2007.

A sound records management plan will include scanning incoming public documents or requiring electronic submission of these documents and plans which will allow permanent documents to be stored in an archives center. The Technology Department recently began implementing a town-wide document management system that will support such scanning and archiving and will greatly facilitate the finding and use of town records by staff and the general public.

Partnerships with Non-Profit Organizations and Interest Groups. Westford has a number of “partnerships” between town departments and non-profit organizations. “Friends” auxiliary groups that support and raise supplementary funds for services such as a public library, a senior center, and school or recreation programs exist in most towns, and Westford is no exception. Some examples of public-private partnerships in Westford include:

- ☞ The Roudenbush Community Center Committee and The Roudenbush Community Center, Inc.
- ☞ The Parks and Recreation Departments and Friends of Westford Sports
- ☞ The Conservation Commission and the Westford Conservation Trust

- ☞ The Council on Aging and the Friends of the Cameron Senior Center, Inc.
- ☞ The Westford Historical Commission and Westford Museum and Historical Society, Inc.
- ☞ The Westford Public Schools and Friends of the Parker Village School
- ☞ The J.V. Fletcher Library and Friends of the J.V. Fletcher Library, Inc.

Non-profit support groups represent the best in grass-roots community-based spirit, and often they are integral to the quality and success of the departments, agencies, or activities they were created to support. These support groups provide much-needed supplementary funding, and residents involved in these groups become literally “invested in” and more knowledgeable about their local government. It would behoove both the town and the non-profit support groups to strive for as much clarity and transparency as possible. Additionally, Westford may need to clarify the legal underpinnings of some of its public-private partnerships.

Local Government Efficiency. Westford has opportunities to increase local government efficiency by consolidating some of its existing operations. An example would be to combine the functions of the Highway Department, Water Department, Cemetery Department, Town Engineer, and Tree Warden into a single Department of Public Works (DPW). Westford also could assign some additional duties to a DPW, notably building maintenance and custodial services, which are currently handled on a building-by-building basis, and an expanded program of fleet maintenance (for several town departments).

Recreation Needs. In the “Land Use Priorities Committee Final Report” (January 2002), the Land Use Priorities Committee found that Westford would need sixty-seven acres of additional recreation facilities in order to meet Westford’s future recreation needs as defined in the 1995 Master Plan. It is not



Roudenbush Community Center.

clear if this forecast remains accurate or relevant. The Land Use Priorities Committee’s estimate, along with information in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2003), should be reevaluated and any identified needs should be incorporated into the CIP.

Comprehensive Master Plan Goals

F.1 Provide town employees with the technology they need to perform their duties, and adequately equipped facilities that are designed to protect the health and safety of occupants.

F.2 Develop and publish a philosophy of local government service, and provide training to town officials and staff to implement it.

F.3 Strengthen Westford’s commitment to municipal facilities and infrastructure by addressing critical needs such as stormwater management, energy conservation and renewable energy sources, deferred maintenance, and accessibility for all.

F.4 Support municipal and school services through careful financial management and land use policies that help to increase revenue and control community service costs.

F.5 Establish a process for developing a five-year capital improvements plan and adopt financial policies to implement it.

F.6 Improve local government efficiency by consolidating departments with overlapping or related responsibilities and centralizing municipal operations under the Town Manager.

F.7 Review relationships between town departments, the schools, and private non-profit affiliates or support organizations, clarify town roles and responsibilities, and address duplication of town services where it exists.

F.8 Invest in the renewal and revitalization of parks, fields, greenways, and waterways by improving access, encouraging use, and enhancing environmental quality.

Recommendations

1. SEEK WAYS TO OPERATE AS EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE THROUGH CONSOLIDATIONS, ECONOMIES OF SCALE, AND TIMELY INVESTMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY.

- ☞ Develop a services contingency plan by requiring department heads to prioritize each of the services they offer as critical, mandated, or traditional.
- ☞ The Town Manager and Board of Selectmen should study the prospect of regionalizing service delivery in partnership with other communities. Where feasible, regionalized service delivery should be initiated. The necessary structures to begin this process should be developed and implemented.
- ☞ Evaluate options and implement a centralized system for committees and boards to reserve meeting space.

☞ If it can be shown that significant long-term cost savings, greater efficiency and accountability, and other public benefits are likely to be achieved, consider the following options to reorganize and consolidate municipal operations:

- ✦ Establish a Department of Public Works (DPW) that reports to the Town Manager. The DPW should include, but need not be limited to, engineering, highway, buildings and grounds maintenance, fleet maintenance, parkland and cemetery maintenance, solid waste and recycling, sewerage collection, and water. Although the water department operates as a municipal enterprise, there is no prohibition against integrating water with other traditional public works functions. Several communities in Massachusetts have consolidated public works departments that include a water division and other divisions operating on an enterprise basis.
- ✦ Evaluate opportunities for consolidating cultural and recreational services under a single town department. In addition, evaluate possibilities for consolidating or separating similar recreational opportunities provided by other town departments or groups.
- ✦ Consolidate municipal building maintenance, currently handled by individual departments that are responsible for a given facility. Building maintenance should be located within the consolidated DPW. Further, consideration should be given to combined school and municipal building maintenance programs.
- ✦ Consolidate municipal and school administrative functions in one location, providing employees with sufficient space, equipment and training to efficiently perform work responsibilities while reducing overhead costs in utilities, infrastructure and maintenance.

