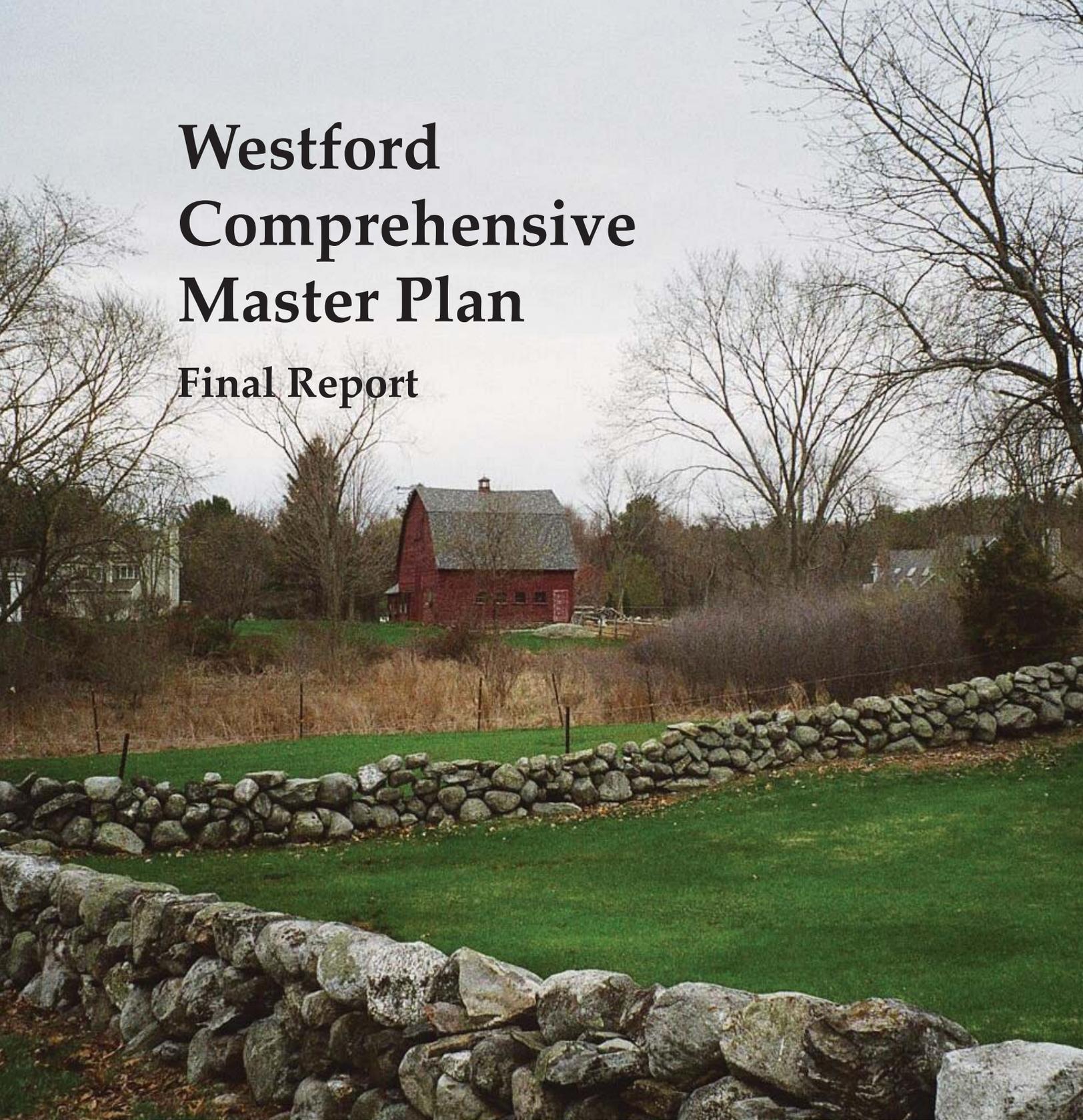


Westford Comprehensive Master Plan

Final Report



Westford Planning Board
Westford Comprehensive Master Plan Committee
April 2009



Westford Comprehensive Master Plan

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April 2009

Adopted by the Westford Planning Board on April 21, 2009

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

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Part 1: Comprehensive Plan Elements

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.
- ◆ 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.



Russell Bird Sanctuary.

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 exceptional public school system.

- ◆ Continue its commitment to education spending while balancing the needs of all of municipal services.
- ◆ Provide high-quality education with small 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 and classroom amenities.

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 local 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 its quality of life, the diversity and health of its natural resources, and its fiscal condition.

At public meetings and in the survey for this Comprehensive Plan Update, residents described Westford's open space and commitment to protecting land as major strengths of the town. They also cited the Westford's high quality public drinking water, abundant wildlife habitats, extensive trail system and the recent East Boston Camps (EBC) purchase as important community resources. In addition, they expressed a desire to protect and enhance Westford's scenic roads, and they think developers should help to protect more open space. Residents also seem to think the town should continue to buy land even though open space acquisitions can be very expensive. In fact, Westford has a long tradition of public and private action to protect open space. The town reinforced its commitment by adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA),



Westford's Hill Orchard.

a local option mechanism for generating revenue to fund open space, recreation, affordable housing and historic preservation activities. CPA funds were instrumental in Westford's acquisition of the EBC property: a significant tract of open space that protects natural resources and provides passive and active recreation opportunities.

Westford's landscape has changed with the relatively rapid rate of development that has occurred throughout the region. Its natural resources and vacant land remain vulnerable to changes in land use, and conservation presents one of Westford's greatest challenges. As development pressures persist, Westford will need to assess its bylaws, regulations, policies, and partnerships and determine whether the town needs new strategies to accommodate growth without placing its natural resources and open space at risk.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Geology

Bedrock Geology. An inventory of a community's natural resources begins with the underlying properties of its land. Westford's beautiful and diverse landscape features are products of its local geology. Like all of New England, Westford's geology reveals evidence of glacial scouring from the relatively recent past overlaid onto remnants of intense tectonic activity from the more distant past. The erosion, weathering, and accumulation of organic materials on the land since the last glacier receded have created a diversity of soil types blanketing Westford's rolling hills. In other areas, the hard rock of the land's crust is often visible in Westford's bedrock outcrops, quarries, and road cuts.

Westford's bedrock consists of several igneous and metamorphic units trending southwest to northeast. These rocks formed in the early to middle Paleozoic Era (490 to 354 million years ago), when the continent experienced tremendous mountain building along its margins. The bedrock visible in Westford today was once emplaced at depth within the crust but has now become exposed by uplift and erosion. The town's granitic rock formations were produced by intrusions of molten material. Metamorphic units formed when pre-existing rocks were squeezed during plate collisions. One rock type in Westford, the Chelmsford Granite, is noteworthy because it underlies much of the northern third of town and has been actively quarried since the early 1800s.

Surficial Geology. The unconsolidated materials that form the building materials of the soil are called the "surficial" geology. In Westford, the surficial geology is the product of erosion and deposition of material by glaciers. Continent-size glaciers once covered large areas of the northern hemisphere. Over many centuries, they formed by the accumulation of more snow in the winters than could melt in the summers. Natural climate cycling caused these huge glaciers to descend from the north and retreat several times in the past 1.8 million years. By about 20,000 years ago the last continental glacier, the Wisconsinan, began to recede, and by about 8,000 years ago, the main front had retreated north of Westford.

At its maximum extent, the Wisconsinan glacier was more than 2,000 feet thick over Westford, thick enough to depress the crust and affect flow patterns of glacial meltwater. The glacier was a wide conveyor belt, moving south and crushing, scraping, and carrying soil and rock, smoothing hill-tops, and gouging valleys. As the glacier rode over the surface, smearing the rock below, it left behind compacted material called "glacial till," a mixture of many sizes of broken rock from boulders to silt. When the glacier receded, turbid meltwater filled with debris and sediment poured off and formed rivers, lakes, dams, and deltas. The meltwater deposited sediment in valleys and depressions, generally in well-sorted (consistent grain sizes) layers called "stratified drift" or glacial outwash.

Stony Brook and the Concord and Merrimack Rivers flow to the northeast in Westford's vicinity because of the topography created by glacial activities. Map 3.1 shows that the surficial geology correlates directly with Westford's topography: till on the uplands and sands and gravels in the low areas. Till, which consists of glacier-deposited unconsolidated geologic material, transmits water slowly, which makes it poorly suited for sewage disposal. Till deposits may be shallow, sparsely covering bedrock between visible outcrops, or it may be more than twenty feet deep, forming elongated hills and rough plains. A specific group of soil types have developed on glacial till. They are generally dense and stony, like the till, making farming difficult. These soils produced the large rocks that colonial farmers used to build the stone walls found in Westford and much of southern New England today.

By contrast, well-sorted sediments formed from glacial meltwater (outwash deposits) are generally level and free of large stones. This soil type is typically suitable for farming if it is not too sandy and fast-draining. The outwash deposits form productive aquifers and provide storage for seasonal hydrologic cycling and floodwaters. Westford's public drinking water supply occupies much of the glacial outwash areas around Stony Brook. Some outwash deposits may be very deep where they were deposited in valleys or deltas.

Geology, Soils & Topography

Geology, soils, and topography play a key role in how land is developed. Areas with bedrock at or near the surface may have scenic or habitat value but are difficult to build or farm on, rivers encourage travel parallel to their flow, agriculture does well in floodplain soils and soils high in nutrients, and level terrain tends to be built on before steep terrain. Surficial deposits determine the rate of groundwater flow and affect development choices. Slope and the mineral content of soils influence the establishment of local flora and fauna and associated natural communities, as well as opportunities for agriculture. Slope also influences habitat formation, such as riffles and pools in streams, vernal pools, and soil development, accumulation, and erosion. Mineral content of soils affects soil fertility and water chemistry. Natural landscape features provide economic and recreational opportunities, and conservation land in areas of valuable habitat.

Soils

Soil is a dynamic resource that affects hydrology, supports plant life, controls biogeochemical cycles, determines plant and animal habitat and supports human habitation. Soils are relatively fragile resources, particularly vulnerable to erosion or disturbance. Significant erosion can cause damaging sedimentation in streams and low lying land, which can have significant impacts on natural habitats. It is extremely difficult and costly to restore the values or uses of disturbed soils. Soil development takes time. New England's soils are considered young because they formed only within the last 8,000 to 10,000 years. Westford's soils developed as a result of drainage patterns on the landscape: water eroded, deposited, and leached through glacial sediments and vegetation became established as organic matter on the surface.

Soil units are useful in determining the principal characteristics of an area's soil. They are classified by their origin, formation, and identifiable properties that make them suitable for different uses.

Soils with broadly similar properties and profiles comprise a *soil series*. All the soils of one series have generally comparable composition and thickness because they developed from similar parent materials in a similar environment. *Soil map units* consist of the soil series name modified by such factors as texture, slope, and stoniness. There are thirty-four mapped soil units in Westford (Map 3.2). The principal soil series include Hinckley, Freetown Muck, Paxton, and Charlton-Hollis-Rock Outcrop Complex. Other common units in Westford include Windsor, Canton, Woodbridge, Swansea, Montauk, and Udorthents (disturbed soil parent materials).¹ Sediment deposits covered by surface water total about 3.5 percent of Westford's land area, and quarry and gravel pits, about 1.5 percent.

Vegetative and faunal communities tend to become established in a pattern that corresponds with the soil series in an area, based on the interaction of a variety of factors: soil drainage class, texture, nutrient levels, stoniness, and location on the landscape. Soils that form in glacial outwash, such as the Hinckley and Windsor series, transmit groundwater more readily than soils formed in glacial till (such as Paxton and Canton soils) or shallow-to-bedrock soils (such as Charlton-Hollis-Rock Outcrop Complex soils). Upland outwash soils are at greater risk for drought than upland till soils and also tend to be lower in nutrients. Deep, very poorly drained organic soils such as Freetown Muck support wetland communities, are high in nutrients, and store water due to their location in depressions and topographic lows.

FARMLAND SOILS

A total of 1,221 acres in Westford (about six percent of the town's total land area) consists of Prime Farmland soils, which are especially well suited for agriculture. Most of the soils classified as prime farmland are located in the uplands in the central and southern parts of town. More than 3,000 acres in Westford are classified as farmland of unique importance and 4,400 acres are classified as farmland

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database for Middlesex County, Massachusetts, <<http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, retrieved 6 December 2006.

of state importance – that is, soils known to be valuable for specific types of crop production or otherwise designated for agriculture by state law, but not conforming to the definition of prime farmland. Together, Westford’s prime farmland and farmland of unique or state importance constitute forty-three percent of the town’s total area.² Westford has a long history of farming, most notably apple growing, but much farmland has been converted to developed land. In fact, between 1985 and 1999, Westford experienced the second greatest loss of agricultural land of any town in Massachusetts (478 acres of farmland converted to development).³ While almost fifty percent of Westford’s soils are considered optimal for farming, the reality of land use in town is much different today than in the past.

Topography

The natural beauty of Westford – its hills and valleys, rivers, ponds, forests, farms, and neighborhoods – are largely a product of its landforms. Westford’s landscape may be thought of as a blanket of soil overlaying ancient bedrock, with vegetation and surface waters serving as other character defining features. Westford’s major landforms are Stony Brook and its adjacent wetlands in the northern half of town, and rolling hills and valleys located throughout town. Westford’s topography is fairly hilly, ranging from a high of about 468 feet above sea level on Prospect Hill just west of the center of town to a low of about 140 feet where Stony Brook leaves Westford and enters Chelmsford. Another major hill is Snake Meadow Hill in the west.

The hilly topography of Westford relates to several other glacial land features. The retreating glacier left characteristic landforms known as *glacial moraines, drumlins, and kames*. Moraines represent the accumulated ice-contact debris left beneath or ahead of the glacier. Drumlins are elongated hills formed when the glacier rode over resistant bedrock, common in

many areas of New England. Kames are rough hilly features formed by deposition and collapse of sediment accumulated close to the melting ice. Lakes and ponds also were formed by glacial movement. Kettle lakes formed when the retreating glacier left behind a chunk of ice around which meltwater flowed and sediment accumulated. When the ice chunk melted, a depression containing meltwater was left behind. Other lakes and ponds formed in depressions left in ice-contact and sedimentary features.

Water Resources

WATERSHEDS

Most natural resources do not follow municipal boundaries, so it is more practical to use natural land features to describe natural resource boundaries. Watersheds provide a useful perspective because they manifest an area’s topography, drainage patterns, and to a large degree, soils and even vegetation and wildlife. The environmental, scientific, and regulatory community is increasingly using a watershed approach to study and measure natural resources, including but not limited to water resources management and planning.

Westford falls within two major drainage basins or watersheds: the Merrimack basin and the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord (SuAsCo) basin (Map 3.3). The Merrimack River basin covers about 279 square miles within 28 cities and towns in northeast Massachusetts, and an additional 4,700 square miles in New Hampshire. It is the fourth largest major drainage basin in New England. The Sudbury-Assabet-Concord River basin is located entirely within Massachusetts and includes all or part of thirty-six cities and towns in a 398 sq. mi. area.⁴ The boundary between them bisects the town approximately east to west, north of I-495. These major basins include a series of connected sub-basins. The sub-basins do not have given geographic names by USGS or the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission, but they correspond with certain significant hydrologic features. Seven sub-basins drain most of Westford’s surface area: the Snake Meadow Brook/Keyes Brook sub-basin; the Nabnasset Lake sub-basin; the

² MassGIS, NRCS Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Certified Soils Database, Middlesex County; statistical calculations by author. See also, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Prime and Unique Farmlands: Important Farmlands Inventory, Final Rule, 7 CFR Part 657 (25 September 2000).

³ Massachusetts Audubon Society, *Losing Ground: At What Cost?* (2003) <www.massaudubon.org>.

⁴ U.S. Geological Survey, Massachusetts-Rhode Island Water Science Center <<http://ma.water.usgs.gov/basins/>> retrieved 13 December 2006.

Stony Brook sub-basin; the Forge Pond sub-basin; the Nashoba Brook sub-basin; the Tadmuck Swamp sub-basin; and the Heart Pond sub-basin. There are also four sub-basins that lie largely outside of Westford: Bridge Meadow Brook (Tyngsborough); Deep Brook (Chelmsford); Beaver Brook (Littleton); and a very small piece of the Massapog Pond sub-basin (Groton, Tyngsborough).

SURFACE WATER

Clean, naturally-flowing, unimpaired surface water is essential to the balance of aquatic and terrestrial life and to human society's domestic, commercial, industrial, and recreational needs. Like most of New England, Westford consists of shallow glacial till and stratified drift over bedrock and as a result, the town has only a few small productive ground-water aquifers. These aquifers are intimately related to the surface water above them, making protection of surface water vitally important to Westford.

By virtue of the size of its drainage sub-basin, Stony Brook is Westford's principal watercourse. Stony Brook's headwaters begin at Wolf Swamp in Boxborough and terminate about 22 miles east at its confluence with the Merrimack River in Chelmsford. The stream is known as Beaver Brook from Wolf Swamp to Forge Pond in Westford, where it becomes Stony Brook and remains so until its terminus at the Merrimack River. From Forge Village to the Chelmsford town line, Stony Brook collects surface water from about eight square miles or almost one-quarter of the town's area. Nashoba Brook and its tributaries Vine Brook, Nonset Brook and Butter Brook collect water from the southern third of Westford and travel south toward the Concord River.

Westford has many beautiful lakes and ponds. At 203 acres, Forge Pond is Westford's largest pond, though part of it lies within Littleton. Similarly, Nabnasset Lake serves as the center of its natural and built environment within Nabnasset Village. Many other ponds characterize Westford, particularly in the Merrimack basin north of Stony Brook, including Keyes Pond, Long-Sought-for Pond, Flushing Pond, Greystone Pond, Grassy Pond, and Burge's Pond. In the Concord basin are Heart Pond (mostly in Chelmsford) and many smaller ponds

From Hodgman's History of Westford (1883)

Hodgman's History of Westford records disputes as early as 1735 around the need to preserve access to upper reaches of the town's streams for spring alewife and shad fish runs. Hodgman reports that in 1735, the town appointed a committee to "Vew the dams across stonne brook with the cost of making conveaninces for the fish to run." Hodgman reports that both shad and alewives passed up Stony Brook to Forge Pond. Apparently the so-called Fish Committee was re-appointed every year until 1826, at which point it is likely that fish runs were largely extinguished by dams on the Merrimack in Lawrence.

and adjoining wetlands. Eight lakes and ponds in Westford are classified as Great Ponds under M.G.L. c. 91, the Public Waterfront Act, including Burge's Pond, Flushing Pond, Forge Pond, Grassy Pond, Heart Pond, Keyes Pond, Long-Sought-For Pond, and Nabnasset Lake.⁵ Public access to Westford's great ponds is available at the Town Beach on Forge Pond, Edwards Beach on Nabnasset Lake, and from canoe access ramps at Keyes Pond, Long-Sought-For Pond, Beaver Brook, and Stony Brook on River Street.

Westford's lakes and ponds provide some of its most pristine open spaces and natural vistas, and the town has taken steps to protect several of them. Grassy Pond, Kennedy Pond and Burge's Pond are located within parcels managed by the Westford Conservation Commission while Greystone Pond is bordered by conservation land. However, other waterbodies such as Long-Sought-For Pond and Lake Nabnasset are surrounded by private property. Many of the town's former quarries have developed small ponds and they are recognized not only

⁵ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Division of Wetlands and Waterways <www.mass.gov/dep/water/resources/about01.htm> and <www.mass.gov/dep/water/greatpon.doc>, retrieved 20 December 2006. A great pond is any pond or lake that contained more than ten acres in its natural state. Ponds that once measured ten or more acres in their natural state, but which are now smaller, still qualify as great ponds.

**TABLE 3.1
WATER QUALITY IN NINE WESTFORD STREAMS, 2006-2007**

Location	Total Phosphorus (mg/L)	Total Nitrogen (calculated) (mg/L)	NO2 + NO3 (mg/L)	TKN (mg/L)	Total Suspended Sediments	Est. % Imperv. Surface
Nashoba Brook						
USEPA reference condition*	0.025	0.44	0.34	0.30		
Butter Brook	0.045	0.65	0.41	0.25	5.28	6.4%
Nonset Brook	0.044	0.55	0.08	0.47	38.89	4.7%
Vine Brook	0.099	0.65	0.23	0.42	15.11	10.5%
Nashoba Brook	0.106	0.65	0.30	0.35	16.39	9.7%
Stony Brook						
Stony Brook @ Forge Pond†	0.009	0.29	0.09	0.20	1.75	
Boutwell Brook	0.026	0.95	0.44	0.52	7.39	10.2%
Keyes Brook	0.017	0.43	0.08	0.35	2.22	4.0%
Gilson Brook	0.020	0.87	0.53	0.34	2.83	9.8%
Tadmuck Brook	0.040	0.82	0.36	0.46	3.00	10.7%
Stony Brook @ Brookside	0.022	0.46	0.17	0.30	3.61	8.1%

* Adapted from USEPA. 2000. *Ambient Water Quality Criteria Recommendations: Rivers and Streams in Nutrient Ecoregion XVI*. EPA 822-B-00-022. United States Environmental Protection Agency: Office of Water, Office of Science and Technology, Health and Ecological Criteria Division. Washington, D.C. December 2000.