- ☞ Continue to improve inter-departmental communication and efficiency through upgrades and enhancements to the town's technology resources, and provide sufficient staff training to make the best use of those resources.

2. TAKE A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ASSET MANAGEMENT: ESTABLISH A CONSISTENT INVENTORY OF MUNICIPAL PROPERTY, MOVE FORWARD WITH PRIORITY PUBLIC FACILITY PROJECTS, AND PERIODICALLY EVALUATE THE TOWN'S LAND AND BUILDING NEEDS.

- ☞ Evaluate the needs, options, and feasibility of renovating and expanding Town Hall.
- ☞ Establish a Capital Planning Committee and charge it with responsibility for coordinating the review process for proposed capital budget items and making recommendations to Town Meeting.
- ☞ Support and integrate the Route 110 Master Plan (1999), Open Space and Recreation Plan (2009), Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2003), the School Department's Five-Year Capital Plan (date), the Fire Services Organizational Analysis (2007), the Land Use Priorities Report (2002), the Permanent Building Committee Report on Town Facilities (2004), the J.V. Fletcher Library Long-Range Plan (2008-2012), and other appropriate reports.
- ☞ Develop additional parks and playing fields, particularly in underserved areas of town.
- ☞ Evaluate the needs, options, and feasibility of renovating and expanding the J.V. Fletcher Library. *(See also, Cultural and Historic Resources, Recommendation #7.)*
- ☞ Establish a process for identifying surplus municipal property and implement a decommissioning and reuse plan for old or abandoned town facilities.

3. PROVIDE TIMELY, CONSISTENT TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES IN

ORDER TO INCREASE PROFICIENCY, ASSURE THE TOWN'S COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS, AND BUILD RAPPORT AMONG LOCAL OFFICIALS AND STAFF.

- ☞ Provide procedural manuals and training, as needed, for all standing boards, commissions, and committees to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities under federal and state laws and local bylaws. (See also, Governance.)
 - ☞ Continue to train, certify and prepare town departments to respond to emergencies, and annually review/update Westford's Emergency Response Plan.
 - ☞ Demonstrate that all town departments are Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliant.
 - ☞ Continue to implement the Town's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan as required by the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, as amended, through public education, prevention, and regulatory measures.
- 4. CONTINUE TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE, MULTIDISCIPLINARY PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, INCLUDING PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, PREVENTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE, PREPARATION FOR EMERGING HEALTH THREATS AND EMERGENCIES, AND SERVICES FOR SPECIAL POPULATION GROUPS AND UNDER-INSURED POPULATIONS.**
- 5. EXPLORE COST-SAVING AND REVENUE ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES.**
- ☞ Continue to evaluate the adequacy of fees charged for municipal services and, where appropriate, base fees on a full cost recovery analysis. In addition, develop a policy to guide fee waiver decisions.
 - ☞ Institute energy audits and monitoring energy and water use in municipal and school buildings.

- ☞ Analyze the cost and benefits of grant funding, long-term sustainability of grant-funded programs or positions, and, if feasible, pursue a regional Grants Manager position.

6. RECOGNIZING THEIR POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY, EVALUATE PUBLIC-PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND DETERMINE WHETHER THEY PRESENT A LIABILITY RISK FOR THE TOWN OR IF THEIR FUNCTIONS SHOULD BE COMBINED.

7. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ☞ Investigate having general government offices open one night per week to accommodate residents who work out of town during normal business hours.
- ☞ Implement the Budget Development Policies recommended by the Long-Range Fiscal Policy Committee.
- ☞ Establish a policy for evaluating whether the town should accept private ways that are used as public roads.
- ☞ Review and develop a clear policy for the betterment program for private roads.
- ☞ Examine the issues associated with local sewer service via district water treatment facilities or allowance of shared septic systems in order to protect town lakes, ponds and streams, and facilitate private property improvements.

10. Governance

Introduction

A community's approach to governance largely determines how well it can resolve conflicts, develop consensus, set policy and manage its affairs. On one level, "governance" consists of tangible components: the institutions that a community creates and arranges to conduct the work of local government: legislation, taxation, regulation, enforcement, and delivery of services for the common good. On another level, it is a set of intangibles: an expression of a community's political culture, including the beliefs, values and principles that shape policy and guide local decision-making.

Issues and Opportunities

During the development of the Comprehensive Master Plan, the committee and consultant identified issues and problems that may require changes in the organization and procedures of local government for improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. In the identification of concerns, the committee and consultant reviewed the Town Special Act Charter, various aspects of citizen participation and its effectiveness, shortfalls of Town Administration and the capacity of the Town to manage conflict. In addition, various subcommittees identified concerns and potential solutions that require change in town organization and/or procedures.

The Comprehensive Master Plan should provide the framework for tying together all of the plans and studies that have never progressed toward implementation or, at best, have been implemented only in part. In fact, several action items in the Implementation Element extend or build upon previous town plans. In the future, plans and studies conducted for or by committees and boards should reference

the goals and vision of this Comprehensive Master Plan. However, over its lifetime, the Comprehensive Master Plan may need to be amended to accommodate changes to the vision and goals.