†Average of 10 samples.

Table by Westford Comprehensive Master Plan Committee.

for their scenic quality but also for their ecological value as vernal pools, providing valuable habitat to vernal pool species. These resources are also unprotected from potential adverse development.

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 and its amendments (collectively called the Clean Water Act (CWA) require states to classify water bodies according to the degree of threat or impairment for designated uses. In April 2006, Massachusetts produced the Massachusetts Year 2006 Integrated List of Waters, the proposed listing of the condition of Massachusetts waters under Sections 303(d) and 305(b) of the Clean Water Act.⁶ The list identifies several water bodies in Westford as impaired or threatened for one or more uses and requiring establishment of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to set the maximum allowable pollution from point, non-point and natural sources. These water bodies include Heart Pond on the Westford-Chelmsford line, Beaver Brook from Mill Pond in Littleton to Forge

Pond, and Stony Brook from the outlet by Forge Pond to the confluence with the Merrimack River in Chelmsford. Residential and commercial development threatens the sensitive and highly productive aquifers beneath Stony Brook and its surroundings.⁷ Stony Brook and Beaver Brook are Class B waters and must meet standards for primary (swimming) and secondary (fishing and boating) contact recreation as established by the Clean Water Act.

Preliminary data collected by volunteers in the Westford Water Quality Program indicate that efforts to protect Westford’s surface waters have proven insufficient to prevent pollution of streams. Table 3.1 shows that seven out of nine major streams in Westford exceed three or more EPA water quality standards. The source of the contamination has not been determined. It appears that efforts to protect Westford’s surface waters have proven insufficient to prevent contamination/pollution of streams and underlying aquifers. Seven out of nine major streams

⁶ Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), Massachusetts Year 2006 Integrated List of Waters, proposed listing of the condition of Massachusetts’ waters pursuant to Sections 303(d) and 305(b) of the Clean Water Act, <www.mass.gov/dep/water/resources/2006il3.pdf>, April 2006.

⁷ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Report for Westford Water Department <<http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/drinking/2330000.pdf>>

in Westford exceed three or more EPA water quality standards, most likely due to insufficient treatment of stormwater runoff, erosion, excess agricultural or residential fertilizers, wildlife activity, and possible illicit discharge of wastewater, as shown in Table 3.1.

GROUNDWATER

In most of New England, groundwater is most easily obtained in large areas of stratified drift, which are far more transmissive to water flow than glacial till or fractured bedrock. Stratified drift generally occurs in lowland areas, where it was deposited by glacial meltwater. Glacial drift valleys are often isolated or separated by uplands of till and shallow bedrock. Groundwater recharge is the part of the hydrologic cycle in which aquifers are recharged by precipitation, surface water infiltration, or hydrologic exchange with other aquifers. Since recharge of stratified drift aquifers generally occurs through inflow from the surrounding drainage basin and nearby surface water bodies, the quality of surface water is critical to the quality of groundwater and therefore to drinking water supply.

Westford has a high-yield aquifer suitable for drinking water in the stratified drift beneath Stony Brook and its surroundings. The town adopted a Water Resource Protection Overlay District (WRPOD) in order to protect the sensitive drinking water supply areas. Within the overlay districts, Westford prohibits certain land uses and allows others only by special permit.

WETLANDS

The importance of wetlands to the health and balance of the natural environment is well known, and wetlands are therefore protected by state and federal law. Wetlands offer aesthetic and recreational value, and are integral to the beauty of the New England landscape. Westford has several large and significant wetland areas distributed throughout town, particularly around Stony Brook and Nashoba Brook. The town has enacted a local Wetlands Protection Bylaw and regulations to supplement the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. c.131, s. 40. The local bylaw establishes additional interests beyond those set by the state law, including water pollution

prevention, recreation, and aquaculture values. The bylaw also regulates activities within 100 feet of the wetland resource areas defined in the state law (buffer zones) as well as activities affecting smaller wetlands, including vernal pools, which are not subject to the Wetlands Protection Act.

FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

Westford has a Flood Zone Overlay District (FOD) that restricts uses on land within mapped flood plains. The purpose of the FOD is to protect public health and safety, and to preserve natural flood control characteristics and flood storage capacity of the floodplain, and to protect the groundwater recharge areas within the floodplain. The boundaries of the FOD are shown on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Map, dated June 15, 1983. No construction or earth-moving activities are permitted in the FOD without a special permit from the Planning Board. Additionally, FEMA flood boundaries reflect flood conditions at a certain point in time. Due to the anticipated increased rainfall and intensity of storms associated with climate change in the northeast portion of the United States, flood boundaries in the northeast are predicted to migrate upgradient over time.

Vegetation

Westford occupies a transitional place in the mosaic of forest types that characterize New England, i.e., a blend between northern (hardwood-hemlock-white pine) and southern (hardwood-oak-hickory) New England forests. This diverse mixture of hardwoods and conifers gives the land a quilted appearance from a distance, and also provides a wide range of habitats for wildlife. Oak, hickory, birch, maple, and Eastern white pine dominate the canopy, while the understory is populated with sassafras, ferns, wildflowers, and assorted shrub species. Introduced and invasive species are not uncommon in many parts of town, especially in disturbed areas and along roadsides. Westford is home to several state champion trees, the largest trees of their species in the state, including the largest black oak (*Quercus velutina*) next to the library, the largest catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*) on private property on Concord Road, and the largest shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) on Trust land on Hildreth Street.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Westford has experienced a gradual regrowth of the forests that were cleared for farming by colonial settlers in the seventeenth century. Westford is forested, but with a modern forest that has largely grown on post-agricultural land after farms were abandoned beginning in the mid-1800s. The abandoned farmland experienced regrowth of the tree species that remained in the uncleared sections of town. Westford's forested area increased fairly steadily from the mid-1800s until the 1970s, when forest cover began to decline again under the pressure of suburban land development. Today, a very small amount of Westford's historic farmland remains in agricultural use.

According to the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), Westford is known to have seven plant species classified as state endangered, threatened, or species of special concern.⁸ They include *Scleria triglomerata* (Tall Nut-Sedge); *Rotala ramosior* (Toothcup); *Myriophyllum alterniflorum* (Alternate-flowered water-milfoil); *Senna hebecarpa* (Wild Senna); *Hypericum ascyron* (Giant St. John's-Wort); *Liatris scariosa var. novae-angliae* (New England Blazing Star); and *Asclepias purpurascens* (Purple Milkweed). The locations of Estimated Habitats of Rare Species are shown on Map 3.4. The Westford Conservation Trust, a private non-profit land trust, maintains an inventory of plants observed and painstakingly recorded by dedicated residents, an example of the concern many Westford residents have for the natural beauty of the town. The inventory was most recently updated in December 2006.

Fisheries & Wildlife

Westford has an abundance of wildlife in many habitats throughout town. As with Westford's plant species, the Westford Conservation Trust maintains a list of fauna observed in Westford by interested residents. The list contains the names of all species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, spiders, mollusks, butterflies and moths, and some other invertebrates observed in town. Further, the NHESP reports that Westford is home to six species listed

as endangered, threatened, or of special concern in Massachusetts, and for which estimated habitats have been mapped. The endangered species list consists of two amphibians, *Ambystoma laterale* (Blue-spotted Salamander) and *Hemidactylium scutatum* (Four-toed Salamander); two birds, *Botaurus lentiginosus* (American Bittern) and *Ixobrychus exilis* (Least Bittern); and two reptiles, *Glyptemys insculpta* (Wood Turtle) and *Emydoidea blandingii* (Blanding's Turtle).⁹

Vernal Pools. The Westford Conservation Trust has been mapping vernal or seasonal pools for certification by the NHESP. Vernal pools are unique habitats known for the amphibians and invertebrate animals that use them to breed. They typically hold water in the winter and spring due to rising ground water and rainfall, remain ponded through the spring and into summer, and usually dry completely by the middle or end of summer. Many amphibian and invertebrate species rely on this special breeding habitat because it is free of fish predators. As of April 2006, Westford had 101 certified vernal pools, placing it in the top 10 towns in the Commonwealth. By regulating the buffer zone around isolated wetlands in its local wetlands bylaw, Westford has provided additional protection for vernal pools beyond state requirements.

The most critical aspect of conserving both rare and common wildlife species and the natural biodiversity of Westford is protecting natural habitats. These habitats are generally not discrete areas with definable boundaries; they are overlapping communities with gradual variation in physical characteristics and species composition. Birds and large animals in particular often make use of multiple communities and require large areas or corridors to thrive. As development has encroached on forest and farmland, wildlife has lost core habitat, edge habitat, and food supplies. These pressures lead to reductions in wildlife populations and increased contact between humans and the remaining wildlife. Conservation of large open space parcels, avoidance of suburban sprawl development patterns, fencing of backyards

⁸ Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, <http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhdat.htm> retrieved December 21, 2006.

⁹ Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), "Rare Species Occurrences by Town," on-line database, <<http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp>> updated 28 August 2006.

that abut wildlands, thinning of deer herds, avoiding building in proximity to wetlands and streams, and restraint of pets will mitigate the potential for human/wildlife conflicts.

Environmental Hazards

Since Westford is largely suburban and forested, the town has fewer environmental hazards than some nearby industrial towns and cities. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup maintains records of all spills, leaks, and other releases of oil or hazardous materials.¹⁰ According to DEP's database, Westford has several identified hazardous waste sites, solid waste sites, and potential environmental threats, as shown on Map 3.5. These sites are in various stages of cleanup, or remediation. Environmental hazards are not necessarily limited to sites with documented remediation needs, however. Westford's closed municipal landfill operated for about fifty years. The landfill occupies about seventeen acres. It is unlined and was closed in 1985, and capped in accordance with state requirements in 1988. The landfill site is located northeast of the intersection of Forge Village Road and Cold Spring Road, near two town wells, the Russell Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary, town forest land, and the flood plain of Stony Brook.

An environmental hazard that is often inadequately recognized is non-point source pollution, or pollution from diffuse or widespread sources that acts principally through stormwater runoff entering surface water bodies and groundwater. Such pollutants include:

- ◆ Excess fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides from lawns and farmland;
- ◆ Oil, grease, and toxic chemicals from urban runoff and energy production;
- ◆ Sediment from improperly managed construction sites and other lands, or eroding streambanks due to stormwater runoff; and

- ◆ Bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes, and faulty septic systems.

These pollutants have harmful effects on drinking water supplies, recreation, fisheries, and wildlife. Their sources are more difficult to control than point source pollution, such as from a leaking oil tank. The most important ways to control non-point source pollution are through proper land management, effective maintenance of septic waste and petroleum, and zoning or erosion control bylaws and regulations, particularly in sensitive areas. The 2007 Watershed Action Plan prepared by Woodard & Curran describes some of the locations of environmental hazards associated with the Stony Brook and Nashoba Brook watersheds.¹¹

Resources of Regional Significance

Most of Westford's natural resources have significance to adjacent communities and to the larger region since resources such as air, water, vegetation, and wildlife do not confine themselves to municipal boundaries. Some resources, such as watersheds, are particularly important to surrounding towns, and even to the rest of the Commonwealth. Likewise, similar resources in surrounding towns are potentially significant to Westford.

The Stony Brook and Nashoba Brook sub-basins and their greater watershed areas are particularly significant to downstream environments and towns. Water that enters these basins in Westford flows into the larger watersheds that include the towns of Chelmsford, Carlisle, Acton and Littleton. Local decisions in Westford, such as zoning and development siting, can have an impact on downstream communities by affecting surface water and groundwater quality and quantity. Non-point source pollution, excessive water withdrawals, and alteration of local hydrology (e.g. flow restrictions, impervious surfaces) can compromise the health of an ecosystem and public welfare both in the sub-basin and far downstream in neighboring communities.

¹⁰ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, retrieved from <state.ma.us/dep/cleanup>, select "My Community."

¹¹ Woodard & Curran, December 31, 2007, Watershed Action Plan, Stony Brook & Nashoba Brook Watersheds.

Several areas of Westford are designated endangered species habitat, which makes them significant to the existence of the species across the state. In addition, NHESP has developed a mapping project known as BioMap, which identifies areas of rare and valuable biodiversity. BioMap includes state-listed rare species habitats, exemplary natural communities, and the full breadth of the state's biological diversity. The goal of the BioMap is to promote strategic land protection by producing a map showing areas that, if protected, would provide suitable habitat over the long term for the maximum number of Massachusetts' terrestrial and wetland plant and animal species and natural communities. Approximately twenty-three percent of the state is mapped as core habitat, and another nineteen percent as supporting landscape. In Westford, BioMap core habitat is found south of Forge Pond, and large areas of supporting natural landscapes occur in the northwest and southern parts of town.

Open space is significantly more valuable to humans, plants, and wildlife when it exists in large corridors or connected areas. Contiguous open space parcels that form corridors can be seen in many places in Westford and surrounding towns. The network of trails and connections to trail systems in surrounding towns is of regional significance, too. In 2002, the Merrimack River Watershed Assessment identified six open space and recreation sites in Westford as priority sites for protection: 500 acres of land along Stony Brook, including three future well sites; East Boston Camps land; MIT property; Drew farm land; the boat ramps at River Street and Farmer land; and expansion/connection of the town-wide trail system.¹²

Unique Features

Westford's diverse landscape contains unique natural features. In the community meetings for this Comprehensive Plan Update, the top five attractions named by residents include natural or open space features: Kimball's Farm, the town common, East Boston Camps, Hill Orchard, Forge Village Beach,

¹² Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Merrimack River Comprehensive Watershed Assessment Report (June 2002), <http://www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications/assessment_reports>.

From the Merrimack River Watershed Assessment (2002)

In 2002, the Merrimack River Watershed Assessment identified six open space and recreation sites in Westford as priority sites for protection: 500 acres of land along Stony Brook, including three future well sites; East Boston Camps land; MIT property; Drew farm land; the boat ramps at River Street and Farmer land; and expansion/connection of the town-wide trail system.

and Nashoba Valley Ski Area. Although Westford has seen much of its agricultural land converted to development, the remaining farms maintain a connection to the town's rural and agricultural history. Most of the farmland in Westford today is valuable not only from a historic perspective, but also because of the scenic views provided by open farmland. The town has taken steps to protect farms by purchasing the Hill Orchard on Hunt Road as well as by purchasing the development rights to Eric's Farm. However, most other farms in town are privately owned and remain unprotected from development.

Westford has a distinctive and well-loved network of woodland trails maintained by the Westford Land and Trails Stewardship Committee under the aegis of the Conservation Commission (deleted Planning Board) and Westford Conservation Trust. These trails traverse many of the town's conservation lands and provide an opportunity for residents to enjoy some of the community's most impressive natural vistas and environmental habitats.

Westford's large tracts of open land are some of its most unique natural features. In addition, the last glaciation left several large boulders called glacial erratics, including a pair of very large granite boulders known as the "house and barn," located near the Westford/ Tyngsborough town line. Along the Stony Brook is the Old Arch Bridge, a granite bridge built of large granite blocks without mortar that carried the railroad track over the brook. The Old Arch Bridge is listed with the U.S. Department of the Interior as a structure of significant interest in the Merrimack Valley.

OPEN SPACE

Westford has long recognized the importance of conserving large parcels of open space in order to protect natural habitats, provide scenic vistas and recreational opportunities and to restrict development in important ecological areas. Westford's past plans and studies have encouraged consolidating protected parcels to form corridors and contiguous open spaces and distributing protected open space throughout town. In furtherance of these goals, the last Open Space and Recreation Plan (2002) identified unprotected parcels and ranked them based on their level of significance and proximity to protected conservation land. The town, conservation-oriented organizations and others in Westford have joined together to acquire these parcels as they become available. Indeed, Westford's track record for protecting open space is impressive. It shows that public agencies, non-profit organizations and private citizens have worked very hard, and over a long period of time, to protect land from development. Map 3.6 presents Westford's existing inventory of open space, both publicly and privately owned.

Considering Westford's abundant natural resources, it is surprising that the town has no federally owned conservation land and very few acres owned by the state. Moreover, only one statewide non-profit organization owns conservation land in town. For the most part, the land preservation efforts in Westford represent sustained efforts by local government and local organizations. The town has acquired many parcels of conservation land through outright purchase, donations, and the development review and permitting process. In addition, the Westford Conservation Trust owns several parcels in Westford and helps to protect many acres of privately owned land by holding conservation restrictions. However, there is a significant amount of land in private ownership without any restrictions on future development. Many of these lands are in recreational, forestry or agricultural use, while others are simply



Farmland in Parkerville.

vacant land holdings that meet the needs of private property owners.

Westford's Variety of Open Space

AGRICULTURAL LAND

Westford has evolved from a rural town with compact industrial villages and expansive farmland into an affluent suburb within the orbit of the Boston metropolitan areas. While the same type of evolution has occurred in communities all over Eastern Massachusetts, it is particularly apparent in Westford because the town is large and until the mid-1960s, Westford remained relatively undeveloped. From 1985 to 1999, however, Westford experienced the second greatest loss of agricultural land of any town in Massachusetts.¹³ The recent *Westford Reconnaissance Inventory* (2006) completed through the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program cited the loss of active farming and the development of agricultural land as one of Westford's key planning issues.¹⁴ These trends have implications for Westford's natural and scenic resources because continued residential development will

¹³ Massachusetts Audubon Society, *Losing Ground: At What Cost?* (2003).

¹⁴ Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program, *Westford Reconnaissance Report*, Department of Conservation and Recreation, 2006.

further threaten the pastoral nature of the town and the community's natural environment.

Although Westford is no longer a rural community, several areas still evoke its rich agricultural past. Parker Village, with its stone walls, open fields and historic farmhouses, provides a visual time capsule of rural Westford, much like the small remaining farms along the town's scenic roads, including horse and hay growing farms such as Volo Farms on Powers Road, Scanlon Farm on Texas Road, and Greenwood Farm on Greenwood Road. The majority of these farms and the smaller hayfields found around town are not protected from future development. Westford has worked to preserve the remnants of farms through a variety of creative mechanisms, however. For example, the town actively encourages owners to consider measures to conserve their land in perpetuity. When land is proposed for development, the town works to secure land donations through the permitting process. Of particular importance to residents is retaining Westford's farming heritage in addition to protecting other landscapes, and the town has successfully preserved several working farms and orchards. Recently, residents passed a resolution at Town Meeting reinforcing Westford's commitment to agriculture and directing the town to form an Agricultural Commission.

Westford's commitment to agriculture is evidenced by the Picking-Gould Farm, the historic 80-acre Meadow Brook Farm on Groton Road that was saved from development through a creative public/private partnership involving the town and two private parties. The town retains ownership of a portion of the property as public conservation land while an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) protects the twenty-four acre parcel that remains privately owned. The result is not only a preserved historic house and farm, but also a considerable amount of protected land along Snake Meadow Brook. The Picking-Gould Farm venture helped to expand a 700-acre wildlife habitat and trail system formed by the Snake Meadow Brook Conservation Land and land within MIT's Haystack Observatory site. Moreover, views of the farm's rolling fields and open pasture from Groton Road are some of the most spectacular in Westford. They provide a visual

respite from the more contemporary land use pattern found elsewhere in the same part of town.

Beyond traditional farming establishments, Westford also has a rich history of fruit orchards. While most of the orchards were eventually converted to residential development, two remain in operation through the town's purchase of land and development rights, thereby ensuring that Westford's orchard legacy will be preserved. Hill Orchard is one of the last working stone fruit orchards in Westford. The town purchased the 22±-acre orchard on the corner of Hunt Road and Chamberlain Road in 1999, and contracts with a private individual to operate the orchard and farm stand. Bohne Orchard on Tadmuck Road, a thirty-one acre apple orchard near Tadmuck Swamp (formerly Reid Orchard), is also protected with an APR. In 1999, Westford purchased the development rights to an additional orchard, the 9-acre Drew Orchard on Blake Hill near the town center. Although the Drew farm was later sold to a new owner, the land will remain in agricultural use although it no longer operates as an orchard. The Day Pumpkin Patch on Graniteville Road is located on town conservation land and is leased to a private entity for agricultural crops.

FORESTED LAND

Forest cover has ecological, water resource and visual significance, and in Westford it has an indelible impact on the character of rural roadways. Despite the town's significant development over the last few decades, it retains some impressive tracts of forest. Recognizing the importance of its forest resources, Westford has protected significant tracts of forested land. The town owns approximately 267 acres of wooded parcels classified as Town Forest, including about 100 acres within the Martina Gage Forest adjacent to Heart Pond and the Oscar Spaulding Forest.¹⁵ Westford's recent acquisition of the East Boston Camps property adds an additional 200 acres to the inventory of protected forests. Other town-owned forested parcels include the Cider Mill Pond property, a thirty-four acre area off Lowell Road that abuts 120 acres of unprotected privately owned

¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all descriptions of open space acres in this section are based on the Westford Assessor's FY 2008 Parcel Database and data received from Westford's GIS Coordinator.