At public meetings for this plan, some residents said that fragmented communication between town boards makes it hard to reach consensus and move forward with an agreed-upon course of action. Over time, distrust seems to have accumulated inside town government as much as it has mounted among the critics of town government.

The underlying authority for Westford's town government stems from its Special Act Charter. In its current form, the roles and responsibilities of town government are not always well-defined. In addition, there seems to be a fragmented understanding of the town charter or disagreement with what the charter says. There is difficulty in separating the policy functions of elected boards from the administrative functions of the manager and staff. Therefore, the charter should be reviewed and updated to clarify roles and responsibilities for all aspects of town government.

Westford would benefit from consolidating some of its existing committees. The fairly recent creation of a single town buildings committee is a good example of a step that can make more efficient use of volunteers, encourage better planning and reduce the number of committees that need appointees and staff support. Other opportunities exist as well. For example, Westford presently has both an affordable housing committee and an affordable housing trust. Several towns that adopted the state's housing trust legislation since 2004 have merged their housing committees or partnerships with the trust

and formed a single entity. In general, Westford should review the status of all appointed committees, reaffirm the need for committees with ongoing responsibilities and disband committees that have completed their charge.

Comprehensive Master Plan Goals

G.1 Build trust and improve communication between town boards, staff, and residents.

G.2 Periodically review the structure of government in Westford to ensure that it continues to meet the town's needs.

Recommendations

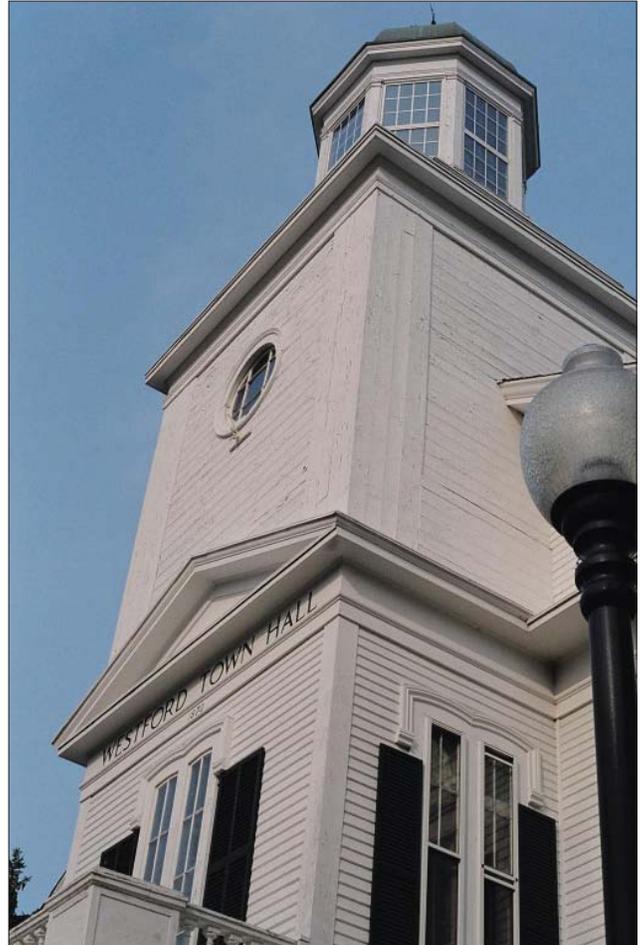
- ☞ Establish and conduct periodic reviews of Westford's Special Act Charter.
- ☞ Review the status, need and charge of all appointed committees, including those with ongoing responsibilities. Committees that have completed their charge should be discharged. Other committees may be reorganized or merged.
- ☞ Provide procedural manuals and training, as needed, for all standing boards, commissions, and committees to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities under federal and state laws and local bylaws. (See also, Community Facilities and Services).
- ☞ Have an annual all-boards meeting for all board members and not just the chairs to introduce new board members, review each board's goals and the "state of the town."
- ☞ Where feasible, implement the recommendations of board- and committee-commissioned studies.
- ☞ The current policy regarding appointment of citizens to committees should be reviewed with the intention of increasing participation by a wider representation of residents.

11. Implementation Guide

The final section of the Comprehensive Master Plan Summary, the Implementation Guide, is a multi-page chart that shows how the plan's recommendations would help to advance the goals and policies of multiple elements of the plan. For each recommendation, the guide identifies the primary source of leadership, the amount of staff support required, and a cost estimate if the recommendation would require new or increased expenditures by the town.

The recommendations of the Comprehensive Master Plan stem from more than two years of work by the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee, representatives of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), and a consulting team retained by the Planning Board to assist with updating the 1995 Master Plan.

To promote timely implementation of the Comprehensive Master Plan, the Planning Board has decided to appoint a Comprehensive Master Plan Implementation Committee. The Committee's role does not supersede or replace that of leaders identified in the Implementation Guide. Instead, the Committee will serve as a facilitator and coordinator of the implementation process, advocate for the Comprehensive Master Plan's recommendations, and report annually to Town Meeting about the town's progress toward implementing this plan. In addition, the Committee will consider and advise the Planning Board of amendments that may need to be made to the Comprehensive Master Plan and the Implementation Guide. Its work will help to ensure that efforts to carry out the Comprehensive Master Plan are unified and consistent, thereby furthering all of the Comprehensive Master Plan's goals.



Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Evaluate the needs, options, and feasibility of renovating and expanding Town Hall.	Community Facilities & Services, Cultural & Historic Resources	Board of Selectmen, Town Manager	Moderate	Subject to project design and designer's cost estimate
Establish an Economic Development Committee.	Economic Development	Board of Selectmen	Moderate	Minimal
Identify and charge a responsible party for oversight of all plans developed for boards and committees for consistency with the vision and goals of this Comprehensive Master Plan.	All Elements	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal
Establish design guidelines and a Design Review Committee to improve the appearance of commercial and industrial districts.	Land Use, Economic Development	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal
Expand water quality monitoring program to include monitoring of Great Ponds and other water bodies.	Natural Resources	Board of Health, Conservation Commission	Moderate	Minimal
Improve capacity to track and report land use change, the status of protected and unprotected open space, land management, improvements to Westford's municipal property inventory, and the condition of municipal and school facilities.	Land Use, Natural Resources, Community Facilities & Services, Land Use	Town Manager, Town Planner, GIS Coordinator	Moderate	Minimal
Establish a Department of Public Works that reports to the Town Manager. The Department of Public Works should include, but need not be limited to, engineering, highway, buildings and grounds maintenance, fleet maintenance, parkland and cemetery maintenance, solid waste and recycling, sewerage collection, and water.	Community Facilities & Services	Board of Selectmen, Town Manager	Moderate to High	Minimal
Establish a Capital Planning Committee.	Community Facilities & Services	Board of Selectmen	Minimal	Minimal
Establish a formal process for roadway and traffic-related design review that would require sign-off by the Town Engineer and the Highway, Police and Fire Departments. This should be integrated into the Planning Board's procedures for site plan review and special permits.	Transportation	Planning Board	Minimal to Moderate	None
Expand the Westford Historical Commission's role in town planning.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Land Use	Historical Commission, Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal
Adopt a policy that requires traffic monitoring of developments after opening.	Transportation, Land Use, Governance	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal
Evaluate the needs, options, and feasibility of renovating and expanding the J.V. Fletcher Library.	Community Facilities & Services, Cultural & Historic Resources	Board of Library Trustees	High	Subject to project design and designer's cost estimate

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Institute energy audits and monitoring energy and water use in municipal and school buildings.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Low	Minimal
Complete a comprehensive cultural resource inventory.	Cultural & Historic Resources	Historical Commission	None	For budgetary purposes, assume \$30,000-\$35,000 for preservation consultant
Train staff in accessioning, storing, and preserving of permanent historical records.	Cultural & Historic Resources	Town Manager	Moderate	Minimal
Identify an appropriate location and construct Archives Center.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Community Facilities & Services	Records & Archives Management Committee	Moderate to High	Moderate to High (subject to location)
Support the cultural goals, objectives, and annual action plans of the J. V. Fletcher Library Long-Range Plan.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Community Facilities & Services	Board of Library Trustees, Library Director	Moderate	Moderate to High
Adopt design criteria relating to roadway improvements and alterations; coordinate procedures between the Highway Department, Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Transportation, Land Use	Planning Board, Department of Public Works, Board of Selectmen	Moderate	Moderate
Designate and publicize a point-of-contact for business development at Town Hall.	Economic Development	Town Manager	Moderate	Minimal
Encourage commercial investment along Routes 110 and 40.	Economic Development	Economic Development Committee	Minimal	Minimal
Work with NMMCOG to streamline the local permitting process.	Economic Development	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal
Establish and conduct periodic reviews of Westford's Special Act Charter.	Governance	Board of Selectmen	Minimal	None, unless Town hires consultant to assist with charter review. In that event, assume \$15,000-\$20,000 for budgetary purposes.
Invest in sidewalk improvements within the villages and connecting the villages to adjacent neighborhoods.	Housing	Department of Public Works	Moderate	Moderate to High; subject and capital outlay policies, capital improvements plan
Make the demolition delay bylaw more effective.	Cultural & Historic Resources	Historical Commission	Moderate	Minimal
Allow vertical and horizontal mixed-use development in the CH District.	Land Use, Housing, Economic Development	Planning Board	Minimal	None; included in Comprehensive Plan Zoning Appendix

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Establish a Rural Residential District.	Land Use, Natural Resources	Planning Board	Moderate	None; included in Comprehensive Plan Zoning Appendix
Improve coordination and communication between town boards and officials with development review responsibilities.	Land Use, Economic Development	Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, ZBA, Historical Commission	Moderate	Minimal
Adopt landscaping techniques to protect natural resources.	Land Use, Natural Resources	Planning Board, Conservation Commission	Minimal	None
Explore new zoning to protect important parcels such as a Transfer of Development Rights bylaw, with designated sending and receiving zones.	Land Use, Natural Resources	Planning Board	Moderate	None; included in Comprehensive Plan Zoning Appendix
Reorganize, update, simplify and clarify the Flexible Development bylaw, integrate the OSRD bylaw within Flexible Development; clarify and improve upon existing bylaw definitions.	Land Use, Natural Resources	Planning Board	Low	None; included in Comprehensive Plan Zoning Appendix
Review zoning to encourage growth in areas where existing infrastructure can support it rather than develop existing open space.	Land Use, Natural Resources	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal or none
Encourage development of villages or mixed-use overlays to promote pedestrian, rather than vehicular, accessibility to services and resources.	Land Use, Natural Resources, Transportation	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal
Establish policies for tree protection, tree maintenance, tree replacement on town owned land and new subdivision and site plan proposals. Review local regulations.	Natural Resources	Tree Warden, Planning Board,	Moderate	Minimal
Review Water Resource Protection Overlay District, amend to include more specific performance standards.	Natural Resources	Board of Health, Planning Board	Minimal	Minimal
Provide incentives for developers to contribute to the town's open space goals.	Natural Resources, Land Use	Planning Board	Minimal	Minimal
Increase conservation staff to oversee growing inventory of town-owned and town-maintained (e.g., conservation restriction trails) conservation land.	Natural Resources, Facilities & Services	Conservation Commission	Moderate	For budgetary purposes, assume \$45,000-\$50,000, excluding benefits.
Clarify and strengthen conservation-related bylaws under the purview of the Conservation Commission.	Natural Resources, Land Use	Conservation Commission	Moderate	Minimal