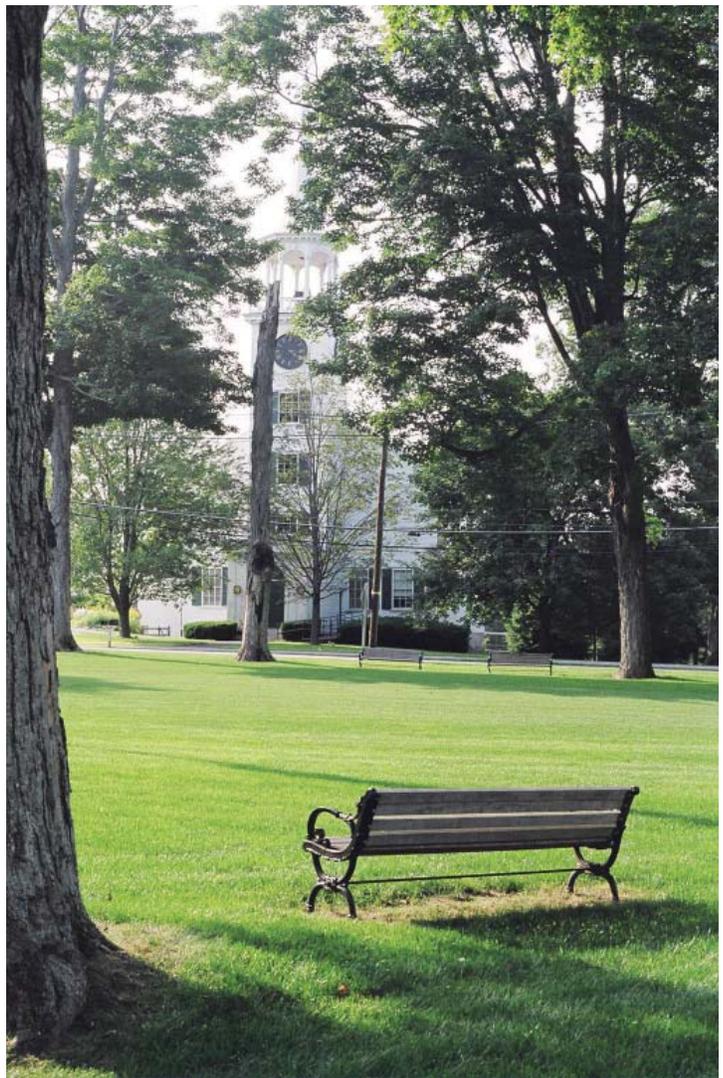
forest and Emmet Conservation Land, a 350-acre town owned parcel. In addition, Westford has tapped zoning and permitting strategies to protect open and forested land and its success can be seen in developments such as Blanchard Farms, Hildreth Hills and Greystone, all of which include significant acres of protected land. In 2007, a parcel of unprotected forest north of Long-Sought-For Pond near Tyngsborough was protected by a conservation restriction as part of the Summer Village development.

OPEN SPACE AND WATER RESOURCES

A significant amount of open space surrounds Westford's lakes and ponds. Grassy Pond, Kennedy Pond and Burge's Pond are located within parcels managed by the Westford Conservation Commission and Greystone Pond is bordered by conservation land. However, other ponds in Westford, such as Long-Sought-For Pond and Lake Nabnasset, are surrounded by private property. Despite Westford's abundance of open water, there are only two public swimming beaches: Town Beach on Forge Pond and Edwards Beach on Lake Nabnasset. There is a canoe access ramp for Stony Brook on River Street and canoe access to Keyes Pond, Beaver Brook and Long-Sought-For Pond. There are also several private beaches in Westford. Grassy Pond and Kennedy Pond are located within conservation land and have no sanctioned fishing or swimming access. Slifer Conservation Land abuts Keyes Pond, but does not provide an access point to water. Limited parking is available at some of these access areas.

PUBLIC PARKLAND

Surprisingly, Westford has few public parks within its borders. The Town Common in Westford Center is the largest of these public spaces in the town. While many residents probably think of the Town Common as a cultural resource, the designed landscape of the Town Common also provides invaluable open space within the Town Center. This traditional town green provides a public gathering space for festivals, concerts, farmers markets, and other



Westford's Town Common.

local events. The land is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen. Its status as protected open space is unclear, but public sentiment would most likely prohibit any changes to this town landmark.

TRAILS

Westford's marked trails are located in various locations throughout the town, within forested land, across fields and along waterways. The trails offer a variety of passive recreation opportunities including hiking, jogging, bird watching, horseback riding and cross-country skiing and allow enjoyment of some the town's most scenic landscapes. Westford once had a more extensive network of trails on privately owned land, but development over the past several decades has eliminated or disrupted many of them. Recognizing the need to protect as many trails as possible, the Westford Planning Board has

negotiated the creation or protection of numerous trails through the permitting process for several subdivisions.

Today, Westford has twenty-one marked trails within its boundaries. The Westford Conservation Trust maintains a trails listing on its website and also publishes a Westford Trails guide every year. The trails guide provides maps and descriptions of each trail. Many of the trails are on public land, but several run across private property and are protected with trail easements, which allow a designated corridor to be used in perpetuity as a public trail. The major trails include the Tom Paul Trail and John Gagnon Nature Trail, as well as networks of trails on land such as the Slifer Conservation Land, the Frances Hill Wildlife Sanctuary and East Boston Camps.

Managing Westford's trails is primarily a volunteer-based effort spearheaded by the Westford Conservation Trust and the Conservation Commission. The Westford Conservation Trust is actively engaged in trails planning and it played an instrumental role in forming a trails group, the Westford Land and Trails Stewardship Committee, in 1998 in partnership with the Conservation Commission. To date, routed signs and wooden map kiosks have been erected at several town conservation parcels: the Otis and Alice Day Agricultural Field, the Slifer Land, Kissacook Hill, the Cider Mill Pond Conservation area, the Stone Arch Bridge/Russell Bird Sanctuary, the Prospect Hill Wildlife Sanctuary and the Richard S. Emmet Conservation Land. Local Scouts groups and individual Eagle Scouts have made significant contributions to trail maintenance, identification and accessibility construction projects.

Planning trail systems has been a long-term process in Westford. More than 10 years ago, Westford began planning a town-wide trail network that would run generally from the northwest corner of town to the Bruce Freeman Trail, a regional rails-to-trails project connecting Lowell to Acton and providing a key link in the "Bay Circuit" trail system around Boston. Town Meeting recently appropriated CPA funds to complete Phase II design services for the portion of the Bruce Freeman Trail that will run through Westford.

GRANITE QUARRIES

One of Westford's unique open space resources is its historic granite quarries. These largely unprotected landscapes provide some of the town's most scenic vistas, including the 100-acre Fletcher Quarry on Oak Hill, which is nearing the end of its production expectancy. Several other abandoned quarries also can be seen on and around Snake Meadow Hill. The Westford Heritage Landscape Inventory (2006) classifies Westford's quarries as important scenic and heritage resources.

PRIVATE SPORTS FACILITIES

Westford has privately owned sports and recreation facilities that provide some of the town's most expansive open land. Several Chapter 61B properties are devoted to outdoor recreation, such as the Nashoba Valley Ski Area, which offers local skiing, a summer day camp and swimming programs for children; and two golf courses, the Butter Brook Golf Course and the Nabnasset Lake Country Club on Oak Hill Road. In addition, the Kimball Farms complex includes miniature golf and a driving range, small water rides and expansive fields. Westford also has two member-only outdoor sports clubs: the Stony Brook Fish and Game Club and the Westford's Sportsman's Club.

Conservation and Ownership

PUBLIC CONSERVATION LAND

The Westford Conservation Commission has more than 120 parcels totaling 1,696 acres under its care and custody. Of all of the undeveloped land that Westford owns, these parcels have the greatest protection against any future change in use. The Conservation Commission has a single set of land use regulations that pertain to all of its lands. It is considering adopting specific use regulations and management plans for each individual conservation property, similar to those created specifically for East Boston Camps (see below). The town has only one conservation employee responsible for Westford's entire conservation land inventory, maintaining land records and actually overseeing the land itself.

One of Westford's most important recent land acquisitions is the East Boston Camps (EBC) property, located between Stony Brook and Keyes Brook.

Founded in 1937 by Isabel and Sarah Hyams, EBC served as a “Fresh Air Camp” for East Boston area children to escape tuberculosis. The East Boston Social Centers, Inc. continued to run the camp until 2005, when the town purchased the 286-acre property surrounding Burge’s Pond and a conservation restriction was placed on the land. The property includes significant wildlife habitat, an extensive trail system, and historic camp structures. Care, custody and control of a portion of EBC (257 acres) was transferred to the Conservation Commission in 2008 per the recommendation of the East Boston Camps Master Plan. The remaining portion (thirty acres) was transferred to the care of the Recreation Commission for the development of playing fields. The Town also recently purchased a 110-acre parcel bordering Stony Brook, across from the East Boston Camps property. The parcel was divided between the Conservation Commission (sixty-five acres), the Recreation Commission (fifteen acres) and the Water Department (thirty-one acres).

The Westford Water Department manages twenty-nine parcels containing a total of 359 acres. Public land under the care and custody of the Water Department is protected from development while the associated water supply is in use. It is important to realize, however, that the town decommissions a drinking water source, it also could designate the land as surplus and allow the parcel to be developed. As a result, watershed parcels may not be protected in perpetuity, though it is unlikely that residents would tolerate the sale of public land for private for-profit development.

SEMI-PUBLIC LAND

Several non-profit organizations own protected open space in Westford. For example, the Westford Conservation Trust owns seventeen land parcels with a combined total of about 120 acres. The parcels are protected through conservation restrictions and are open to the public for passive recreational use. Further, the Massachusetts Audubon Society owns approximately 274 acres of land in Westford. Most of the Society’s land is contained within the Nashoba Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, which consists of two separate, mostly wooded parcels totaling 194 acres. While relatively small, the sanctuary is part of the 600±-acres of protected conservation land in

the Kennedy Pond area between Concord Road, Carlisle Road and Power Road. This area also includes Conservation Commission land, property owned by the Westford Conservation Trust, and some privately owned land as well.

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION RESTRICTIONS (APR) & CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS

Westford property owners have the opportunity to work with the town and local and regional conservation organizations to protect their land. The Westford Conservation Commission, local organizations such as the Westford Conservation Trust and the Westford Land Preservation Foundation, the Sudbury Valley Trustees, the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and the New England Forestry Foundation all hold conservation restrictions in Westford on private land totaling 1,720 acres. Approximately 844 acres of land in Westford are protected with conservation restrictions granted to the Westford Conservation Commission. In addition, the Conservation Commission holds conservation restrictions on 274 acres jointly with the Westford Conservation Trust.

The Westford Land Preservation Foundation holds the conservation restriction for the EBC property. It also is working with several developers on limited development projects that would permanently preserve conservation land. Finally, an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) is held by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on the thirty-one acre Bohne Orchard, while Westford holds two APRs: the nine-acre Drew Farm and the twenty-four privately-owned acres of the Picking-Gould Estate.

CONSERVATION ZONES

Approximately 133 acres of privately owned land in Westford have been placed within conservation zones. The majority of these parcels were designated as conservation zones when the town learned that some conservation restrictions had been invalidated due to technicalities. Several other parcels were placed in conservation zones as mitigation for development proposals. Town meeting designated all of the conservation zones.

Trail Easements. Currently there are twenty-one protected trails in Westford. The trails cross land owned by the town and the Westford Conservation Trust, as well as privately owned land for which trail easements have been granted to ensure public access. To date, there are at least fifty permanent trail easements in Westford.

CHAPTER 61, 61A AND 61B

About 80 properties with a total of approximately 1,900 acres in Westford are subject to temporary restrictions under M.G.L. c.61, c.61A or c.61B. These three state laws allow cities and towns to tax eligible land according to its forestry, agricultural or recreational use value, not market value. In exchange for the fairly significant tax reduction that comes with a Chapter 61, 61A or 61B agreement, the property owner grants a right of first refusal to the community to acquire the land before it is converted to another use. The law also allows the community to assign its right of first refusal to a non-profit conservation organization. Some of Westford's largest and most well-known parcels of open space and recreation land would be vulnerable to development if their Chapter 61, 61A or 61B agreements were not renewed. Westford does not have a formal process by which all town departments and local conservation organizations are notified when a property owner seeks to remove a property from Chapter 61 status. Currently, notification is sent to the Board of Selectmen, as required by law, and the Board notifies the Conservation Commission.

PRIVATE LAND

Westford has several large, residentially zoned parcels with no protection in place to prohibit or limit future development. Considering both land owned by private individuals and non-profit organizations, these parcels include a combined total of about 1,500 acres, though not all of the land is developable. The largest unprotected property in Westford is MIT's 570 acres at the Haystack Observatory site, which has hiking and equestrian trails. There are several parcels ranging from twenty to fifty acres scattered throughout the town. Westford also has many small, vacant parcels that may seem unimportant when viewed individually, but together they include a considerable amount of land. Moreover, the smaller parcels also provide open space in areas

that have largely been developed, and this makes them important from a neighborhood perspective. The unprotected residential land parcels contain a combined total of about 1,030 acres.

Implementation: Planning Tools and Techniques Adopted by the Town

Westford's zoning bylaw incorporates several measures to protect the town's natural resources, including the Flexible Development Bylaw (7.2.4), the Open Space Residential Development Bylaw (7.1), the Assisted Living Bylaw (7.3.3), and the Water Resource Protection Overlay District Bylaw (8.1). However, these bylaws do not provide a consistent level of protection. While a number of natural resource interests are addressed in Westford's zoning, particular interests appear in some but are missing in others. (Table 3.2) Leaving aside consideration of other interests the town may want to establish, it appears that the resource interests presently addressed in Westford may be vulnerable due to weaknesses or omissions in local regulations.

The ability of town boards to safeguard Westford's long-term community interests would be enhanced if local bylaws incorporated the values and natural resource goals expressed in the this Comprehensive Plan Update. In the past, Westford's planning studies have not always led to implementation, yet they provided direction for resource management. A better connection between the planning process and day-to-day bylaw implementation and project review could help Westford perform more effectively at implementing its planning work.

Although Westford needs to do more to protect its natural resources, the town has carried out many open space goals and recommendations. For example, Westford instituted alternatives to conventional subdivisions, allowing exemptions to lot dimensional requirements in exchange for set-asides of conservation land. In 1995, Westford adopted an Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) bylaw, and subsequently adopted a Flexible Development Bylaw (1999), which authorizes land use boards to work with developers during the design process to identify important resources, scenic areas, and

TABLE 3.2
NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION MEASURES IN WESTFORD’S ZONING

Natural Resource Area Interests	Gen Regs, CHD, 5.4.3	PCD, PID - 6.4	OSRD - 7.1	FLEX - 7.2	ALF - 7.3	WRPOD - 8.1	SRMOD - 8.4	MCOD - 8.5	MajProj - 9.3A	Dim. Regs. - App. C
Permanently protect open space		*	X	X			X			
Maximize contiguous open space							X			
Limit impervious surface		*			X	X				X
Plan site around natural features		*	X	X	*		X		*	
Preservation of existing ground cover				*	X		*	X	*	
Landscape with native plantings	X								*	
Identify and preserve historic features				*	*		*	X	*	
Preserve large tracts of open space			X	X						
Increase residential density			X	X						
Limit uses based on environmental threat						X				
Maximize storm water recharge										
Post-construction impact monitoring										
LEED residential/commercial certification										
Steep slopes (15%) exclusion & buffers										
		* = Expressed as an interest								
Italics: for consideration as additional resource protection measures		X = specified in one or more bylaws or regulations								

Source: Westford Zoning Bylaw and BSC Group, Westford Comprehensive Plan Committee.

Key:

Gen Regs, CHD, 5.4.3 General Regulations, Landscape requirements, Commercial Highway District;

PCD, PID - 6.4. Planned Commercial/Industrial Developments;

OSRD - 7.1 Open Space Residential Development;

FLEX - 7.2 Flexible Zoning Bylaw;

ALF - 7.3 Assisted Living Facilities;

WRPOD - 8.1 Water Resource Protection Overlay District;

SRMOD - 8.4 Senior Residential Multifamily Overlay District;

MCOD - 8.5 Mill Conversion Overlay District; MajProj - 9.3A

Special permit performance standards for major commercial projects and major retail projects.

Dimensional Regulations - Appendix C. Table of Dimensional and Density Regulations.

environmentally sensitive land. Since Westford adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and approved a three percent surcharge on property tax bills, the town also has committed CPA funds to open space each year.

LOCAL CAPACITY

Westford has several organizations working to preserve natural resources and open space. Its town departments and conservation organizations work closely together to ensure that Westford’s significant open space and invaluable natural resources are protected for future generations:

- ◆ The Westford Conservation Commission administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and local wetlands bylaw. The Commission also acquires and holds property on behalf of the town in order to protect land and water resources. The Commission has one staff person, a Conservation/Resource Planner, who administers and enforces the Commission’s permitting decisions and oversees the conservation land inventory.
- ◆ In turn, the Planning Board is responsible for implementing the OSRD and Flexible Develop-

ment bylaws and working with developers to ensure that important conservation land is protected during the development process.

- ◆ The Westford Water Department manages the town's water supply, storage, and distribution system. It also provides public education about organic lawn care and water conservation.
- ◆ The Westford Conservation Trust (WCT) was founded in 1984 and currently owns seventeen parcels of land with a total of 117± acres. All but one of these properties provides public access, and most have trails. The WCT also holds conservation restrictions and trail easements, promotes Westford's trail systems, coordinates regional trail efforts with other communities, works with the Conservation Commission to recruit volunteers for the Land and Trails Stewardship Program, and maps the town's trails, open space, and vernal pools.
- ◆ The Westford Land Preservation Foundation, Inc. (WLPF) is a non-profit organization founded in 2001 to preserve land in Westford. It works with local land owners in an effort to determine appropriate ways to preserve their land, and holds the conservation restriction on the EBC land.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Protection of natural resources is a regional issue. The decisions and actions taken in one community can have lasting impacts on the natural environment of an adjacent community. To facilitate the preservation of important natural resources such as water quality and quantity, wildlife habitats, and open spaces, Westford should expand its efforts to work with regional communities and organizations to identify common goals. For example, the town could hold an annual forum with neighboring towns to discuss common natural resource/habitat/open space protection efforts, and to facilitate cooperation and joint action. The town also should continue existing coordination efforts with the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) and SuAsCo communities. Existing local educational

initiatives such as Healthy Lawn/Healthy Families and Stream Team projects should be continued and additional efforts should be undertaken to educate residents on their responsibilities for protecting the environment.

While Westford has successfully preserved a significant amount of open space, there are still large tracts of undeveloped land that remain unprotected. Current economic conditions can make it difficult for towns to complete outright purchases of land. Limited municipal finances, together with rising real estate values, make it imperative that alternative methods for land conservation be pursued. Bylaws could be strengthened to include incentives and/or requirements that developers contribute to open space goals such as pedestrian/bikeway infrastructure and identify and conserve unique natural features on specific sites. Development of new initiatives such as a transfer of development rights by-law can also be pursued to facilitate the protection of significant land parcels.

Prioritizing the town's open space goals is a first step in ultimate resource protection. Efforts should be made to identify possible trail systems, identify missing links in existing greenway corridors, and review current Chapter 61 parcels to determine appropriate conservation planning initiatives. For example, reviewing existing town-owned parcels for suitability as neighborhood parks is one means by which the town could supply needed green space in areas with limited open land.

Accommodating 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.

COMPREHENSIVE 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 the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (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.
- ◆ 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 DEP’s 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, promote safety and public health 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 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 bylaw, with designated sending and receiving zones.
- ◆ Research and update the Open Space and Residential Development 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 and records 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.



Historic workers' housing, Orchard Street, Forge Village.

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. Town records dating from the town's formation in 1729 document Westford's history and provide valuable resource material for local historians and genealogists. 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 and cemeteries, and scenic roads. 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.