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Continue to implement National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II requirements and DEP Stormwater Management Policy.	Natural Resources, Land Use	Department of Public Works	Moderate	Minimal
Adopt a policy to provide on-road bicycle accommodation on the major thoroughfares by increasing shoulder widths when roadways are reconstructed.	Transportation	Department of Public Works	Moderate	Subject to project design and designer's cost estimate
Adopt the Massachusetts Safe Routes to Schools Program.	Transportation	School Committee	Minimal	Minimal to Moderate (to match sidewalk/bikeway construction grants)
Identify deficiencies and improve the geometry, roadway width and pavement surfaces of main travel corridors in Westford in order to reduce traffic through residential neighborhoods.	Transportation	Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works	Moderate	Subject to scope of services and division of labor between town and consultants
Provide emergency vehicle detection at all existing and proposed traffic signals in Westford.	Transportation	Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works	Minimal	Est. cost approximately \$20,000 per traffic signal
Support public transportation by extending the existing LRTA fixed route bus service from Chelmsford into Westford on Route 110., and investigate the feasibility of extending bus service to other areas if supported by density and ridership.	Transportation	Board of Selectmen	Moderate	None
Update and implement the Route 110 Master Plan and use it as a framework for regulating all development within the corridor.	Transportation	Board of Selectmen, Planning Board	Minimal to Moderate	For budgetary purposes, assume \$60,000-\$75,000 (planning only)
Require department heads to prioritize services as critical, mandated, or traditional.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	High	None
Study the prospect of regionalizing service delivery in partnership with other communities.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Board of Selectmen	Moderate	Minimal
Identify and establish standards for areas that are environmentally sensitive to development, e.g. water supply, habitat preservation.	Natural Resources, Land Use	Conservation Commission, Planning Board	Moderate	Moderate if done in-house; with consulting support, assume \$25,000 - \$30,000 for budgetary purposes
Maintain five-year updates of Westford's Affordable Housing Plan so that it continues to qualify for approval under the Housing Production Plan program.	Housing	Housing Partnership	Minimal	Minimal

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Designate a specific area within the Industrial Highway District as a Chapter 43D Priority Development Site, access planning funds through the Interagency Permitting Board. Implement the sidewalks recommendations contained in the Route 110 Master Plan.	Economic Development, Land Use	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen	Moderate to High	Minimal
Prioritize sidewalk construction based on a set of criteria that reflect the importance of an area to the overall town's pedestrian network.	Transportation	Department of Public Works	Moderate	Subject to capital outlay policy or capital improvements plan
Provide pedestrian connections between offices and retail areas.	Transportation	Department of Public Works	Moderate	Subject to capital outlay policy or capital improvements plan
Attract "green" (environmentally responsible and emerging) industries and institute design guidelines.	Transportation	Planning Board	Minimal	Minimal (requires amendments to the Zoning Bylaw; may also require investment by the Town)
Evaluate the benefits and potential drawbacks of public-private organizational relationships and determine whether they present a liability risk for the town or if their functions should be combined.	Economic Development, Natural Resources, Land Use	Economic Development Committee	Minimal	Minimal
Identify and secure incentives for emerging high-tech industries.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Applicable Town Departments, Boards and Committees	Moderate	Moderate (Should involve Town Counsel)
Complete scenic roads inventory, including descriptions and photo documentation of scenic roads.	Community Facilities & Services	Economic Development Committee	Moderate	Minimal
Prepare a Development Master Plan for the Route 40 area based on the evaluation of available resources and a review of current zoning.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Transportation, Land Use	Planning Board, Historical Commission, Tree Warden	Moderate to High	For budgetary purposes, assume \$
Have an annual all-boards meeting for all board members and not just the chairs to introduce new board members, review each board's goals and the "state of the town."	Economic Development, Land Use	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal (if done primarily with in-house resources)
Seek opportunities to use CPA funds for projects that preserve historic homes and also create permanently affordable housing units.	Governance	Board of Selectmen	Minimal	None
Develop formal policy for notifying interested parties when land is being removed from Chapter 61 status	Housing	Housing Partnership, Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee	Moderate	Moderate to High
	Natural Resources	Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission	Minimal	Minimal

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Set standards commensurate with state standards on water quality and determine methods to achieve mitigation of problem areas.	Natural Resources	Board of Health	Moderate	Minimal
Monitor the effectiveness of stormwater/low impact development (LID) bylaw; review for consistency with DEP Stormwater Management Handbook and regulations.	Natural Resources, Land Use	Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Department of Public Works	Moderate	Minimal
Add through and turning lanes and the installation of traffic signals at Route 110/Tadmuck Road. Require developers to construct some of the improvements as part of traffic mitigation.	Transportation	Board of Selectmen, Planning Board	Minimal	Minimal (action should be carried out by developers as a condition of permit approval)
Develop and implement a Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan.	Transportation	Department of Public Works	Moderate	For budgetary purposes, assume \$125,000 for planning work
Encourage employers to provide subsidies to employees to encourage ridership.	Transportation	Economic Development Committee	None	None
Provide safety and operational improvements at the Route 40 intersections with Oak Hill Road, and provide pedestrian and bicycle accommodation with any proposed improvements.	Transportation	Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works	Minimal	Subject to design cost estimate
Review existing zoning requirements for minimum parking for possible reduction in the number of required parking spaces.	Transportation	Planning Board	Minimal	Minimal
Evaluate options and implement a centralized system for committees and boards to reserve meeting space.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Technology Director, School Department	Moderate	Minimal
Provide procedural manuals and training, as needed, for all standing boards, commissions, and committees.	Governance, Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Town Counsel	Moderate to High	Minimal
Provide timely, consistent training for employees, boards and committees in order to increase proficiency, assure the town's compliance with state and federal laws, and build rapport among local officials and staff.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Department Heads	Moderate	Minimal
Upgrade traffic signage in the town to conform to current state and federal standards.	Transportation	Department of Public Works	Moderate	
When feasible, pursue special legislation that would allow the town to "forgive" or reduce property taxes for property owners who rent units to low- or moderate-income families at monthly rents that comply with DHCD requirements.	Housing	Board of Selectmen, Housing Partnership	Minimal	Minimal

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Inventory historic homes and other buildings that may not lie within current National Register districts.	Cultural & Historic Resources	Historical Commission	Minimal	Minimal to Moderate
Encourage employers to offer flexible work hours.	Transportation	Town Manager	Minimal	May be subject to collective bargaining
Investigate the feasibility and benefits of establishing a park-and-ride facility in Westford near the I-495 ramps or on Route 40 near Route 3.	Transportation	Department of Public Works	Minimal	Requires consultation with NMCOG, MassHighway
Analyze the cost and benefits of grant funding and, if feasible, pursue a regional Grants Manager position.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Moderate to High	For in-house full-time Grants Manager: \$55,000-\$60,000, excluding benefits.
Consolidate municipal and school administrative functions in one location, providing employees with sufficient space, equipment and training to efficiently perform work responsibilities while reducing overhead costs in utilities, infrastructure and maintenance.	Community Facilities & Services, Governance	Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, School Department	Moderate	Subject to consolidation plan
Consolidate municipal building maintenance under DPW if it can be shown that costs and other benefits exist.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Department of Public Works	Moderate	None
Establish a policy for evaluating whether the town should accept private ways that are used as public roads.	Community Facilities & Services	Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works	Minimal	Minimal
Evaluate all opportunities for consolidating cultural and recreational services under a single town department.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Moderate	None
Hold biannual town board and committee meetings to review the state of the town, goals of each board and/or committee and introduce new members.	Community Facilities & Services	Board of Selectmen	Minimal	Minimal
Investigate having general government offices open one night per week to accommodate residents who work out of town during normal business hours.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Minimal to Moderate	May require collective bargaining
Establish a process for identifying surplus municipal property and implement a decommissioning and reuse plan for old or abandoned town facilities.	Community Facilities & Services, Governance, Land Use	Town Manager	Moderate	Minimal
Work with neighborhood groups to encourage pride in ownership of historical property.	Cultural & Historic Resources	Historical Commission	Minimal	None
Consider collaborating with one or more neighboring towns to establish regional preservation planning capacity, including the possibility of shared staff.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Community Facilities & Services	Historical Commission, Town Manager	Minimal	Minimal

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Consider hiring a part-time preservation-planner who could also serve as staff for the Westford Historical Commission.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Community Facilities & Services	Historical Commission, Planning Board	Minimal	For preservation planner: \$55,000-\$60,000, excluding benefits.
Create incentives for maintenance and/or improvements to historical structures.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Land Use	Historical Commission, Planning Board	Minimal	Subject to type and source of incentive
Examine potential reuse of the granite quarries along Route 40.	Economic Development	Economic Development Committee, Town Planner	Moderate	Minimal
Westford should review the status, need and charge of all appointed committees, including those with ongoing responsibilities. Committees that have completed their charge should be discharged. Other committees may be reorganized or merged.	Governance	Board of Selectmen	Minimal	None
Where feasible, implement the recommendations of board- and committee- commissioned studies.	Governance	Board of Selectmen	Minimal	Subject to type of study and recommendations
Consider Neighborhood Conservation Districts in Westford's villages.	Housing	Historical Commission	Moderate	Minimal
Provide a streamlined comprehensive permit review process for developers proposing more than the minimum required number of affordable units in areas identified by the town as appropriate for higher-density housing.	Housing	Zoning Board of Appeals	Moderate	Minimal (should involve Town Counsel)
Provide more ways to develop both affordable units and market-rate units that meet the needs of a variety of households.	Housing	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal
Remove the existing affordable housing requirement from the Flexible Development bylaw and establish a new inclusionary zoning bylaw.	Housing	Planning Board	Minimal	None; included in Comprehensive Plan Zoning Appendix
Seek opportunities to create small pocket parks in neighborhoods inadequately served by open space or recreation areas.	Housing	Planning Board, Parks and Recreation Commission	Moderate	Moderate to High
Support direct sponsorship of affordable housing construction where appropriate, and partner with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) where feasible for assistance with such initiatives.	Housing	Housing Partnership, Board of Selectmen	High	Must be determined on a project-by-project basis
Allow upper-story dwelling units in the B and BL Districts.	Land Use	Planning Board	Minimal	None; included in Comprehensive Plan Zoning Appendix