Wherever one travels in Westford, the town's deep appreciation for its historic assets is very obvious. Exquisitely preserved historic homes are located throughout town, surrounding the town common, overlooking the mill ponds in Westford's industrial villages, and standing alongside scenic roadways. Impressive masonry mill buildings still stand proudly over their associated villages, and Westford is committed to restoring them as community landmarks. The town also has a successful history of adapting its historic buildings when they became obsolete for their original uses. Most impressive is the fact that many public buildings continue to serve the community. These success stories should inspire the town as it tackles perhaps one of its most difficult challenges: the future of its historic town hall.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Villages

Westford developed as a series of individual villages surrounded by large amounts of undeveloped land. The building fabric of each village is unique. Westford's villages evolved in association with different aspects of the town's history: mill construction along a water source; seasonal recreation on the lakes and ponds; transportation patterns; and agricultural development. Today, the villages are not as clearly defined as they once were because much of the surrounding land has been subdivided. However, they still contribute significantly to Westford's visual identity. Westford has six historic villages and all but one (Nabnasset) are listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The National Register villages are identified with street signage at their entrances.¹

- ◆ **Brookside Village** is Westford's smallest mill village. Anchored by the Brookside Mill overlooking the Stony Brook River, this village has mill workers' housing along Brookside and Moore Roads and Coolidge Avenue, including a series of almost identical Queen Style style homes lining Brookside Road. Portions of the original mill building have been restored and additions constructed for residential units. The mill's granite dam and adjoining granite arched bridge are also preserved intact and contribute to the village's rural industrial character.
- ◆ **Forge Village** is the largest and best preserved of Westford's factory villages, with the Abbot Worsted Company Mill and Abbot Mill tower dominating its landscape. Located along the northern edge of Forge Pond, the mill harnessed its power from the Stony Brook, which continues to run through the village. Initially developed during the Colonial period (ca. 1730) around a grist mill, this village evolved with subsequent industrial endeavors, including an iron forge and worsted mill. Today, the village includes a well-preserved collection of workers'

housing in a variety of styles and types dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and several well-preserved Federal style homes on Pleasant Street. The town has undertaken recent streetscape and infrastructure improvements in the village, including brick walks and granite curbing on Pleasant Street and a new bridge in 2005.

- ◆ **Graniteville** is located just east of Forge Village on the Stony Brook. Initially, this village developed around machinery manufacturing, then granite quarrying and later, wool production. Graniteville is not as large or as densely developed as Forge Village. Graniteville is not as large or as densely developed as Forge Village. At the center of the village is the C.G. Sargent Machine Shop (1877). The village also includes small-scale commercial buildings, a church, and a school. Residential buildings, most dating from the mid-nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century, include one- and two-family mill workers' housing as well as several larger, architecturally significant homes on spacious lots on the west side of North Main Street, built for mill managers and owners. The remains of a foundry are also located in Graniteville.
- ◆ **Nabnasset**, also known historically as Schlusemeyer land, is a densely settled summer cottage community around Nabnasset Lake. The neighborhood was initially conceived as a marketing promotion when a grocery store gave away deeds to small parcels of land (20' x 25') in coffee cans.² The homes in the village are characterized by their modest scale and appearance, primarily single-story cottages and bungalows with minimal architectural embellishment. Today, most of these homes have been renovated for year-round use. Many have been enlarged with additions and alterations, and several were demolished to make way for larger homes. While the small scale of Nabnasset's historic structures limit contemporary living standards, continued altering of these homes will eventually change

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all historical information presented here is based on the National Register Nominations completed for each village.

² Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, *Westford Reconnaissance Report: Freedom's Way Heritage Landscape Inventory* (2006), 20.



Historic Graniteville.

the historic character of the entire neighborhood.

- ◆ **Parker Village** in the southern section of town is a remnant of Westford's agricultural past. This village developed as both a wayside station along the roadway from Vermont to Boston and as a center for agricultural settlement. The village is defined by its linear development along Concord Road and its expansive fields, stone walls, and scenic views, the restored Parkerville Schoolhouse and a well-preserved collection of historic farmhouses and agricultural outbuildings.
- ◆ **Westford Center** is located at the geographic center of Westford at the juncture of Boston Road and Main Street. It serves as the primary civic and cultural center of town. Westford Town Hall, the J. V. Fletcher Library and the Fire Station are located here around a landscaped green, along with three renovated historic buildings: the Roudenbush Community Center, the Westford Museum, and the Parish Center for the Arts. The village contains an exception-

ally well-preserved collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century houses, many with associated outbuildings such as carriage houses and barns. In the heart of the village lies the Common, a large triangular green established in 1723 and redesigned in 1919 by landscape architect Bremer Pond.

Historic Buildings

Westford has an impressive and well-preserved collection of historic buildings throughout the town. They represent more than three centuries of development, from Westford's initial European settlement in the seventeenth century through its industrial development in the nineteenth century and its twentieth-century evolution into suburb. It is important to remember that Westford's historic buildings include not only historic homes, but also mill buildings, institutional and religious structures, and outbuildings such as barns and carriage houses. These buildings define Westford's built environment today and provide a visual link to its past. Previous historic resource inventory efforts have concentrated primarily on documenting the town's historic residential, industrial and institutional buildings

within the villages of Brookside, Graniteville, Forge Village, Parker Village and Westford Center. Most of Westford's historic buildings are privately owned, but several are in public and non-profit ownership. For the most part, historic buildings owned by the town are located within the National Register Districts.

Westford's architectural collection includes many of the popular styles of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the Federal and Greek Revival styles popular during the early eighteenth century, the Second Empire and Italianate styles fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century; the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles popular during the late nineteenth century; and the Colonial Revival style of the early twentieth century. These styles were applied not only to historic homes, but also to mill buildings and religious, educational and civic structures. Today, many of these buildings are well-preserved, exhibiting the hallmark details that characterize their respective styles – from the austere and symmetrical design of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century to the exuberant architectural trim of the late-nineteenth century Victorian era. These historic buildings contribute significantly to Westford's visual character and provide visual documentation of its pattern of growth over time.

RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Westford's oldest residences are geographically dispersed throughout the town and convey its agrarian past. Many Federal and Greek Revival style homes still retain typical characteristics of early farm houses, with large barns and associated agricultural land. Westford's later residences were designed in the architectural styles of the mid- and late -1800s, such as the Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Shingle Style and Colonial and English Revival styles. Examples of these styles can be seen in all of Westford's residential neighborhoods and have been applied to single-family homes as well as multi-family workers' housing near the mills. Each village exhibits a unique scale of housing. For example, residences in Westford Center include several high-style examples of Federal (1780-1810), late Italianate (1870s), Queen Anne/Tudor (ca. 1890-1905), and Colonial Revival (ca. 1900-1910) buildings as well as simpler examples at the village's pe-

riphery. Nabnasset homes include small bungalows and some rustic seasonal cabins, while farm houses with adjoining barns and outbuildings define the landscape in Parker Village.

Clusters of workers' housing contribute to the character of Westford's mill villages, Brookside, Forge Village and Graniteville. Workers' housing was constructed by mill owners within walking distance to the mills, and included single- and multi-family structures. These homes were typically defined by their small scale and dense lots, and similar homes were often repeated on a single street. Westford's earliest examples of this type of housing (1870s-1880s) are located in Graniteville and Forge Village and include several building types and styles, primarily with side hall plans and central chimneys as well as a small number of Italianate style row-houses and double houses. Later examples (1890s-1910) include a smaller number of side-hall houses with simple Queen Anne style details. Colonial Revival style double houses and some four-family row houses (ca. 1915-25) are located in both Graniteville and Forge Village. Today, one of the most striking attributes of Westford's workers' housing is the repetition of housing forms and styles on single streets within the mill villages.

INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

Westford's mill villages are defined by their respective mills, each different in form, style and materials. While these buildings no longer serve their original manufacturing uses, they remain important visual landmarks. Future restoration and reuse of the mills in Forge Village and Graniteville would help significantly to revitalize these villages.

- ◆ **Brookside Mill** at 8 Brookside Road is a small granite and brick mill complex directly adjacent to Stony Brook. The mill was renovated into housing units in the 1990s, including its original granite section (ca.1862) and later brick sections (1895). Today, the mill has a distinctly residential appearance although the elevation facing Brookside Road has been preserved relatively intact. To date, this is the only mill in Westford that has been renovated. Other historic features of this complex include the mill pond, granite dam and granite single arch bridge.

- ◆ **Abbot Mill Complex** in Forge Village is a brick mill complex with two and three-story brick buildings constructed in 1887 and enlarged in 1910. The Town approved a redevelopment and rehabilitation development plan in 2005 with selective demolition and interior renovation. The owner has begun preliminary work on the site for hazardous waste removal.
- ◆ **Abbot Worsted Yarn Company Mill and C. G. Sargent Machine Shop Complex** in Graniteville is an expansive, two-story Italianate style granite mill complex built during the mid-nineteenth century. The most distinctive building in the complex, Granite Mill #1 on Broadway, was constructed along the Stony Brook in 1877. This portion of the mill is partially occupied with a variety of tenants while other sections remain vacant. The entire complex has been on the market for several years.



Westford Center historic buildings, clockwise from left: Parish Center for the Arts, Westford Town Hall, and J. V. Fletcher Library.

CIVIC BUILDINGS

Most of Westford’s historically significant civic buildings are located in Westford Center.³ These well-preserved buildings include:

- ◆ **Westford Town Hall**, constructed in 1870 in the Second Empire style. This two and one-half story building has an impressive façade with a pedimented front gable intersected by a three-story tower. The building’s original Second Empire tower was destroyed in the 1938 hurricane and a Colonial Revival tower was added at that time. While an addition was added to the building at the rear, the main historic building has been well-maintained, with minimal alterations. Recently Westford Town Hall was deemed structurally unstable by the building inspector, who revoked the certificate of occupancy and ordered the building to be vacated. The future of Town Hall remains unclear as the town con-

tinues to evaluate restoration costs. The building is located within the Westford Center National Register District.

- ◆ The **J. V. Fletcher Library** was built in 1895-96 in the Romanesque Revival style, with later additions and renovations in 1963, 1969 and 1987. The brick building is defined by its distinctive terra cotta and granite arched entrance, decorative copper and stone cornice trim and slate hipped roof. Two identical additions were added to each side of the building, replicating its original brick exterior. The library trustees recently completed restoration work on the main entrance, and they expect to apply for a state library construction grant to expand the building when a new funding round becomes available. Also located with the Westford Center National Register District, the library and is the only building in the district built completely of brick.

³ Information from *National Register Report, Westford Center Historic District, 1998.*

Other municipally owned properties with historic significance include:

- ◆ The **Old Town Farm**, 35 Town Farm Road. The town poor farm was established in 1824 when Westford purchased the farm of John Read. A two-story, late Federal style brick Poor House was built on the land in 1837 and a new barn was built in 1858.⁴ The building was recently improved, and the Westford Parks and Recreation Department occupies it for offices and community space. Westford has approved Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to replace the building's roof. The property was listed on the National Register in 2008.
- ◆ **East Boston Camps (EBC)**. In 1937, Isabel and Sarah Hyams founded a "Fresh Air Camp" on land between Stony Brook and Keyes Brook for East Boston area children to escape tuberculosis. Two sawmills were set up on the land and cabins were constructed with lumber from the site. The town purchased the 286-acre property in 2005 and allowed the East Boston Social Centers, Inc. to continue to run camp programs there through 2007.⁵ Westford town has completed a master plan for the EBC property and is currently trying to determine who will run programs at the site in the future. While natural resource protection is a primary concern, the EBC has historically significant camp structures on the property, including a series of one-story hipped roof camp cottages with distinctive horizontal siding. The master plan recommended retaining these buildings.⁶



Roundebush Community Center.

SCHOOLS

During the 1700s and 1800s, schoolhouses were built to serve each district of Westford. By about 1870, the town had ten district schoolhouses. Today, nine of the original schoolhouses remain, but most have been renovated into private homes. One of the historic schoolhouses, the 1880 Parkerville Schoolhouse, is now a museum. In 2003, the District #4 Schoolhouse, Nashoba, was demolished for construction of a new house.⁷

Several larger schools were built in Westford's villages, including Queen Anne style schools in Graniteville (Sargent School, 1884), Westford Center (Frost School, 1908), and Forge Village, (Cameron School, 1872, remodeled in 1908 in the Colonial Revival style). All of these buildings have been renovated and today, they support different uses. For example, the Cameron School at 20 Pleasant Street serves as the Cameron Senior Center and headquarters of the Council on Aging while the Frost School at 73 Main Street is occupied by the Roundebush Community Center, Inc. The town still owns the Frost School and the non-profit organization maintains it. The Community Center has demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving the three historic buildings it uses for community programs, including the Frost School, the second Westford Academy Building at 65 Main Street (see below) and the Old

⁴ Town of Westford Cultural Resource Inventory.

⁵ *Town of Westford East Boston Camps Master Plan*, 2007

⁶ The Master Plan does, however, mention several other buildings to be demolished. It is unclear whether these buildings have historic significance and whether they would be reviewed under the demolition delay ordinance.

⁷ "Our Community Today," *Westford Historic Preservation Plan* (Draft), February 16, 2007.

Nab (1922) in Nabnasset Village. During the 1990s, the organization spent more than \$850,000 on repairing, improving and maintaining these facilities.⁸

Although Westford Academy is the town's public high school today, it was incorporated as a private school in 1792 and constructed two important buildings in Westford Center. In 1793, Westford Academy constructed a two-story, late Georgian style school to the west of the Common and remained there until 1897, when the Academy moved into a new, larger school at 65 Main Street. In 1910, the original building was moved to its present location on Boston Road and converted to a fire station. The town used it for this purpose until the present Central Fire Station was completed in 1974. Today, the Westford Historical Society operates Westford Museum in the first Westford Academy building.⁹ The second school at 65 Main Street, built in the late Victorian Richardsonian Romanesque style, is one of Westford's most elaborately embellished buildings, now occupied by the Roudenbush Community Center.



Westford Museum.

MUSEUMS

Westford has two operating museums:

- ◆ In 1983, the Westford Historical Society opened **Westford Museum** in the former 1793 Westford Academy Building. The building is owned by the town and maintained by the Historical Society, which houses its collection of historic Westford artifacts here. The Museum includes an adjacent house with staff office and research materials, but the historic Westford Academy building serves as the primary museum, with both permanent and revolving display space. The Society also hosts lectures, music programs and public events in this facility.
- ◆ The **Parkerville Schoolhouse** (1880) at the corner of Concord and Carlisle Roads in Parker Village opened as a living history museum in the early 1990s. Although the town retains ownership of this one-room schoolhouse as well, the building is managed and maintained by a non-profit organization, Friends of the Parkerville School. The first Parkerville School was constructed in 1874, but it was destroyed by a fire in 1880. Later that year, the town rebuilt the schoolhouse and operated a school in it until 1929. Thereafter, the schoolhouse was used as a social club until 1989, when inquiries were made to renovate the building into a residence. At that point, the Friends formed to restore the building and maintain the schoolhouse as a living history museum for local schoolchildren as well as a local event venue. The Friends have undertaken system and access improvements

⁸ Retrieved from Roudenbush Community Center, <www.roudenbush.org>.

⁹ Westford Historical Society, *Westford Museum & Historical Society* (pamphlet).

to the building and have completed site maintenance and landscape improvements.¹⁰

CHURCHES

Westford is home to several historically significant churches that still serve their ecclesiastical purpose.¹¹ These churches are generally well preserved and have been surveyed as part of the town's cultural resource inventory. Each parish has an extensive website with historical information.

- ◆ The **First Parish Church** (1794, renovated in 1868) is located at 48 Main Street in Westford Center. This Georgian style wood-frame structure with its distinctive three-story tower is well-preserved and contributes significantly to the overall New England village appeal of Westford Center. An adjacent parish hall was constructed in 1996 that detracts somewhat from the historic church building, but the First Parish remains one of Westford's most historically significant architectural resources.¹²
- ◆ **Saint Catherine's Roman Catholic Church** (1934) and Rectory (1927) is located on 107 North Main Street between Graniteville and Forge Village. This modest brick church with its steeply pitched roof and extensive landscaped grounds continues to serve both villages.
- ◆ The **Westford Methodist Church** (1871) at 10 Church Street in Graniteville was constructed on land donated by Charles G. Sargent, who founded the Sargent Machine Shop and co-founded the Abbot Worsted Company. According to the parish's website, it recently undertook a capital improvements campaign (2000) to renovate and enlarge the church. The website also includes a brochure for prospective tenants to lease an unused portion of the building.

Another historically significant church building has been adapted from its original religious use into a civic purpose. The historic Congregational Church (1829; remodeled 1896) at 10 Lincoln Street in Westford Center is a two-story, wood-frame building renovated in the Late Victorian style.¹³ After the church was deconsecrated in the mid-twentieth century, it became a parish hall for the First Parish Church on Main Street. When the First Parish Church constructed a new parish hall (see above), the Congregational Church building was left vacant. In 1998, the Westford Historical Society purchased the church building and restored its Victorian details. It is now occupied by the **Parish Center for the Arts**, a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of cultural arts.¹⁴

Historic Farms

Agriculture played a pivotal role in Westford's early economy and remained important through World War II. Dairy farming was the predominant agricultural pursuit, although local orchards producing apples and peaches also prospered in Westford. The loss of active farming and the development of agricultural land were cited as the most important landscape issues raised by Westford residents during the planning process for the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program in 2006.¹⁵ Today, Westford's remaining farms provide some of the town's most magnificent scenic vistas and contribute to its visual character. The historic farm houses and outbuildings provide a tangible link to the past, even where the agricultural land has been lost. At least one farm has been placed under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), but while this designation protects the agricultural landscape, it does not provide permanent protection for the farm structures. Many of the town's residential farm buildings have been preserved through private efforts, but there are no

¹⁰ Retrieved from *Westford Web*, <<http://www.westford.com/parkerville/about>>.

¹¹ Historic information gathered from the town's historic inventory data and church websites.

¹² *National Register Report, Westford Center Historic District*, 1998.

¹³ This building is also known as the First Parish Church, as it once served as the parish hall for the First Parish Church between the 1950's until 1996.

¹⁴ Retrieved from *Westford Web*, <<http://www.westford.com/museum>>, <<http://www.westford.com/pca>>

¹⁵ Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Program, *Westford Reconnaissance Report*, June 2006.

permanent restrictions in place to ensure their future preservation.

As Westford continues its suburban evolution, the physical components of its early farmsteads will remain threatened by new development. The loss of agricultural outbuildings will permanently alter the landscape and begin to eclipse the visual qualities of “place” that make Westford special. While new development often preserves and reuses agricultural residences during redevelopment, the farm’s outbuildings are often demolished. Still, Westford does have some examples of historic agricultural preservation efforts:

- ◆ **Gould Picking Farm**, the historic Meadow Brook Farm on Groton Road, was saved from development through the cooperative efforts of private individuals and the town. Most of the farm’s historic structures remain with only minor modifications. The town owns portions of the farmland, and an APR protects the privately owned land from future development. There are no preservation restrictions recorded for the historic buildings, however. The views of this property from Groton Road, with its rolling fields and open pasture, provide some of Westford’s most spectacular vistas and a visual respite from the contemporary development that has occurred elsewhere in the same area.
- ◆ **Hill Orchard** is one of the last working orchards in Westford. The town purchased the 22-acre orchard on the corner of Hunt and Chamberlain Roads in 1999 and contracts with a private individual to operate the orchard and farm stand, thereby ensuring that Westford’s orchard legacy will be preserved. This property also includes the remnants of a roadway that once led to Schoolhouse #2 on Stony Brook Road and beyond to Groton.
- ◎ Two early farmstead homes on Concord Road in Parker Village, the **Henry Fletcher House** (1810) and Barn at 224 Concord Road and the **John Proctor House** (1730) at 218 Concord Road, are protected with preservation restrictions under M.G.L. c. 184, ss. 31-33. A preserva-

tion restriction runs with the deed and is one of the strongest preservation strategies available. All properties with preservation restrictions filed under state law are automatically listed in the State Register. These two properties are also individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

OUTBUILDINGS

Westford’s old barns are local landmarks that serve as a visual reminder of the town’s agrarian past. While most of the historic farmhouses are well-preserved, the same cannot be said for some of its remaining barns. Barns still used for agricultural purposes or adapted for new uses appear to be in relatively sound condition. However, many of the vacant or unused barns show evidence of deterioration. Westford does not have a complete inventory of its historic barns and related agrarian outbuildings. The Historical Commission recently worked with the owner of the Reid Barn to save the structure from demolition. The barn was relocated from 145 Littleton Road to 129 Littleton Road and preserved as part of a local retail business. The Historical Commission has received requests over the past several years from local property owners seeking financial assistance to preserve their historic barns.

Westford also has many mid- to late-nineteenth century residential and industrial-related barns or carriage houses. Many are attached to houses, as was a common building practice throughout New England during the nineteenth century. Well-preserved examples of these outbuildings can be seen adjoining some of the houses in Westford Center. Other outbuildings include agriculturally-related structures. The Westford Historical Commission has documented the historic significance of the stone grain silo at 47 Acton Road, which is believed to date to the early twentieth century.