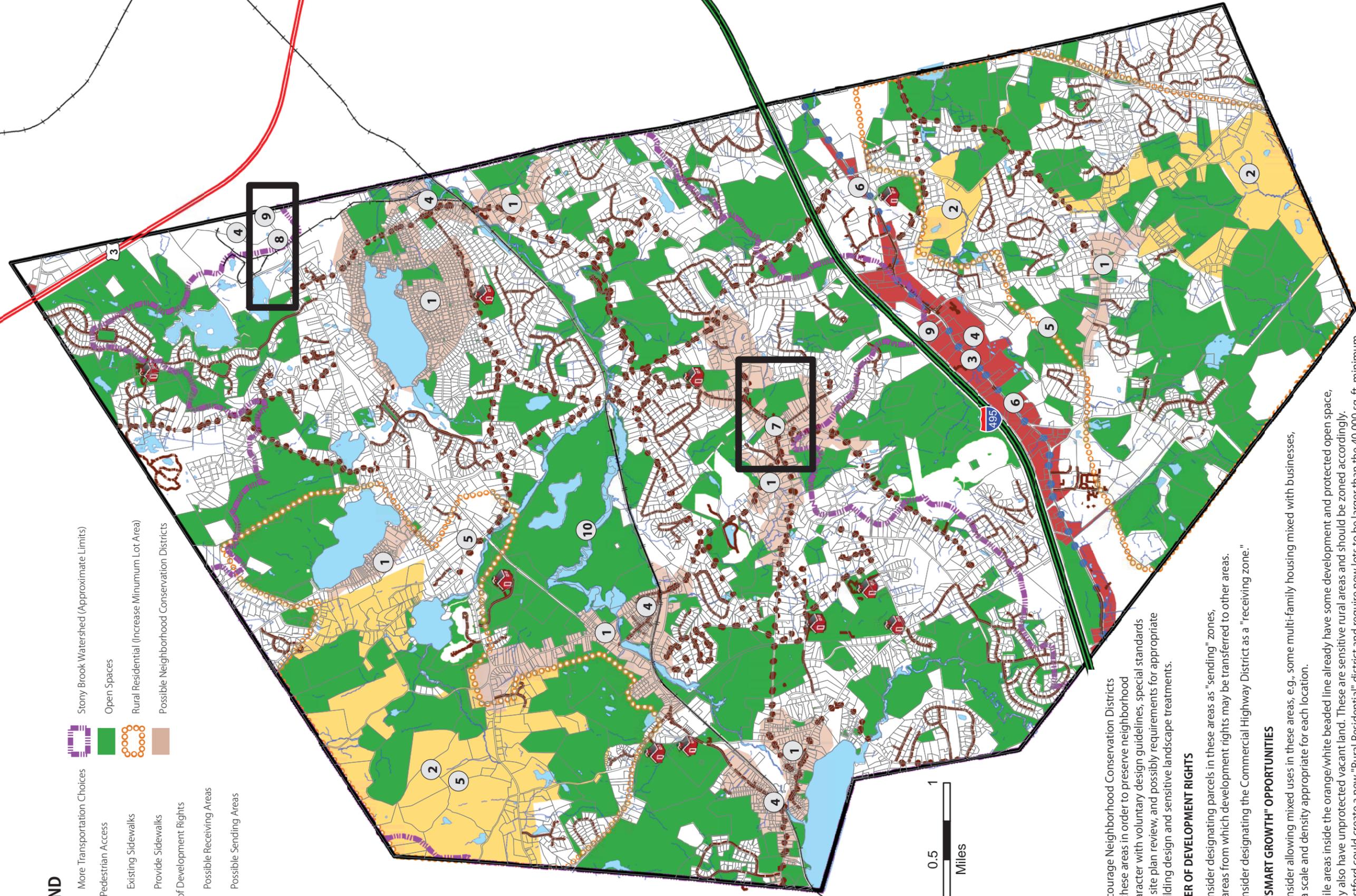
Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Reduce the minimum lot area and minimum frontage in the B District in order to reduce the number of non-conforming lots and structures.	Land Use	Planning Board	Minimal	None; included in Comprehensive Plan Zoning Appendix
Identify existing town-owned parcels that may be suitable for development as small pocket or neighborhood parks.	Land Use, Natural Resources	Parks and Recreation Department	Minimal	Minimal
Prepare site-specific management plans for town-owned conservation lands, including town forest land.	Natural Resources	Conservation Commission	High	Minimal (if done with in-house resources; if outside consultants, assume \$5,000-\$7,500 per plan)
Continually reassess Westford's priorities for acquiring or otherwise protecting additional conservation land.	Natural Resources, Land Use	Conservation Commission	Moderate	Minimal
Adopt a policy to enforce and monitor the implementation of TDM measures to effectively reduce peak hour trips on the affected roadways.	Transportation	Planning Board	Moderate to High	
Consult with Town Counsel about options to integrate a review of potential roadway and storm water drainage impacts within the endorsement process for ANR lots.	Transportation	Planning Board	Minimal	Minimal
Encourage use of private shuttle bus services by employers	Transportation	Economic Development Committee	None	None
Enhance and publicize the town's existing pedestrian trail network; provide signage along the trails.	Transportation	Conservation Commission	Minimal	Minimal
Establish Traffic Management Associations (TMAs).	Transportation	Economic Development Committee	Minimal	None
Form a permanent sidewalk committee to develop and implement an updated sidewalk plan.	Transportation	Board of Selectmen	Minimal	Cost of implementation is subject to capital improvements plan
Provide directional and informational signs to improve circulation in Westford Center.	Transportation	Department of Public Works	Minimal	Minimal
Study and implement improvements at Plain Road and Depot Street intersection.	Transportation	Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works	Moderate	Subject to design cost estimate
Continue investigating available state matching grant programs for historic preservation from the MHC as well as local CPA funds.	Cultural & Historic Resources	Town Manager	Ongoing	

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Continue and expand multidisciplinary public health programs, including public health education programs in environmental protection, environmental quality, and public health.	Natural Resources, Community Facilities & Services	Board of Health	Ongoing	
Implement the Budget Development Policies recommended by the Long-Range Fiscal Policy Committee.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Board of Selectmen	Ongoing	
Continue existing policy requiring construction of sidewalks in new subdivisions.	Transportation	Planning Board	Ongoing	
Integrate the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the School Department's Five-Year Capital Plan, the Fire Services Organizational Analysis, the Land Use Priorities Report, the Permanent Building Committee Report on Town Facilities, the J.V. Fletcher Library Long-Range Plan, and other appropriate reports.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Capital Plan Committee, Board of Selectmen	Ongoing	
Continue to evaluate the adequacy of fees charged for municipal services and, where appropriate, base fees on a full cost recovery analysis. In addition, develop a policy to guide fee waiver decisions.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Board of Selectmen	Ongoing	
Continue to work toward meeting the 10% affordable housing or 1.5% land area minimum.	Housing, Land Use	Housing Partnership, Zoning Board of Appeals	Ongoing	
Continue to implement the Town's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan through public education, prevention, and regulatory measures.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Ongoing	
Continue to train, certify and prepare town departments to respond to emergencies, and annually review/update Westford's Emergency Response Plan.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Ongoing	
Continue to upgrade and enhance the town's technology resources and provide sufficient staff training to make the best use of those resources.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Ongoing	
Demonstrate that all town departments are Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliant.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Ongoing	
Explore cost-saving and revenue enhancement opportunities.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Ongoing	
Periodically evaluate the town's land and building needs.	Community Facilities & Services	Land Use Priorities Committee	Ongoing	

Action Item	Related Elements	Leadership	Level of Effort: Existing Staff	Estimated Cost
Seek ways to operate as efficiently as possible through consolidations, economies of scale, and timely investments in technology.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Ongoing	
The current policy regarding appointment of citizens to committees should be reviewed with the intention of increase participation by a wider representation of residents.	Governance	Board of Selectmen, Town Moderator	Ongoing	

LEGEND

-  More Transportation Choices
-  Improve Pedestrian Access
-  Existing Sidewalks
-  Provide Sidewalks
-  Transfer of Development Rights
-  Possible Receiving Areas
-  Possible Sending Areas
-  Stony Brook Watershed (Approximate Limits)
-  Open Spaces
-  Rural Residential (Increase Minimum Lot Area)
-  Possible Neighborhood Conservation Districts



1 Encourage Neighborhood Conservation Districts in these areas in order to preserve neighborhood character with voluntary design guidelines, special standards for site plan review, and possibly requirements for appropriate building design and sensitive landscape treatments.

TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

- 2** Consider designating parcels in these areas as "sending" zones, or areas from which development rights may be transferred to other areas.
- 3** Consider designating the Commercial Highway District as a "receiving zone."

OTHER "SMART GROWTH" OPPORTUNITIES

- 4** Consider allowing mixed uses in these areas, e.g., some multi-family housing mixed with businesses, at a scale and density appropriate for each location.
- 5** While areas inside the orange/white beaded line already have some development and protected open space, they also have unprotected vacant land. These are sensitive rural areas and should be zoned accordingly. Westford could create a new "Rural Residential" district and require new lots to be larger than the 40,000 sq. ft. minimum lot currently required in the Residence A district.
- 6** Extend the existing LRTA bus service from Chelmsford into Westford into Westford on Route 110, require enforceable Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plans for larger-scale office and industrial developments, and require post-construction traffic monitoring and mitigation.
- 7** Keep core community facilities in the center of town, including Town Hall services.
- 8** Develop a master plan for the Route 40 area and promote commercial development in this location.
- 9** Explore options for a park-and-ride facility.
- 10** Continue and strengthen efforts to protect water quality and open space in the Stony Brook watershed.