Scenic Roads, Cart Paths and Stone Walls

Westford’s historic transportation route patterns still exist and they provide one of the most influential elements of its rural form. Most of these early roads maintain their rural character, with narrow pave-

ment, winding routes, and adjoining mature trees and vegetation. They also provide views to scenic rural vistas and open fields. Stone walls line many of these rural roads and delineate the boundaries of former farm fields. Recognizing the importance and vulnerability of its historic roadways, Westford adopted the provisions of M.G.L. c. 40, s.15C, the Scenic Roads Act, and approved a Scenic Roads Bylaw in 1975. Initially, the town designated four roads under this bylaw. Since then, town meeting has designated an additional six roads as scenic roads. The Westford Historical Commission has placed signs at the entrances to each scenic roadway.

Westford also has a number of remnants of early roadways that have since been abandoned. For example, a cart path near Boutwell Brook, bounded by two stone walls, is used now as a trail. A path near Cider Mill Pond, defined by double stone walls, is a remnant of the former main road to Chelmsford, discontinued in 1866 and now protected by an easement. Part of the path is owned by the town, although the center portion is privately owned.¹⁶ The cart path between Graniteville Road and Forge Village Road is protected as part of the Tom Paul Trail and also bordered by two stone walls.

Stone walls supply physical evidence of a town's agrarian heritage. They delineate the historic development pattern of land ownership and agricultural use. In Westford, stone walls can be found throughout the town along and within now-forested land, along its scenic roadways and bordering the perimeter of its remaining farmland and open space. Deferred maintenance and natural erosion have caused many of these dry-laid stone walls to deteriorate. Westford does not have an inventory of its stone walls, but some notable examples include the walls along Hildreth Street, a designated scenic road. Zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations often provide little protection for stone walls during development. However, Westford's Scenic Roads Bylaw provides some degree of protection for stone walls and significant trees within the public right-of-way of designated roads.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Historic Structures

Westford was once home to a network of rail services, including the Stony Brook Railroad from Lowell to Ayer and the Nashua, Acton & Boston Railroad. By the 1930s, the town's streetcar and railway lines were all but abandoned in response to the automobile. While only one of the original train depots still stands, the legacy of the railways remains in Westford's historic railroad bridges and rail path remnants. Westford has several historically significant bridges and they are remarkably well-preserved. While many of the Commonwealth's historic bridges have been replaced by modern structures, Westford's transportation routes still have the bridge scale and massing characteristics of rural areas. Many of the town's historic bridges were constructed from local granite and display significant engineering expertise. Only one is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Stony Brook Road Bridge is located on one of Westford's designated scenic roads. This double arched bridge adjacent to the Brookside Mill is constructed of granite blocks and located within the Brookside National Register District. Other stone arch bridges include one on Nutting Road, constructed over the trolley line near East Boston Camps. A stone lintel bridge off Rome Drive is part of a trail through protected conservation land. Westford's most significant granite bridge is the Old Arch Bridge on the former Red Line, an abandoned railroad right-of-way converted to a trail. The Old Arch Bridge is listed by the U. S. Department of the Interior as one of the most important engineering landmarks in the Merrimack Valley. Built in 1872 as part of the Nashua, Acton & Boston Railroad, this granite block bridge was built without mortar in a single arch spanning 60 feet. The bridge is managed by the Westford Conservation Commission. In the late 1970s, aesthetic improvements and erosion control measures were taken to protect the bridge and the adjoining public trail and conservation land.

Historic Objects

The Roudenbush Map of Westford identifies a number of historic objects and markers. These objects include markers at the original site of the Abbot Worsted Company on North Main Street and the



Stony Brook Bridge.

Colonel John Robinson homestead site on Robinson Road. War Memorials are located on Westford Common and North Main Street in Forge Village. Perhaps the most intriguing object is the Westford Knight on Depot Street. This stone is believed to be a grave marker for one of the first Europeans to reach Westford as part of an expedition led by Prince Henry Sinclair, of Scotland. The voyage would have reached the New World in 1399 A.D. The carvings can be seen as a picture of a knight, complete with sword.¹⁷ Another object believed to date to Sinclair's journey is the Boat Stone, which is now stored in the J.V. Fletcher Library. This oval shaped stone has an image of a fourteenth century sailing ship carved into its surface.

Burial Grounds and Cemeteries

Westford has eight cemeteries, five of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁸ Six of the cemeteries are maintained by the town, including:

- ◆ **Fairview Cemetery** (est. 1702) on Main Street and Tadmuck Road;

¹⁷ Retrieved from *Westford Web*, <<http://www.westford.com/museum/knight>>

¹⁸ Roudenbush Map of Westford.

- ◆ **Hillside Cemetery** (est. 1753 as a family cemetery) on Depot Street, also known as North Burying Ground;
- ◆ **Pioneer Cemetery** (est. 1750) on Carlisle Road, also known as Old Pioneer Burial Ground, where the last indigenous Native American from Westford is reportedly buried;
- ◆ **Pine Grove Cemetery** on Forge Village Road;
- ◆ **Westlawn Cemetery** (est. 1760) on Concord Road, also known as West Burying Ground; and
- ◆ **Wright Cemetery** (est. 1819) on Groton Road, the original family plot for the Wright family and descendants, continues to be owned by the family but the Town maintains the grounds.

The Westford Parks and Grounds Department oversees maintenance of these cemeteries. In 2005, the department received CPA funds to restore slate grave markers in the Fairview and Westlawn Cemeteries. The work included installing new footings for approximately 20 stones.

Westford also has two privately owned and maintained cemeteries: **Russian Cemetery** (est. 1918) on Patten Road, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and **St. Catherine's Cemetery** on Pine Ridge Road. Westford's cemeteries are generally well-preserved with impressive early gravestone carvings.

In 1907, a local resident copied epitaphs from many of Westford's cemeteries and compiled them in *Epitaphs from Grave Yard Records, Westford, Massachusetts*. A local student also compiled a list of names and dates from the Westlawn Cemetery/West Burial Ground (1968). Recently, these cemetery data sources were consolidated and a local resident re-inventoried Westlawn Cemetery, identifying each stone's location, additional personal information, condition of stone, and stone carver's name when known. The inventory includes all of the cemetery's gravestones, even more recent markers.¹⁹

Quarries

Quarrying began in Westford at Graniteville in 1826, although granite had been taken previously from the large surface boulders scattered over the northern part of the town. By 1900, granite had become an important part of Westford's industrial base. Today, the former quarries are scattered throughout Westford's hills and are largely unprotected. Most are small, inactive and inaccessible, but they are significant for their artifacts, which reflect the historic development of the quarry. Many of the smaller quarry ponds now provide important vernal pool habitats. Some of the most significant quarries sit atop and around Snake Meadow Hill and several are included within the Graniteville National Register Historic District. Remnants from one quarry were integrated into the design of the Villages at Stone Ridge residential development. Future preservation of the town's quarries is complicated. In the *Westford Reconnaissance Report: Freedom's Way Heritage Landscape Inventory* (2006), the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) identified the quarries as a critical concern for the need to preserve their historical legacy while addressing public safety concerns.

¹⁹ *Westford Museum Musings*, "List of Those Buried in the West Burial Ground," (Fall 2006).

Archaeological Resources

Westford has one documented ancient Native American site of unknown date and three documented historic archaeological sites. According to DCR, this level of documentation is extremely low and Westford probably has far more archaeology potential.²⁰ Westford has not completed a town-wide archaeological survey, nor has it included archaeological sites within its existing historic resources inventory. The Westford Historical Commission recognizes that significant sites could exist within the town and recently received CPA funds for a comprehensive archaeological survey.

In the past, a number of archaeological reconnaissance surveys have been completed in various locations in response to development proposals, including Summer Village on Long Sought For Pond. Any significant archaeological sites identified in Westford will be included in the MHC Inventory of Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. This confidential inventory contains sensitive information and is not a public record under state law. All archaeological site information should be kept in a secure location with restricted access such as a new Town Archives Center.

Heritage Landscapes

Westford is a tapestry of both natural and heritage landscapes that contribute to its scenic quality. The town's natural landscapes are important not only for their environmental significance, but also as a context and setting for most of Westford's historic built assets. Westford's heritage landscapes, which were created by human interaction with the land, include the industrial landscapes of Westford's mill villages and their associated mill ponds and dams. The town's historic railroad lines also contribute to some of its most impressive landscapes, including the remnants of the Boston and Maine Railroad and the Red Line. In addition, the Westford Town Common represents the quintessential rural town green. These heritage landscapes are highlighted in DCR's *Westford Reconnaissance Report*. Westford's heritage landscapes should be documented as a

²⁰ *Westford Reconnaissance Report* (2006), 9.

component of the town's comprehensive cultural resource inventory.

PRESERVATION PLANNING IN WESTFORD

Local Preservation Capacity

Westford has several municipal and private non-profit organizations engaged in the preservation and advocacy of historic and cultural resources. Several groups work town-wide while others focus on specific properties. Town boards such as the Planning Board and Conservation Commission have worked collaboratively to preserve Westford's rural character. Westford's three most active preservation organizations, the Westford Historical Commission, the Westford Historical Society, and the Records and Archives Management Committee have worked collaboratively to promote historic preservation, although their missions differ somewhat.

The **Westford Historical Commission** is a municipal board chartered with the preservation, protection and development of the historical and archaeological assets of the town. Created by town meeting in 1975, this group is involved in preservation advocacy and planning initiatives, including Westford's demolition delay bylaw, the scenic roads bylaw, historic resource surveys, and National Register of Historic Places nominations. The Historical Commission serves as the budget manager for the use of town funds in support of the Westford Cottage and Westford Museum buildings. The Historical Commission has placed signage at each National Register historic district and on each of the town's scenic roads. The Commission has no staff.

The **Westford Historical Society, Inc.** is a private non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation that operates the Westford Museum with paid part-time staff and an active board and volunteers. The Society owns and maintains a collection of town artifacts that are exhibited in the Museum, including nineteenth century medical supplies, a country store and information about the Westford Knight, Westford's historic mills and Westford's granite industry. In addition, the Society owns a repository of local genealogical records, house and other building histories, and

Westford ephemera and memorabilia, and organizes revolving exhibits, annual events and a monthly lecture series. It recently established the Westford History Research Prize, awarded to a student at the Westford Academy for original research papers on Westford history. The Historical Society owns the Performing Center for the Arts (PCA) building, having raised the funds to purchase it from the First Parish Church United and preserve it as public space.

The **Records & Archives Management Committee** was established in 2002 by the Town Manager and 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 town records, worked toward development of an Archives Center for the town, and obtained CPA funds for multiple projects for the preservation of town records and for making town records more accessible to the public.

Identification of significant historic resources through a cultural resource inventory forms the basis of historic preservation planning at the local level. The Westford Historical Commission conducted a historic resources inventory during the 1990s. This effort resulted in the submission of 753 properties into the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. Original copies of the inventory forms are kept at the Westford Museum and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

Westford's inventory can also be reviewed at MHC's online searchable database, MACRIS. The identified resources date from 1664 to 2000 and they include 587 buildings, 85 objects, 60 structures, 15 areas, and six burial grounds. However, many of the inventory forms do not include secondary features such as out-buildings, stone walls and landscape elements, and the inventory does not include resources throughout the community. The Historical Commission recognizes the limitations of the existing inventory and has begun efforts to undertake additional inventory work with CPA funds. The Records and Archives

**TABLE 4.1
NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS**

Historic Name	Date Listed	No. of 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
Individual Listings		
Fairview Cemetery	January 12, 2005	26 contributing
Henry Fletcher House and Barn, 224 Concord Road	September 30, 1993	6
Hillside Cemetery	December 6, 2005	36 contributing
John Proctor House, 218 Concord Road	February 4, 1993	3
Russian Cemetery	November 25, 2005	20 contributing
Westford Town Farm	March 13, 2008	1
Westlawn Cemetery	January 5, 2005	18 contributing
Wright Cemetery	December 6, 2005	9 contributing

Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Management Committee has focused on the preliminary steps necessary to develop a town Archives Center for the preservation, storage, and controlled access of the town’s numerous permanent records.

National Register of Historic Places

Westford has five National Register Districts and eight properties listed individually on the National Register (Table 4.1). Two of the individual listings (Henry Fletcher House and John Proctor House) were initiated by the property owners, who also placed preservation restrictions on the properties.

Local Efforts to Protect Historic Resources

Guided by recommendations in previous plans, Westford has worked to preserve historic resources by enacting bylaws and funding mechanisms. Westford adopted the CPA in 2001 with a three percent surcharge on local tax bills. Westford’s CPA-funded historic preservation activities have included preserving historic town documents, renovating the exterior of the Roudenbush Community Center, repairing the roof at the Old Town Farm, restoration of the Fletcher Library, and carrying out preservation planning activities such as a town-wide

archaeological survey and a conservation survey of historic bound volumes in the Town Clerks office.

Demolition Delay. In 1997, Westford adopted a demolition delay bylaw that allows the Historical Commission to stay for six months the demolition of structures determined to be both historically significant and preferably preserved. Prior to 1988, Westford lost at least 29 historic properties. While some were destroyed by fire, most were demolished for new development, including train depots, houses and a blacksmith shop at Chamberlain’s Corner. Through the demolition delay bylaw, the Historic Commission has helped to save several historically significant resources, including a granite carved marker at Gould Farm with date, apple and arrow; the United Methodist Church’s original parsonage on Church Street, which was moved to River Street in 2002; and the Reid Barn, 145 Littleton Road, which was moved to 129 Littleton Road in 2003.

A demolition delay bylaw does not guarantee that historic buildings will be saved. Since the bylaw was passed, many structures have ultimately been demolished after the delay period expired, including Schoolhouse No. 4, formerly located at 1 Lane’s End.²¹ Communities throughout state are discov-

²¹ Demolition and demolition delay information detailed in “Our Community Today” *Westford Historic*

ering that a one-year delay is more effective at encouraging rehabilitation options beyond demolition.

Scenic Roads. Westford's Scenic Roads Bylaw requires a review process by the Planning Board for the removal of trees and stone walls within the public right-of-way on designated roads. However, the source of authority for Westford's local bylaw, the Scenic Roads Act, does not protect features outside the right of way, such as stone walls or views across open fields. Only ten roads have been designated as scenic roads since 1995: Hildreth Street, Old Lowell Road, Old Road, Vose Road, Gould Road, Leland Road, Stony Brook Road, Chamberlain Road, Hunt Road, and Frances Hill Road.

Mill Conversion. Westford has a Mill Conversion Overlay District that includes the four historic mill complexes: Abbot Mill in Forge Village, the Abbot Worsted Mill and Sargent Machine Shop in Graniteville, and the Brookside Mill in Brookside Village. The bylaw's purpose is to encourage the preservation, reuse and renovation of historic mills while preserving neighborhood character. The bylaw requires redevelopment proposals to comply with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and directs applicants to consult with the Westford Historical Commission during the planning process. Any expansion of the existing buildings or new construction must be consistent with the historic character, architectural style and scale of the existing mill structures.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Westford values its historic resources. The town has approved several preservation-based bylaws, and



Scenic roadway and stone walls.

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 CPA, Westford chose to provide much-needed funding for resource protection. Moreover, many of the recommendations of 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 available for them. Collaborative efforts between town boards, departments, private property owners and

Preservation Plan DRAFT, 2007. This Plan also includes a detailed list of demolished buildings in Appendix Table 3.

local preservation organizations will be critical in determining the future preservation of these and other historic structures.

National Register Districts are an important preservation tool, but 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 Chapter 40C Local Historic District and designating 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.

Scenic roads are a critical component of Westford's identity. While it is complicated to balance public safety concerns with the protection of scenic roads, allowing these resources to be altered with modern engineering designs would forever change the retained elements of rural Westford. In addition, the existing scenic road bylaw cannot preserve features on private property due to limited authority under the state Scenic Roads Act. A scenic overlay (zoning) district with a no-disturb buffer along designated roads would be more effective, and it would not prevent property owners from using their land.

The Records and Archives Management Committee was established in 2002 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.

COMPREHENSIVE 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, building 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 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 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 its 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 preserva-

tion 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 Historic 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.
- ◆ Continue investigating available state matching grant programs from the MHC as well as local CPA funds.
- ◆ Consider collaborating with one or more neighboring towns to establish regional preservation planning capacity, including the possibility of shared staff.

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.

The centerpiece of a comprehensive plan is the land use plan, which has to balance private property interests with the public's interests in environmental quality, services, facilities, infrastructure, and transportation. The land use plan provides a policy framework for actions to promote the best possible future for a community. In Massachusetts, land use decisions lie almost exclusively with local governments, although some exceptions exist. Under "home rule," municipalities have considerable latitude to regulate development as long as their bylaws, actions and policies do not conflict with the state constitution or state laws that place limits on local authority. However, Massachusetts can be a challenging environment for local governments because the zoning act has never been revised to reflect the principles of home rule. It also has not been brought in line with modern planning practices.



*Clockwise from upper left:
Kimball Farm, Parkerville,
Westford Center, Old Nab Preschool.*

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 a persuasive impact 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.

LAND USE PATTERN

Westford is a fairly large town compared with other communities in the region and throughout the state. Its territorial extent of 31.3 sq. mi. includes 30.6 sq. mi. of land, making Westford the 79th largest town in the state and second largest in the Northern Middlesex area. Westford's water resources and its direct access to major transportation routes have influenced its land use pattern in noteworthy ways, both historically and since the town adopted its first zoning bylaw in 1955.

Westford's land use pattern is that of an evolving suburb. The town has well-preserved urban villages that stand out on any land use map, but the extensive suburban housing development that has occurred here in the past thirty years forms one of the dominant impressions of Westford today. Its affluence, prestigious reputation and zoning requirements have attracted a residential development pattern composed of spacious single-family homes, mainly on large lots. Despite its efforts to encourage alternatives to conventional plans, Westford – like all towns in Massachusetts – is vulnerable to constraints imposed by zoning and subdivision laws that have not been updated in more than three decades. It also is vulnerable to Chapter 40B, the state's affordable housing law. Against the backdrop of weak land use statutes, limitations on home rule and local tensions about growth and change, Westford has been able to rally support for protecting open space and the results can be seen in many parts of town. Although it has all of the land use challenges found in other suburbs, Westford remains a beautiful community.

Measuring Land Use Change

Methods of quantifying a community's land use pattern can produce quite different results. The advent of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology has simplified the procedures for measuring land use change in cities and towns. From time to time, state agencies report land use statistics from aerial flyovers, and for most communities the earliest data represent conditions that existed in 1971. In addition, many communities have developed their own GIS installations and data libraries, such as a collection of assessor's parcel maps. Associating a GIS parcel map with property records maintained by lo-

cal assessors makes it possible to create maps that illustrate a wide variety of facts about a community's land base. Westford is an example of a community with an extensive and well-maintained GIS library.

Land use information reported by the state differs significantly from parcel-based land use statistics. The former represents *land coverage*, or the amount of land covered by natural and man-made features, but the latter represents land use by the uses that determine the appraised value of individual properties. Land coverage boundaries respond to the location and extent of *features*, but land uses reported in an assessor's database follow *parcel boundaries*. One is a measure of *physical* attributes; the other, *legal* attributes. Since land coverage maps account for a community's entire geographic area, they include features such as open water and roadways; in contrast, assessor's parcel maps represent land in recorded plans. Finally, land coverage profiles from the state are available only for a limited number of years; in contrast, parcel-based statistics usually reflect current conditions, but they are a less useful source of information for tracing historic changes in land use. Fundamental differences between the two types of GIS land use data available today make them difficult to compare. Although the differences are less pronounced in cities and maturely developed suburbs, they are very obvious in Westford. Still, both sources of land use data tell a consistent story about the profound changes that have occurred in Westford since the early 1970s.

LAND COVERAGE

The most recent land coverage statistics from the state are based on aerial flyovers in 1999, when the housing market was robust and new business growth could be seen in many parts of Eastern Massachusetts for the first time since the recession (1990-91). At the time, forests covered slightly less than half of Westford while three percent of the town's total area was devoted to agriculture. Residential uses – defined here as housing units and the local roadways serving them – occupied about thirty-one percent of the town, and large single-family house lots accounted for sixty-seven percent of all residential development.

TABLE 5.1
LAND USE CHANGE IN WESTFORD, 1971-2007

Land Use	Acres in Use				Percent Change			% town 2007
	1971	1985	1999	2007	1971-1991	1985-1999	1999-2007	
Commercial	71.2	137.9	180.7	217.3	94%	31%	20.3%	1.1%
Industrial	477.6	572.8	996.5	992.0	20%	74%	-0.5%	4.9%
Residential	2,504.6	3,642.9	6,215.5	6,562.7	45%	71%	5.6%	32.7%
Other	17,013.7	15,713.5	12,674.4	12,295.1	-8%	-19%	-3.0%	61.3%
<i>Summary</i>								
Developed	3,052.4	4,353.7	7,455.4	8,114.3	43%	71%	8.8%	40.4%
Undeveloped	17,013.7	15,713.5	12,611.7	11,952.8	-8%	-20%	-5.2%	59.6%
Total	20,067.1	20,067.1	20,067.1	20,067.1	NA	NA	NA	NA

Sources: For 1971, 1985 and 1999 data, UMass-Amherst, MacConnell Land Use Maps, MassGIS; for 2007, Westford GIS, aerial photogrammetry analysis. Data supplied courtesy of NMCOG.

Table 5.1 shows the degree to which Westford’s land use pattern has changed since 1971, including data from the state through 1999 and from the town’s GIS department through 2007. However, the data represent broad classifications of land use and they do not reveal fundamental transformations that occurred as Westford continued to grow. For example, from 1971-1999, nearly 2,900 acres of forest and more than 1,000 acres of agricultural land changed to another use, mainly housing. Well over half of all residential land use changes occurred between 1985 and 1999, a period that included two cycles of intense housing growth: one prior to the recession and the other after 1994. Some small-lot housing development occurred in Westford in the form of townhouses and single-family homes in cluster developments, but most the conspicuous land use change has involved the conversion of agricultural land to large-lot single-family homes. Considering all residential use types, more than 4,100 acres were converted to housing between 1971 and 2007.

Residential land use change is not the only indicator of Westford’s late-twentieth century transformation from a semi-rural town to a suburb. In the same era, land used for commercial purposes increased by 154 percent and for industrial purposes, nearly 110 percent – *excluding* land devoted to power easements, transmission lines and so forth -- while traditional economic activities such as farming and quarrying declined. As the town gained households, it also experienced growth in demand for schools, playing fields and public services. Westford experienced these changes in the form of an increase in recreation land and institutional or urban open space. In addition

to building two new schools and renovating or expanding three existing schools between 1971 and 1999, Westford also constructed a new fire station and two pumping stations for new water supplies. The Nashoba Valley Vocational-Technical School was built in this period, too. Viewed in their entirety, the areas devoted to residential, commercial and industrial uses in 1999 represented a 28-year increase of about 3,800 acres.

LAND USE CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTING PARCELS

Nowhere in Westford is the difference between land coverage and parcel-based land use statistics more obvious than the town’s inventory of residentially developed land. Table 6.2 shows that as of Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, residential uses occupy about 7,400 acres of land *in parcels*. Differences between the data in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 have less to do with the amount of new growth in Westford than with the characteristics of Westford’s residential land use pattern. For example, the town has several single-family residences on large parcels that may have some additional development potential. It also has a number of condominium or townhouse developments on large parcels that have no additional development potential due to deed restrictions placed on the open space. Map 5.1 illustrates Westford’s present land use pattern.

The total amount of land used for commercial and industrial purposes today is also much greater than the land coverage statistics would suggest. However, planners and assessors do not always use the same

**TABLE 5.2:
USES OF LAND IN WESTFORD TODAY (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	Total	940
Total	7,438		
Commercial		Mixed Uses	
Hotels, Nursing Homes	36	Predominantly Residential	91
Commercial Storage	13	Predominantly Commercial	41
Retail, Restaurants	98	Total	132
Auto-Related Uses	28		
Banks, Offices	117	Chapter 61, 61A, 61B	1,927
Services	21		
Commercial Recreation	166	Privately Owned Vacant Land	2,482
Total	479		
		Public, Non-Profit, Charitable	4,375
Total			17,773

Sources: Westford GIS Department, FY07 Assessor's Database; Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

terminology to describe land uses. For example, businesses and industries own more land than the number of acres physically occupied by buildings, access drives and parking lots. Some of the land supports drainage areas, and local zoning regulations (including Westford's) often require nonresidential uses to reserve a percentage of their land as open space. In addition, many companies hold land for future expansion. These variables mean that sometimes a parcel classified by an assessor as "industrial" would be reclassified in a land coverage analysis as partially industrial and partially forested. Moreover, in Westford and many communities, the commercial base includes large outdoor recreation facilities. While Westford's golf course constitutes a commercial use for appraisal purposes, a planner would classify it as recreational land.

DEVELOPED LAND USES

Residential Development. Westford's 7,438± acres of residentially developed land support about 7,330 housing units. An overwhelming majority of the houses in Westford are detached single-family homes, a residential use common in Westford's historic development pattern and virtually assured by today's zoning regulations. Single-family homes constructed since the 1960s are almost always as-

sociated with tract subdivisions made obvious by the cul-de-sac streets that serve them. However, Westford's inventory of single-family residences includes a variety of house and lot sizes and neighborhood designs, from the small homes and cottages around Nabnasset Lake to the late 19th century layout of Graniteville and the farm houses that define the southern end of town.

In addition to traditional single-family homes, Westford has nearly 800 condominiums, though some are actually single-family dwellings with exclusive use areas on land held in common ownership. Two-family, three-family and small multi-family dwellings make up a fairly small share of Westford's housing inventory, but this is partially because some have been converted to condominiums. Most of the older attached housing can be found within the villages and adjacent neighborhoods, but two-family homes exist in many parts of Westford.

Commercial Development: Four patterns of commercial development exist in Westford today. The most noticeable is a strip of highway-oriented retail uses on Route 110 (Littleton Road), east of the Boston Road intersection. Office buildings extend

along Littleton Road west of the same intersection, interspersed with some retail and service uses and industrial development. The third pattern consists of small-scale village businesses, and the fourth is a collection of small, scattered-site commercial and mixed-use buildings, typically not far from the villages. Westford's zoning map seems to memorialize many of these locations in the Business District for it, too, is scattered throughout the town.

Industrial Development: Westford has zoned a considerable amount of land for industrial uses. The largest industrial use district, Industrial Highway, contains several research and development, industrial office and light manufacturing facilities, generally to the south of Route 110 on the west side of town and just north of Route 110 in a technology park east of the retail strip. The smaller industrial zones tend to be developed with light manufacturing, warehouse and small offices. Quarrying and sand and gravel operations exist primarily in the Industrial A and Industrial C districts, and in a few areas as nonconforming uses.

Institutional Uses: Westford has a traditional set of institutional uses: facilities used for government, charitable, religious or educational purposes. The town itself owns more than 3,200 acres of land, but not all of the land is devoted to a community facility or service use. The Westford School Department owns 339 acres, and another 539 acres support municipal facilities such as Town Hall, the police station, the public library, the central fire station and substations, three former school buildings now managed by the Roudenbush Community Center, the highway garage, water department, and an assortment of smaller buildings, including the water department's pumping stations. The remaining land is accessory to municipal or school facilities, conservation land, or simply vacant, undeveloped municipal property, with the exception of parks and playing fields under the care and custody of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Charitable and religious uses occupy 71 acres in Westford. Most of these uses are concentrated on the west side of town in the vicinity of Forge Village and Graniteville, accessible to the town's historic population centers.

VACANT LAND

Westford has more than 5,000 acres of vacant land, excluding public property and conservation land owned by private, non-profit organizations. However, not all of the vacant land is developable. Owing to efforts by the town, non-profit conservation groups and concerned land owners, about 1,000 acres of residential land and 138 acres of agricultural land have been protected with conservation restrictions or other types of use restrictions. In addition, much of the land that remains vacant today has little if any development potential due to natural constraints.

Residential Land: According to data from the assessor's office, vacant residential land accounts for about forty-two percent of all privately owned vacant land in Westford. Nearly sixty percent of the residential land is unbuildable due to conservation restrictions, wetlands, steep slopes or land-locked parcels with no feasible means of securing access. The vacant residential parcels with obvious or likely development potential include a total of 774 acres. The town also has 98 acres of accessory residential land, i.e., parcels in common ownership with an adjacent residence, some appearing to be developable. While most of Westford's vacant residential land is in small parcels, generally less than five acres each, some larger tracts do exist. A few appear to have been subdivided but not yet built, but one 115-acre tract of has been identified as an area of conservation interest for many years.

Commercial Land: The supply of commercial land includes 140± acres recorded by the assessor's office. About 50 acres have some development potential and 83 acres used for commercial agriculture may be partially developable, too. However, all three of the agricultural parcels are zoned for residential use. Less than ten acres of vacant commercial land have no development potential. Most of these parcels lie along Littleton Road (Route 110).

Industrial Land: Vacant industrial land is limited to about 100 acres, more than half classified as developable and the rest having some degree of development potential. Another 95 acres of industrial land are undevelopable. Most of the developable industrial land lies south of Route 110 in the Industrial

Highway District, but there is also a small pocket adjacent to U.S. Route 3 and Makepeace Road.

Forest, Farm and Recreation Land: Virtually all of Westford’s Chapter 61, 61A and 61B properties are zoned for residential development. Assessor’s records show that the entire inventory consists of 1,927 acres, including 1,033 vacant acres and 894 acres in large parcels with a residence or business. Many of the residences on these properties are quite old, such as the four eighteen century farm homes on Gould, Concord and Lowell Roads and Wright Lane. Westford’s regionally renowned Kimball’s ice cream stand is an example of an agricultural business associated with Chapter 61A land.¹

ZONING

Westford’s zoning framework includes ten conventional use districts (Map 5.2) and five overlay districts (Map 5.3). A **use district** is a geographic area delineated on a zoning map and designated for specific land uses. An **overlay district**, also delineated on a zoning map, may encourage or limit certain uses within one or more use districts, depending on the purposes of the overlay. Each zoning district has use and dimensional (density) requirements, and many uses require a special permit, i.e., an approval granted at the discretion of a particular town board. Like most zoning bylaws throughout the state, Westford’s bylaw assigns special permit granting powers both to the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. The Planning Board also exercises control over site plan review.

The Westford Zoning Bylaw has been updated and reorganized since the last Master Plan (1995). Some examples of zoning amendments recently approved by Town Meeting:

- ◆ Flexible Development
- ◆ Mill Reuse Overlay District
- ◆ Senior Residential Development

- ◆ Accessory Dwellings
- ◆ Assisted Living Facilities

Residential Zoning

The vast majority of Westford’s land is zoned for residential development. As a result, the town’s residential zoning regulations will have a significant impact on its overall land use pattern at buildout, just as residential development already influences Westford’s land use pattern and character today.

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS AND USES

Residence A. One of the most striking qualities of zoning in Westford is the homogenous standards that apply to eighty-five percent of the town’s land. The Residence A (RA) District, which covers 17,142 acres, is a conventional district for single-family homes. The minimum lot area in RA is 40,000 sq. ft. (with a seventy-five percent minimum upland requirement), with minimum frontage, 200 feet. Westford requires dwelling units to be set back at least fifty feet from the road, fifteen feet from side boundary of a lot and thirty feet from the rear boundary. Westford also caps building heights at the traditional suburban maximum of thirty-five feet and 2.5 stories.

Residence B. Westford’s second residential district, Residence B (RB), requires a minimum lot area of 20,000 sq. ft. and minimum lot frontage of 100 feet. Aside from lot area and frontage, the only difference in dimensional requirements in the RA and RB Districts is the front yard setback (twenty-five feet in RB). The RB district includes less than five percent of the town and applies to land in three locations: Forge Village, Graniteville and Nabnasset. According to data from the assessor’s office, the vast majority of lots in the RB District fall below Westford’s minimum lot area requirement. Changes to structures on nonconforming lots are governed by Westford’s Zoning Bylaw and the Zoning Act. In most cases, alteration or expansion of non-conforming structures requires a special permit from the Board of Appeals. In addition to the challenges of small lots in the RB District, the shape and boundaries of the district create many “split lots,” or lots divided by a zoning

¹ See also, Chapter 3, Natural Resources and Open Space.

district boundary. The Zoning Bylaw appears to be silent on regulations governing split lots.

Westford allows a limited set of uses by right in the RA and RB Districts: single-family homes, non-profit membership clubs, sand and gravel removal, access to land in another zoning district, uses exempt from local regulation under the state Zoning Act, and municipal facilities. Some accessory uses are permitted in both districts as well, such as a family day care home, an accessory residential structure (e.g., a greenhouse or swimming pool), a horse stable, a garage for up to three vehicles, or renting rooms to as many as five boarders in an owner-occupied single-family home. In addition, Westford allows professional office home occupations by right, but other home occupations have to obtain a special permit from the Board of Appeals, subject to conditions on the size of the business, the exterior appearance of the house, traffic impacts and on-site parking.

Except for the single-family dwelling, all other residential uses in the RA and RB District require a special permit. The Board of Appeals has authority to grant special permits for multi-family conversions (up to four units) and accessory apartments, or small apartments inside owner-occupied single-family homes or accessory buildings on single-family house lots, such as a garage or barn. The permit expires when the home is sold or no longer qualifies as an owner-occupied dwelling. The other special permitted uses – Open Space Residential Development, Flexible Development and Assisted Living Facilities – fall under the Planning Board’s purview.

Open Space-Residential Development. Westford has zoning regulations that encourage or require alternative development plans. Under Section 7.1 of the Zoning Bylaw, Open Space Residential Development (OSRD), any division of ten or more acres of land or construction of a road exceeding 1,000 feet in the RA District requires a special permit from the Planning Board. Westford’s OSRD bylaw is similar to the type of zoning that many communities call “Major Residential Development” because it applies to projects exceeding a size threshold, in this case defined by land area or roadway length, including subdivisions that are otherwise governed by the Subdivision Control Law. In Westford, OSRD

requires that a portion of each residential development site be reserved as common open space at a ratio of 10,000 sq. ft. of upland per dwelling unit, with some variations for larger developments or those located in an industrial zone.

Westford does not allow a “density bonus” or additional dwelling units in an OSRD. Projects may include no more than the same number of house lots that would be allowed in a conventional subdivision plan, but the bylaw does not specify how the maximum number of units will be established. It places responsibility on the developer to document the maximum number of allowable lots, “...based upon accepted standards of soil testing for sewage disposal systems on the individual lots, limitations due to wetlands, flood plains and steep slopes, and requirements of the Planning Board’s ‘Rules and Regulations Governing Subdivisions.’”

The OSRD bylaw also establishes minimum lot area requirements for lots in an OSRD plan (20,000 sq. ft.). The standard makes sense given that the bylaw specifically applies to RA. In other sections, however, the OSRD bylaw refers to development “in a residential district,” and the Industrial A and Industrial C Districts, which means OSRD either applies to those districts as well. Presumably the 20,000 sq. ft. limit would work in a district requiring larger lots, such as RA, IA or IC, but since the RB District already requires a minimum lot of 20,000 sq. ft., the OSRD bylaw apparently does not anticipate the possibility of open space designs in this zone.

In October 2008, the Massachusetts Appeals Court invalidated a very similar bylaw in the Town of Westwood. The Court held that communities cannot impose a discretionary special permit on a development that is subject to the Subdivision Control Law and reject a “conventional” subdivision plan if it complies with a Planning Board’s subdivision rules and recommendations from the Board of Health.²

Flexible Development. Westford adopted the Flexible Development (FD) bylaw after the last master plan was written. The FD bylaw, Section 7.2, is

² *Wall Street Development Corporation v. Planning Board of Westwood*, 72 Mass. App. Ct. 844 (2008)

similar to the type of zoning that most communities refer to as Open Space Residential Development because it calls for a site planning process that requires an analysis and documentation of significant natural features. In Westford, any development that is required to comply with the OSRD bylaw is also required to submit a Flexible Development plan. If the Flexible Development Plan is approved, it governs the project; if not, OSRD presumably applies.

Like OSRD, the FD bylaw limits the maximum number of dwelling units in a project to the number that could be built in a conventional plan and places responsibility on the developer to prove what a conventional plan would support. Unlike OSRD, the FD bylaw gives the Planning Board discretion to grant a density bonus of up to fifty percent (or 1.5 times the number of units that could be built in a conventional plan), if the developer offers additional open space or age-restricted units, or substantially complies with a set of design standards published in the Planning Board's rules and regulations. Section 7.2.7 divides the fifty percent density bonus among each of these three qualifying conditions, with the greatest share of the bonus assigned to the provision of additional open space. The FD bylaw limits density-bonus dwelling units to two bedrooms.

Another feature that distinguishes the OSRD and FD bylaws is that the former is limited to single-family homes while the latter allows a mix of residential uses: single-family and two-family homes, and small multi-family dwellings. In addition, while OSRD is intended to work with subdivisions of land, the FD bylaw does not require applicants to file a subdivision plan because the land can be held in common ownership, e.g., a condominium with or without exclusive use areas. Further, these bylaws have different types of open space requirements. FD developments must provide a 100' buffer around the perimeter of the site and at least ten percent of the total site area as contiguous open space, and some of the open space can be wetlands.

Finally, regardless of whether an applicant meets any of the conditions that qualify for a density bonus, all FD projects must include affordable housing units. Under Section 7.2.8, Westford requires a fifteen percent contribution of affordable units, de-

fining as low-income, moderate-income and median-income affordability. The affordable units must remain affordable in perpetuity under an affordable housing use restriction conveyed by the applicant. As a result, Westford's FD bylaw doubles as a mechanism for alternative site layouts and inclusionary zoning, or the mandatory inclusion of affordable units within a market-rate development. However, Westford's approach to inclusionary zoning differs from that found in other communities because it does not allow any options for the developer to comply with the affordable housing requirement, such as payments to an affordable housing fund, creating affordable units in other parts of town (so-called "off-site" units), or land donations to the Westford Housing Authority.

SENIOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

In Westford, developers have two options for creating residences for senior citizens: the Senior Residential Multifamily Overlay District (SRMOD) and the Assisted Living Facilities bylaw, which governs assisted living developments allowed by special permit in the Town's residential districts and most of the commercial or industrial districts.

SRMOD. As described in Section 8.4, the SRMOD is a type of "floating" zone that can be placed on any qualifying tract of land by town meeting vote. Westford defines a qualifying tract as five contiguous acres with at least 200 feet of frontage. The bylaw provides for Senior Residence Multifamily Developments (SRMD) at an average density determined by the lesser of (a) one bedroom per 8,000 sq. ft. or (b) two units per acre, if the land used to calculate maximum density includes no more than twenty-five percent wetlands. Much like the design standards that apply to Flexible Development, SRMD projects are required to provide a 100' buffer around the perimeter of a site. They also have to reserve at least twenty percent of the entire site as open space and provide affordable units. Residential use options include single-family and multi-family dwellings with up to five units per structure.

To place land in the SRMOD, a developer must petition for a Zoning Map amendment and submit a concept plan to the Planning Board for review and

comment. A concept plan is a conceptual representation of a proposed development, not detailed engineering plans. Westford's concept plan specifications call for enough information for the Planning Board to determine whether the project will be able to meet the minimum requirements of Section 8.4 if Town Meeting agrees to add the land to the SRMOD. Following Town Meeting, the developer can seek plan approval by submitting detailed plans to the Planning Board under Section 9.4, Site Plan Review. The plan is reviewed under the combined standards presented in Section 9.4 and Section 8.4.6 (SRMD design requirements). SRMD projects do not require a special permit.

Assisted Living. The Assisted Living Facility option in Section 7.3 is a special permitted use in all districts except the Business District and the Limited Business District. An Assisted Living residence provides housing and support services to persons unable to live independently. Under Section 7.3, Westford limits Assisted Living developments to parcels of five or more contiguous acres and requires a perimeter buffer of 100' or more, depending on the total number of acres in the site. Density is controlled by a maximum of eight bedrooms per acre. The bylaw also allows developers to include accessory commercial uses, such as personal services for exclusive use by residents of the project.

To qualify for a special permit, an Assisted Living developer is required to submit a site plan that conforms to Westford's Site Plan Review standards and additional standards outlined in Section 7.3.5. The standards include fairly prescriptive design requirements, although an Assisted Living residence created in a former municipal building does not have to comply with all aspects of Section 7.3.5 if the building and site did not meet them when Town Meeting adopted the Assisted Living Facility bylaw. Finally, the bylaw promotes the inclusion of affordable assisted living units, but it does not mandate them.

MILL CONVERSION OVERLAY DISTRICT

Westford has created a special overlay district (Section 8.5) to facilitate the redevelopment and reuse of four historic mill compounds: the Abbot Mill on Pleasant Street, the Abbot Worsted Mill on North Main Street, the Sargent Mill on Broadway

Street, and the Brookside Mill on Brookside Road. Although the Mill Conversion Overlay District (MCO) bylaw does not include a specific list of allowed uses, it clearly intends to allow residential reuse projects by virtue of its purpose statement, its inclusion of criteria for determining the maximum number of dwelling units, and its affordable housing requirement.

The MCO bylaw is silent on the amount of non-residential space that would be allowed in a mill conversion project. It also does not specify a maximum number of dwelling units that developers can create in a Mill Conversion Project (MCP). Instead, Section 8.5.9 empowers the Planning Board to set the density on a project-by-project basis, considering ten criteria outlined in the bylaw. The Planning Board also has authority to determine the mix of dwelling units by size, except that three-bedroom units may not exceed ten percent of all units in any MCP. Presumably the intent is to reduce a project's impact on school services by limiting the number of families with school-age children, much like the Flexible Development standard that limits "density bonus" units to two bedrooms.

The MCO places several requirements on MCP developers. For example, Section 8.5.6 requires not only detailed development plans, but also evidence that a proposed project meets "applicable standards of the National Park Service or the Westford Historical Commission." It also requires a Development Impact Statement with an analysis of impacts on municipal and school services. Like so many of Westford's alternative plan regulations, the MCO requires a 100' buffer around the perimeter of the site, though Section 8.5.8 ("Standards") authorizes the Planning Board to waive the buffer to accommodate existing conditions or construction of a wastewater treatment facility. Section 8.5.8 also requires the roadway to be maintained by an association of homeowners or the applicant. Further, MCP developments must include units that remain affordable in perpetuity, similar to the requirements that apply to a Flexible Development plan.

Commercial and Industrial Zoning

The evolution of commercial and industrial land use can exert an enormous impact on Westford's character even though the total amount of land zoned for these uses is small compared to the size of the residential districts. Today, land zoned for commercial development in Westford represents 2.3 percent of the town's total area, and industrially zoned land represents 7.6 percent.



Shopping center on Route 110 in the Commercial Highway District.

As a matter of policy, Westford has designated Route 110 as a concentrated area for employment, goods and services, so it is unsurprising to find that most of the land zoned for commercial and industrial development is located along this corridor. The Commercial Highway District includes land on both sides of Route 110 for much of the roadway's length through Westford, particularly in the vicinity of Route 110 and Boston Road, which in turn connects with I-495. Similarly, the Industrial Highway District includes land along and behind the Commercial Highway District. The presence of so much commercial and industrial land means that uses along Route 110 attract a considerable amount of local and regional traffic. In addition, the uses and use intensity permitted in other commercial and industrial districts affect Westford's built and natural character and the quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods.

COMMERCIAL HIGHWAY DISTRICT

The Commercial Highway District (CH) provides for a wide range of retail and other commercial uses along Route 110, but it allows only one type of residential use, Assisted Living Facility (and this by special permit). Most types of retail sales are permitted as of right, along with restaurants, personal or business service establishments, movie theatres, auto sales and funeral homes. Essential services, hospital or clinic facilities, and motor vehicle services all require a special permit. In addition, the Planning

Board has authority to grant a special permit for the following types of projects:

- ◆ A Planned Commercial Development (PCD), a development of permitted uses on at least 200,000 sq. ft of land;
- ◆ A Major Commercial Project (MCP), defined as a development with 15,000 sq. ft. or more of commercial space; and
- ◆ A Major Retail Project (MRP), defined as a project with 15,000 sq. ft. or more of retail space, up to a maximum of 60,000 sq. ft.

Westford also allows some industrial uses by right in the CH District: research/office parks, removal of sand and gravel, light manufacturing operations with no more than four employees, and wholesale trade. Other uses, including drive-through facilities are allowed by special permit, but while restaurants are a permitted use, drive-in restaurants are specifically prohibited. This suggests that although the CH District lies along Route 110, the town does not want it to become a "free-for-all" strip commercial zone replete with drive-through establishments.

Uses in the CH District require a minimum lot size of 40,000 sq. ft. and minimum frontage of 200 feet. However, a commercial use on a conforming 40,000 sq. ft. lot is limited to maximum building coverage

of fifteen percent, which is unusually low for commercial developments. To qualify for the maximum allowable coverage of twenty-five percent, a commercial project needs at least 60,000 sq. ft. of land. Minimum open space requirements vary from thirty to fifty percent, also depending on lot size, and the open space used to determine zoning compliance must be upland. Westford's highway-oriented development expectations for the CH District are made particularly clear by its minimum front setback requirement of seventy-five feet.

PLANNED COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The PCD option provides an opportunity to develop larger-scale commercial projects than would normally be allowed in Westford. Under Section 6.4 of the Zoning Bylaw, a PCD can include any uses permitted in the CH District. However, the use intensity and scale of a PCD can significantly exceed that of other developments in the CH District, for the maximum building coverage that applies to a PCD is fifty percent instead of twenty-five percent. It must adhere to a variety of development regulations in Article 5, such as landscaping and buffering requirements in Section 5.4, off-street parking, signs and so forth. However, a key feature of the PCD special permit is that the Planning Board may grant exemptions from the Zoning Bylaw.

To create a PCD, the developer must apply for a special permit and Site Plan Approval by submitting a detailed plan that shows physical improvements and changes to be made to existing land forms. Physical characteristics such as waterways and water bodies, and other site features (including existing and proposed) need to be identified on the plan, along with engineering, right-of-way and utility data, proposed building locations, lot coverage, façade elevations, off-street parking, screening buffers/strips, entrances and exits, setbacks, and percentage of open space. As part of the special permit process for a PCD, the Planning Board must make specific findings about the adequacy of screening, safety of site entrances and exits, and sufficiency of parking. Further, it must determine that above ground sewer facilities and provisions for storm water management will not cause pollution or any type of nuisance.

MAJOR RETAIL PROJECT (MRP) AND MAJOR COMMERCIAL PROJECT (MCP)

Westford's requirement for a special permit to develop retail or commercial uses over 15,000 sq. ft. effectively places a limit on the size of uses that appear to be allowed by right in the Table of Use Regulations. The Major Retail Project (MRP) provision of the Zoning Bylaw not only triggers at 15,000 sq. ft. of retail space, but also caps retail uses at 60,000 sq. ft. Presumably Westford intends to prohibit "big box" retail, although the Zoning Bylaw does not explicitly impose the same 60,000 sq. ft. maximum on retail within a PCD. There is no comparable cap on the size of a Major Commercial Project (MCP), which can include a variety of commercial uses. The MCP special permit requirement applies when a development meets or exceeds any of the following thresholds: 15,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, 100 parking spaces, or an anticipated trip generation of 250 or more vehicle trips per day.

The Planning Board can grant MRP special permits in all three business districts, the Industrial Highway District and the Industrial A District. MCP is allowed by special permit in all nonresidential districts. In both cases, the special permit is subject to Westford's usual special permit granting criteria and an extensive set of development regulations and design standards in Section 9.3A of the Zoning Bylaw. The same standards do not apply to a PCD, however. Westford also requires a fiscal impact analysis for MRP and MCP applications. In addition, Section 9.3A contains an unusual provision for off-site improvements to municipal facilities, which applicants may propose and the Planning Board may approve. The bylaw implies that the Planning Board can require mitigation above and beyond the applicant's responsibility to mitigate impacts directly caused by a project.

BUSINESS AND BUSINESS LIMITED DISTRICTS

Westford has two smaller commercial districts, the Business (B) District and Business, Limited (BL) District. Together, they cover less than one percent of the town. The B District includes 38 properties located throughout Westford north of I-495, mainly but not exclusively in the villages. In contrast, the BL District exists in only one location, between

North Main Street and Milot Road just west of the Graniteville Historic District.

B District. Compared to the CH District, the B District's use regulations are quite limited. Retail, professional offices, restaurants, personal services, a hotel, printing establishments, and sand and gravel removal are permitted by right, and while a Major Retail Project is allowed by special permit, a PCD is prohibited. Some uses that would not be out of character in a neighborhood business zone, such as a horseback riding academy, winter recreation facility or storage of agricultural products, are allowed by special permit in the B District but prohibited in the CH District. Other uses allowed by special permit include a nursing home, gas station, adult day care facility, golf course. Single-family homes are permitted by right. Still, it is important to note that very few lots or structures in the B District conform to Westford's current dimensional requirements: a minimum lot area of 40,000 sq. ft., minimum frontage of 200 feet, upland open space as a percentage of total lot area (thirty percent), or minimum setback requirements (thirty-five feet front, fifteen feet side, thirty feet rear). In light of the prevalence of pre-existing structures or uses in the B District, Westford imposes no building coverage or minimum landscaped buffer requirements on lots in this zone.

BL District. The BL District requires a minimum lot area of 100,000 sq. ft., minimum frontage of 200 feet, and an unusual set of minimum setback requirements: fifty feet on all sides of a building. This district's use regulations are particularly restrictive. For example, Westford does not allow any residential uses by right or by special permit in the BL District. The only type of retail allowed is a Major Retail Project by special permit, but restaurants, offices, personal or business services, and sand and gravel removal are permitted by right. A Major Commercial Project or drive-through commercial uses (excluding drive-through food services) are allowed by special permit.

INDUSTRIAL HIGHWAY DISTRICT

Westford's Industrial Highway (IH) District exists in five locations south of I-495, all along or in the vicinity of Route 110. It is an office park and light indus-

trial zoning district situated for the movement of goods and services by trucking, in most cases away from residential neighborhoods. The IH District allows a range of industrial uses, including office and research parks, light manufacturing, wholesale trade, sand and gravel removal, and sawmills and wood processing. Storage and distribution facilities require a special permit, as does the Planned Industrial Development (PID) option, which is very similar to a PCD in the CH District. While Westford does not allow traditional retail uses by right in the IH District, a Major Retail Project is allowed by special permit. In addition, Westford allows retail sales to industrial or commercial buyers and auto sales by right, along with professional or business offices. A Major Commercial Project can be developed by special permit.

Development within the IH District requires a large minimum lot area of 100,000 sq. ft. and at least 250 feet of frontage. This district also requires a deep front yard setback of at least 100 feet, and limits buildings to a maximum coverage ratio of twenty-five percent. A PID requires an even larger lot – 400,000 sq. ft. – and 400 feet of frontage, but like the PCD, a PID can accommodate larger-scale developments by virtue of a maximum building coverage ratio of fifty percent.

INDUSTRIAL A, B, C AND D DISTRICTS

The **Industrial A (IA) District** includes four areas. The largest is located near Westford's northernmost border on the southbound side Route 3, extending west along both sides of Route 40 (Groton Road). Some additional sections exist as far west as Tyngsborough Road and Forrest Road. Pockets of IA land exist in Graniteville, too, along the Boston and Maine rail line near River Street and Bridge Street. Finally, the IA District includes land within the Nashoba Valley Ski Area and land adjacent to I-495 southbound, off Tadmuck Road.

Westford allows many of the same uses in the IA District as in the IH District, such as office parks, light manufacturing and sand and gravel removal. Unlike the IH District, however, quarrying is allowed in the IA District, but wholesale trade and very small manufacturing facilities are prohibited.

In addition, Westford allows retail sales by right and a Major Retail Project by special permit in the IA District. Other types of commercial uses allowed by special permit include nursing homes, winter commercial recreation, golf courses and horseback riding.

Several factors make the IA District unique among Westford's five industrial zones. In fact, it differs from all of Westford's use districts because viewed in its entirety, the IA District allows the broadest mix of uses. First, it is the only industrial zone in which residential uses of any kind are allowed by right – a single-family dwelling. The residential use regulations in the IA District are virtually identical to those of the RA and RB Districts, including the rules for special permits and residential accessory uses. Second, the IA District's commercial use regulations match those of the B District. Third, the IA District is governed by the same density and dimensional regulations as the B District, except that the maximum building height in the IA District is four stories instead of three. Fourth, IA is the only industrial zone other than IH in which access ways to other districts are allowed.

The **Industrial B (IB) District** includes a small area in the Nabnasset neighborhood, bordered by the Boston and Maine railroad to the north, Brook Road to the east, and Lowell Road to the south; a pocket south of I-495 adjacent to Carlisle Road, between Liberty Way and Applewood Drive; and a third area in Forge Village, also along the rail-line, bordered by Town Farm Road and Pine Street. This zone bears some similarities to the IA District, but only to a point. For example, IB is the only industrial district other than IA that allows retail sales of any type. It also allows funeral homes, hotels, restaurants, and personal service establishments by right, and nursing homes, gas stations, winter recreation facilities, adult day care facilities and Major Commercial Projects by special permit (but not a Major Retail Project). Along with IA, it is the only industrial zone in which cemeteries are allowed by special permit. It is also the only industrial zone other than IA that permits some residential accessory uses, such as a professional office and other home occupations. Furthermore, IB is the one of only two zones

in which the Planning Board may grant a Planned Industrial Development (PID) special permit.

Despite the similarities found in IA and IB use regulations, the IB District requires significantly larger lots: a four-acre minimum, and 300 feet of lot frontage. While the IB District's density and dimensional requirements are closer to Westford's other industrial zones than the IA District, the IB District's minimum front yard setback is only half that of the other zones (fifty feet instead of 100). In contrast, its side yard setbacks are some of Westford's largest (forty feet). Also as with IA, there is no defined maximum building area, i.e., a maximum building coverage ratio.

The **Industrial C (IC) District** includes land in the northeast corner of Westford along both sides of Route 3, bordered by Tyngsborough and Chelmsford, and a tract of land under Chapter 61, wedged between single-family home developments on Caldwell Drive, Vineyard Road and Tynsborough Road. The use regulations in the IC District generally provide for the same industrial uses allowed in the IA District, except that sawmills are prohibited in IC and wholesale trade is allowed by right. Except for general service establishments, commercial uses are prohibited in the IC District. This district also allows most residential uses by special permit, including single-family dwellings, conversions to multi-family units, OSRD and Flexible Development plans, and Assisted Living Facilities, and a limited number of residential accessory uses (also by special permit). Development in the IC District is subject to the same density and dimensional requirements that apply in the IH District, except that a smaller percentage of an IC lot must be reserved as open space (thirty percent).

Westford's fifth industrial zone, the **Industrial D (ID) District**, is quite small. It consists of two parcels west of Saw Mill Road, one owned by the town. The ID District is governed by the same commercial and industrial use regulations as the IC District and the same residential use regulations as the IH District, i.e., only one type of residential use is allowed, an Assisted Living Facility by special permit. The ID District requires a very large minimum lot area, 200,000 sq. ft., and the deepest side yard setbacks of

any industrial zone in Westford, but in most other respects its density and dimensional requirements are similar to those of the IH District.

Protective Overlay Districts

Westford has three types of protective overlay districts: the Water Resource Protection Overlay District (WRPOD), the Floodplain Overlay District (FOD) and the Conservation Overlay District (COD).

The **Water Resource Protection Overlay District (WRPOD)** consists of three sub-areas – WRPD I, II and III – which are very similar to Zones I, II and III as defined by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). WRPD I/Zone I includes a 400 ft. radius around drinking water supplies, and WRPD II/Zone II includes all land deemed influential to the quality and quantity of water drawn from a well under stressed pumping conditions, i.e., the recharge area. WRPD III/Zone III is the larger watershed surrounding a water supply. Many uses permitted in the use districts require a special permit from the Planning Board in the WRPOD. Some uses are explicitly prohibited. The WRPOD also imposes limits on total impervious coverage, i.e., the percentage of a lot that can be covered with buildings and pavement.

The **Floodplain Overlay District (FOD)** is very similar to the floodplain bylaws found in other communities. It includes all areas within the 100-year floodplain and floodways shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps prepared by FEMA in 1983. The FOD limits permitted uses to those unlikely to cause flooding in a 100-year storm event: agriculture, forestry, passive recreation, wildlife management, or structures that existed prior to the delineation of flood zones in Westford (1983). The Planning Board can grant a special permit for new construction in a floodplain as long as the applicant demonstrates that a proposed project conforms to the State Building Code and provides an engineer's certification that it will not increase flood levels during a 100-year flood.

The **Conservation Overlay District (COD)** includes tracts of land associated with seven residential subdivisions or condominium developments approved

during the 1980s and early 1990s. The parcels are located off Tenney Road, Groton Road in the vicinity of Keyes Road, off Hildreth Street, off Power Road, off Pine Ridge Road between Forge Village Road and Cold Spring Road, and off Patten Road. The uses of land permitted in the COD include agriculture, forestry and passive recreation.

Development Standards

Westford has adopted some development standards or requirements that govern site design, off-street parking, landscaping, signage, lighting and so forth, especially in the business and industrial districts. Landscaping and buffering requirements do not apply equally in all nonresidential districts, and throughout the Zoning Bylaw there are additional landscaping standards that apply to particular uses. It appears that Westford has no environmental standards for landscaping, such as a prohibition against invasive species, requirements for drought-resistant plantings, or a limitation on the percentage of a site that can be covered with turf. The Zoning Bylaw does call for native trees in some of the nonresidential zoning districts (under Section 5.4), but there is no comprehensive set of environmental landscaping standards, including methods to reduce water consumption.

Westford's sign bylaw is somewhat unusual in that it places authority for sign permits with the Board of Selectmen. However, it also gives the Planning Board power to grant a special permit for signs that exceed the size limits in the Zoning Bylaw. Relative to development standards and review procedures, two provisions of the Zoning Bylaw that merit some attention include Site Plan Review under Section 9.4 and Westford's off-street parking regulations in Section 5.1.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

The state Zoning Act does not specifically authorize site plan review, but the courts have upheld it as a valid exercise of zoning authority and today, most communities have some type of site plan review procedure. Site plan review is very important because it creates a mechanism for reviewing development plans for projects that are likely to have a noticeable impact on surrounding land uses, natural

resources and traffic. It also provides a mechanism for placing reasonable conditions on projects prior to issuance of a building permit. However, it does not create authority to disapprove uses permitted by right. Unlike a subdivision plan or a special permit, an approved site plan does not “grandfather” any zoning rights.

In Westford, Site Plan Review under Section 9.4 applies to new construction or exterior alterations or expansion of nonresidential and multi-family uses, construction or expansion of nonresidential or multi-family parking lots, and any use requiring a special permit or variance. Westford does not require site plan review for uses exempt from local zoning requirements under Section 3 of the Zoning Act, yet an increasing number of Massachusetts communities have extended site plan review to educational or religious uses and day care centers, and the Attorney General has given cautionary approval to these by-laws. The Westford site plan bylaw also establishes a three-year period within which an approved site plan remains in effect, but in most towns, approved site plans lapse after two years (mimicking special permit requirements in the Zoning Act).

OFF-STREET PARKING

Westford’s off-street parking regulations are very similar to the regulations found in other suburbs. The Zoning Bylaw specifies minimum parking and loading space requirements for all classes of land use, establishes design standards for parking lots over a certain size (five spaces), and provides options for parking to be shared in common by adjacent uses. It also creates authority for the Planning Board to grant a special permit to reduce the number of parking spaces for a given project. However, since the approved site plan still has to show the minimum number of spaces required by the Zoning Bylaw, the special permit effectively reduces the number of spaces that must be constructed, not the number of spaces that the applicant is required to provide.

The Table of Parking Requirements (Zoning Bylaw Appendix D) contains minimum off-street parking space requirements for residential, commercial, industrial and other uses. It does not impose any

maximum on off-street parking spaces, however. Westford requires a substantial amount of off-street parking for commercial uses. For example, a retail store must have at least one parking space per 180 sq. ft. of floor area; nursing homes, three spaces per bed; restaurants, one space per three seats, regardless of the type of restaurant; personal or business services, one space per 200 sq. ft. of floor area; hotel, one space per 600 sq. ft. of floor area; and professional offices, one space per 200 sq. ft. of floor area, regardless of whether the office is a first-floor or an upper-story use. Applied literally, Westford’s off-street parking requirements for retail would compel the owner of an 18,000 sq. ft. store to provide 100 parking spaces. Considering typical land multipliers for site improvements, 100 parking spaces would mean reserving 35,000 to 40,000 sq. ft. of land for off-street parking, turning areas and access drives – assuming lots with a regular shape. It is not clear why Westford requires so much parking for retail establishments or many other commercial uses. Westford’s industrial parking space requirements are also quite demanding, such as off-street parking for a warehouse or wholesale trade facility at one space per 400 sq. ft.

Growth Management

In 1996, Westford Town Meeting adopted regulations to limit the number of new residential building permits issued per year and to impose phased construction requirements on certain types of residential development. The bylaw was scheduled to “sunset” in 2007, but town meeting voted to extend it for another 12 months. Although the Attorney General’s office approved the extension, the approval letter included a note of caution about the potential for conflicts with a recent Supreme Court decision in *Zuckerman v. Town of Hadley* (2004).³ In the *Hadley* case, the court invalidated a rate-of-growth bylaw that contained no “sunset” provision or expiration date. The court also held that a time-limited growth management bylaw could be considered constitutional if it were both temporary and tied to a planning process for longer-term solutions to the issues that led to the growth management regulations in the first place.

³ Martha Coakley, Attorney General, to Kaari Mai Tari, Westford Town Clerk, 13 August 2007.

Under Westford’s growth management bylaw (Section 6.3), the Building Inspector is allowed to issue permits for a total of 30 new dwelling units per year, including a maximum of six units per development. If a surplus exists by mid-December, the unissued permits can be released on a first-come, first-served basis. In addition, the Planning Board has authority to require development phasing plans for SRMD projects or any development with a voluntary density reduction and at least five acres of protected open space. These types of projects are not subject to the annual cap on building permits. Some housing units are exempt under Section 6.3, including low- or moderate-income housing, MCOB units, Assisted Living Facilities, accessory apartments, and one single-family home on a tract of land existing when the growth management bylaw went into effect. Significantly, while the growth management bylaw exempts low- or moderate-income units, it applies to market-rate units in the same (mixed-income) development.

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.” Although the term is in vogue, the concept has been embraced and promoted by planners for decades. 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.⁴

⁴ Appendix E provides a review of potential smart growth opportunities in Westford.

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. For example:

- ◆ Westford does not have direct access to **public transportation**, but the town could make sidewalks a higher priority and work toward making Westford a place that encourages people to walk.
- ◆ Westford could do far more to promote **mixed-use development** by updating its use regulations and reducing regulatory barriers. Ironically, the only residential use that Westford allows by right in a commercial district is the detached single-family home – and only in the B District, which is largely built out and composed of many nonconforming lots.
- ◆ 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 a combination of factors: very 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. Westford does not allow enough development on commercial lots to make underground parking feasible. As a result, the combined factors of low coverage ratios, building height limitations, large open space requirements and a large amount of land required for off-street parking mean that in many cases, a permitted use would need more land than the minimum lot area required in a commercial zoning district.
- ◆ 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 types of offsets that would help to reduce a developer’s risk and the total cost of development. Moreover,

What does it mean to “grow smart”?

Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices. Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth strategy.

Create Walkable Neighborhoods. Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship and play, and therefore a key component of smart growth.

Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration. Growth can create great places to live, work and play -- if it responds to a community’s own sense of how and where it wants to grow.

Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place. Smart growth encourages communities to craft a vision and set standards for development and construction which respond to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness, as well as expanded choices in housing and transportation.

Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective. For a community to be successful in implementing smart growth, it must be embraced by the private sector.

Mix Land Uses. Smart growth supports the integration of mixed land uses into communities as a critical component of achieving better places to live.

Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas. Open space preservation supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, improving our communities quality of life, and guiding new growth into existing communities.

Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices. Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation is a key aim of smart growth.

Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities. Smart growth directs development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure, seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer, and conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe.

Take Advantage of Compact Building Design. Smart growth provides a means for communities to incorporate more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.

-Smart Growth Network

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 MCOB. The town also places significant limitations on the size of housing units other than single-family homes. Whether unwitting or intentional, Westford has adopted a housing policy framework that privileges single-family homes and makes it very difficult to create lower-cost multi-unit dwellings for families in a Flexible Development or MCOB.

acre (40,000 sq. ft.) lots. While the OSRD and Flexible Development bylaws encourage smaller lots and open space preservation, they are not designed to alter Westford’s overall build-out potential or to induce a fundamental rearrangement of future growth. At best, tools like Westford’s OSRD and Flexible Development regulations encourage projects that are more attractive and environmentally sensitive than conventional subdivisions. These outcomes are important, but they do not reduce pressure on outlying land or **guide development toward designated growth areas.**

◆ Westford’s present zoning policies contemplate a blueprint for buildout that would divide almost ninety percent of the town’s land into one-

◆ 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 SRMD projects and adjacent residential areas, landscaped buffers along the front and sides of developments in the Commercial Highway 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.

- ◆ Westford's villages, Route 110, and eastern 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. Moreover, the bylaw all but "freezes" the villages at historic densities by requiring a minimum lot area of 20,000 sq. ft. and minimum lot frontage of 100 feet. A greater challenge to instituting TDR in Westford is the absence of sewer service, yet some communities in Massachusetts have developed small, district-oriented wastewater treatment facilities in an effort to accommodate some compact building forms and infill uses in established areas.
- ◆ Zoning in Westford sometimes makes it difficult for developers to anticipate how much they will be able to build on a given site or what it will **cost to obtain permits and approvals** from the Town. For example, the MCOB bylaw gives the Planning Board authority to set the maximum number of units in MCP projects, based on a loosely defined Development Impact Statement. Moreover, the regulations for MRP and MCP developments call for a fiscal impact analysis and impacts mitigation without any clear standards for determining what sort of mitigation the Town may require.
- ◆ People often forget that one of the central tenets of smart growth is **fairness and predictability in permitting**. Under Westford's present zoning, neither developers nor abutters can readily foresee what the town will require as a condition of approval for MRP, MCP, PCD or PID projects.

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 Plan, Westford will 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.

Many of the regulations are vague, and so many uses in Westford require a special permit that the permitting process itself exposes applicants to an extended, potentially costly path for obtaining development approvals in addition to a heightened risk of appeal.

Zoning and Business Development

Westford would like to see fewer “franchise” businesses along Route 110 and attract 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. 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 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.

While the location of Route 110 has a great deal to do with the composition of businesses located there, Westford’s zoning regulations do not make it easy for small companies to locate in the Commercial Highway District. However, zoning changes alone are unlikely to influence the mix of businesses because Route 110 has 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 that may require the town to invest some of its own resources in short-term financing for land acquisitions.

Design Review

Westford could improve the appearance of commercial and industrial development in the future 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. They do not dictate a single solution for all sites. Rather, they define a range of potential responses to a variety of design 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 building styles.

In Westford, design review could help the Planning Board look beyond the site engineering and landscaping considerations that are embedded in the Zoning Bylaw and consider criteria such as:

- ◆ 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 attributes and vocabulary 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 a Design Review Committee (DRC). It should be composed of people such as architects, graphic designers and others interested in the design of the built environment and qualified to work with design guidelines. They would develop design guidelines through a participatory process open to residents, business property owners, developers and others with an interest in the quality of Westford’s built environment. 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 nonresidential areas, particularly the commercial districts. Design review could begin as an advisory review coordinated with Westford’s existing Site Plan Review process under Section 9.4.

An advisory design review process also could serve as an initial step for projects that reach certain development thresholds in the CH and IH districts or for any large-scale nonresidential or multifamily residential project. The design review process also could be activated by commercial and industrial projects of certain size thresholds in all of the non-residential districts. For example, any commercial or industrial project of 10,000 sq. ft. or more, or any use subject to special permit, could activate design review. Further, design review could be activated within existing special permit review procedures such as those associated with a PCD, PID, MRP or MCP.

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 comprehensive 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, RB, B, 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 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, which means a significant limit on the number of buildings that could be converted. An alternative approach would be to 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 dis-

trict 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. The new bylaw should have a fair system of density bonuses or other cost offsets for on-site affordable units and the option to provide equivalent housing through “off-site units” or land donations to the Westford Housing Authority or the Westford Affordable Housing Trust. It should apply to townhouse and multi-family uses, and to single-family homes only under a special permit for a higher density than Westford’s present zoning allows.
- ◆ 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 providing opportunities for economic development and at the same time protecting the character and the quality of life in neigh-

borhoods near commercial and industrial areas. 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.

Since Westford allows some mix of uses in several zoning districts, the town is in fairly good shape to fine-tune its zoning regulations and promote high-quality development. "Fine tuning" is a desirable state to be in for communities seeking to update their zoning in accordance with a Comprehensive Plan. There also seems to be some openness in Westford to allowing mixed-use developments that include housing in appropriate locations with adequate facilities.

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 Bylaw. The performance standards are important because they attempt to reduce the adverse impacts of large-scale development, but the bylaw does not establish a maximum amount of permissible development. What Westford defines as "building area" is a maximum footprint requirement, with certain exclusions in its calculation (e.g., gutters, chimneys, cornices, etc.). However, the Zoning Bylaw does not establish a maximum gross floor area ratio (FAR).

FAR is the total floor area of a development expressed as a percentage of the lot. An FAR of 1.0 means that on a 40,000 sq. ft. lot, a developer could create 40,000 sq. ft. of floor area. Unlike building footprint limitations, FAR considers the *total* 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.

The importance of establishing an FAR requirement in the CH District cannot be underestimated. There may be existing office and other commercial developments that appear to be fully developed, yet in actuality they have expansion potential because they have not maximized their full build-out within

Westford's traditional dimensional requirements. Currently, the Planned Commercial Development 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 or excessive parking requirements. 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. Since the CH zone is becoming highly developed and visible, the addition of attractive multi-family 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 attractive landscaping with the need for successful commercial developments.

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

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, for new development or alterations to existing nonresidential developments already require Site Plan Review. Since the IB, IC and 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 nonresidential 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 country 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

In a variety of meetings for this Comprehensive Plan, 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 gave to applicants.

Westford could hold concurrent development review meetings, particularly for large-scale projects and projects in environmentally sensitive areas. A scoping session – an “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 facilitate communications between boards. Finally, electronic submissions of applications and plans and a permit tracking system on the town’s website may help boards, applicants, and other interested parties find current information.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- L.1 Establish development review and permitting policies that are fair, clear, and aligned with the goals of this Comprehensive 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 Transfer-of-Development Rights (TDR) bylaw with designated sending and receiving zones.
- L.6 Work with neighboring towns and the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (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.**
 - ◆ Westford needs improved coordination within town government. Municipal boards, commis-

sions, 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.

- ◆ Westford should 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, INTEGRATE THE OSRD BYLAW WITHIN FLEXIBLE DEVELOPMENT; 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. IMPLEMENT THE MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LAND USE GUIDANCE PLAN (MAP 5.4) BY ESTABLISHING A RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT AND A TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS BYLAW.

- ◆ Westford should establish 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. The town needs better regulatory tools to reduce development in still-rural areas and create an

effective vehicle for “sending” and “receiving” zones in a **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)** bylaw.

- ◆ 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.

4. ADOPT LANDSCAPING TECHNIQUES TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES.

- ◆ Westford should 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.

- ◆ Westford needs to update its land databases at least once a year, 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 rank-

ing 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 eighteen-month planning process for Westford's 1995 master plan, and it was expressed both in public meetings and surveys for this Comprehensive Plan, too. Westford will continue to find it challenging to accommodate new housing development.

Since every household pays some type of shelter cost, housing serves as a community's socio-economic infrastructure and gatekeeper; the cost of housing plays a major role in determining who can live in a town. Addressing housing affordability will remain difficult for Westford despite the town's efforts to gain more control over Chapter 40B, the state's comprehensive permit law. Only a handful of communities have adopted effective inclusionary zoning bylaws, so Chapter 40B is still the most widely used mechanism for developing mixed-income housing in Massachusetts. It also remains very controversial even though the law is nearly forty years old. However, affordable housing has more than one meaning. While many people associate housing affordability with Chapter 40B, it also includes



Historic home, Westford Center.

the impact of property taxes and other charges on a homeowner's housing costs, particularly elderly homeowners.

Communities influence the make-up of their population by the steps they take to control housing growth. When zoning restricts the development of housing for a variety of household types, the result is a fairly homogenous population. Westford has very little economic or racial diversity today, mainly due to its limited housing choices and high housing costs. Moreover, its large percentage of family households and families with children correlate with a long-standing pattern of single-family home development that exists in most parts of Westford

– a pattern of traditional neighborhoods built for traditional families. Westford residents value their historic housing and close-knit neighborhoods, and these qualities help to define what it means to live in Westford. Like all towns that are trying to plan for their future, Westford faces tough housing policy choices that need to be integrated with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

An emerging challenge in many suburbs involves the tension between preserving neighborhood character, protecting private property rights, and generating tax revenue. This tension is manifested in the debate over tear-downs and “mansionization,” i.e., the replacement of older, typically small homes with new, large, high-end homes that change the visual appearance of established neighborhoods. The same investments provide a significant source of “new growth” revenue under Proposition 2½. Westford has lost older buildings to tear-downs even though the town has a demolition delay bylaw and the Westford Historical Commission has worked hard to implement it. However, tear-downs are not the only type of investment that triggers mansionization. Major alterations and modernization projects that expand the footprint and height of an existing house can have the same impact on a neighborhood as outright demolition.

HOUSING INVENTORY

Westford has an interesting mix of homes that give its villages and neighborhoods a distinctive look and set the town apart from other communities nearby. Its housing stock is also quite valuable, and some of it is historically significant. The types, ages and architectural styles of homes in Westford tell a story about the town’s evolution from a rural agri-

cultural settlement to an industrial town, and ultimately to a modern suburb. As Westford has grown, its housing inventory has become less diverse, although detached single-family homes have clearly been Westford’s mainstay for a long time. From 1990 to 2000, Westford’s total housing inventory increased by more than 1,400 units, making Westford one of the state’s top thirty communities for rate of housing growth. Most of the increase reflected new single-family home development. Since 2000, market demand for multi-family and townhouse condominiums has intensified, though not to the degree that Westford experienced in the early to mid-1980s. The same trend can be seen in many towns throughout the state. Today, Westford has about 7,570 housing units, or 240 units per sq. mi., which is roughly forty percent of Middlesex County’s average housing density.

Housing Characteristics

HOUSING AGE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Westford has a beautiful collection of historic homes that stand out despite the large amount of land consumed by new development in the past fifteen to twenty years. The town’s oldest residences can be seen along a frame of roadways that includes Carlisle, Concord and Griffin Roads, Main Street and Forge Village Road, Hildreth Street, Depot Street and Tyngsborough Road, Groton Road, and Graniteville Road, Broadway Street and North Main Street (Map 6.1). Many of these streets are scenic roads, regardless of whether they have been designated as such. Westford’s villages contain some of its most noteworthy historic homes and well over half of all Westford buildings listed in the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (MACRIS).

TABLE 6.1
HOUSING UNITS IN WESTFORD, 1990-2007

Housing Type	Census Housing Counts			Estimate	
	1990	2000	Change	2007	Change
Detached Single-Family	4,772	6,161	1,389	6,558	397
Attached Single-Family or Multi-Family	489	574	85	802	228
Two-Family	199	184	-15	184	0
Other	74	22	-52	22	0
Total	5,534	6,941	1,407	7,566	625

Sources: Bureau of the Census, Claritas, Inc., and Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

Westford has developed in phases that can be gleaned from the age of its homes and the design, width and character of its roadways. Farmhouses and farms dating to the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century on Concord Road, Hildreth Street, Lowell Road, and Groton Road attest to Westford's agricultural past. During the last half of the nineteenth century, new neighborhoods formed the vicinity of Forge Pond and along Graniteville Road, North Main Street, Bridge Street and River Street, while housing filled in around existing homes in Westford Center and another mill village, Brookside, blossomed on the east side of town. Most of Westford's historically significant housing units date to the period between the Civil War and World War I, when industrial development triggered the construction of homes built for mill owners and their employees. Housing development continued in the same areas from the turn of the century to World War I.

After World War II, a wave of subdivision activity spread throughout the Boston area in response to three conditions: the new regional highway system, housing demand from "Baby Boom" families, and federal housing finance policies that encouraged new-home construction outside the nation's cities. When access to Boston was enhanced by the construction of Route 2 and the Massachusetts Turnpike, growth rates skyrocketed during the 1950s in communities just south and east of Westford. The completion of I-495 in the early 1960s, from Littleton to the Lowell Connector, spurred new growth in Westford as well. Housing development gradually shifted from Boston's inner suburbs to small outlying towns, and this trend has continued ever since the postwar era. Unlike earlier periods of household and population growth, single-family home construction dominated the development pipeline from 1950 to 1980. This was true not only in Westford, but also throughout the nation.

Less than fifteen percent of Westford's present housing inventory was built prior to World War II, but the prevalence of new housing is fairly common in



Housing in Forge Village.

Westford's region. Since the mid-1980s, the small towns in northern Middlesex County and northern Worcester County have grown and changed due to regional transportation improvements, the outward movement of jobs from central cities, and high housing costs in the Greater Boston area. In addition, growth in household formation rates beginning in the mid-1980s led to growth in demand for single-family homes by the early 1990s, so it makes sense that new single-family homes made up most of the housing pipeline during the last decade. In small towns that still had large amounts of vacant land, the land market responded in kind. Westford and most of its neighbors have fairly large minimum lot size and frontage requirements, and no public sewer service. In light of these conditions, it is not surprising that the total amount of land used for residential development increased dramatically after 1990, making the loss of farmland and forests even more conspicuous. In Westford, 478 acres of agricultural land and more than 1,500 acres of forested land were converted for residential development between 1985 and 1999. As a result, Westford ranked second out of 351 communities in the state for rate of lost farmland and ninth for rate of lost forest land.¹

Westford's villages are historic areas with a fairly compact development pattern and more housing

¹ Massachusetts Audubon Society, *Losing Ground: At What Cost?* (2003), Technical Notes, 9.

TABLE 6.2
CHARACTERISTICS OF SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES BY AGE OF HOUSING UNIT

Period	Statistical Average				
	Parcels	Lot Area	Land Value	Building Value	Total Value
2000-2006	296	1.024	\$246,895	\$402,686	\$650,838
1990-1999	1,419	1.168	\$250,904	\$342,191	\$594,658
1980-1989	1,075	1.394	\$244,763	\$277,335	\$524,454
1970-1979	1,042	1.164	\$234,978	\$190,124	\$427,218
1960-1969	920	0.891	\$222,430	\$151,142	\$375,694
1950-1959	603	0.649	\$207,336	\$116,748	\$326,339
1920-1949	450	0.662	\$207,956	\$114,751	\$325,061
1900-1919	172	0.754	\$207,816	\$118,292	\$328,460
1865-1899	103	1.010	\$214,783	\$165,480	\$384,368
1800-1864	79	1.363	\$238,715	\$188,100	\$431,911
Pre-1800	33	1.714	\$249,673	\$212,988	\$469,721
Period	Statistical Average				
	Gross Floor Area	Living Area	Number of Rooms	Number of Bedrooms	Number of Bathrooms
2000-2006	5,613	2,867	8.5	3.9	3.2
1990-1999	4,926	2,574	8.1	3.8	3.0
1980-1989	4,553	2,353	7.8	3.6	2.8
1970-1979	3,737	1,913	7.4	3.5	2.4
1960-1969	3,251	1,585	6.7	3.3	1.9
1950-1959	2,859	1,379	5.9	2.9	1.5
1920-1949	2,587	1,395	5.8	2.7	1.4
1900-1919	2,843	1,556	6.3	3.0	1.5
1865-1899	3,740	2,003	7.3	3.3	1.8
1800-1864	4,265	2,273	7.8	3.4	2.1
Pre-1800	4,786	2,451	8.2	3.5	2.2

Source: Westford Assessor's Office, FY 2007 Parcel Database; Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

options than other parts of town. However, the villages in Westford are rural industrial centers, not city neighborhoods. The density of development is relatively modest, and the extant multi-family buildings tend to be low-rise and small, e.g., three- to six-unit structures. Multiple residences on a single lot – a particularly threatened type of historic housing resource in many Eastern Massachusetts towns – can still be seen in the villages of Forge Village and Graniteville. Most of Westford's multiple-residence properties date to the turn of the century. Westford also has a sizeable inventory of two-family homes and for the most part, they co-exist with older multi-family and single-family homes in and around the villages. These types of small-scale, attached housing types fit seamlessly into most residential neighborhoods, and they are very common in communities with rural economic centers. They also provide most of the housing diversity that exists in Westford today.

SIZE AND CONDITION OF HOUSING UNITS

Since single-family homes constitute more than eighty-eight percent of all housing units in Westford, its housing units are relatively large, measured by total number of rooms per unit (Table 6.2). Nearly half of Westford's housing units have eight or more rooms, which is comparable to the size of homes in Harvard or Concord and larger than the homes in most other communities nearby. The prevalence of homes suitable for families helps to explain Westford's significant percentage of families with children, fifty-two percent, which is large for Massachusetts suburbs and the state as a whole.² The

² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Summary File 3, Tables H22, P34, P36. Retrieved from American FactFinder at <www.census.gov>, and Claritas, Inc. Census 2000 reports that fifty-eight percent of Westford's families had children under 18 in April 2000, but according to Claritas, the percentage has declined somewhat, to fifty-two percent.

spaciousness of housing in Westford does not apply equally to owner- and renter-occupied units, however. Half of all renter-occupied units in Westford have one to four rooms, and percent percent are studio, one- or two-bedroom units. Still, modestly sized rental units make up a smaller percentage of all rental housing in Westford than in most other communities nearby, and this reflects the mix of units available for rental occupancy: small apartments, units in two-family or small multi-family buildings, and in many cases, single-family homes.³ A 268-unit comprehensive permit development recently approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals will be Westford's second mixed-income apartment development and the first without age restrictions.

Westford's housing is generally in good to excellent condition. This is not surprising because so much of the town's housing stock was built within the past thirty years. However, its older housing units are also well maintained and its historic housing inventory is, for the most part, impeccable. A drive through any Westford neighborhood attests to the care that residents have taken to maintain and enhance the quality of their homes. Data from the assessor's office indicate that less than two percent of Westford's housing units are in poor or seriously substandard condition. According to Census 2000, overcrowded housing is virtually non-existent in Westford, less than one percent of all occupied units. Further, since less than forty-two percent of Westford's housing units pre-date 1970, lead paint hazards are not as common here as in the state as a whole.⁴

OCCUPANCY, TENURE AND VACANCY RATES

In population and housing studies, "household" means one or more people living in the same housing unit. Accordingly, the number of occupied housing units in a community is the same as its total number of households. A "family" household consists of two or more people related by blood, marriage or adop-

tion. Most Westford households are both homeowners and families, and the percentage of owner-occupied housing units has increased since 1990. Today, renters account for slightly less than eight percent of all households living in Westford – down from 12.3 percent in 1990 and 14.1 percent in 1980.⁵ Growth in owner-occupied units has occurred due to a combination of new-home construction, conversion of older rental units to condominiums and in some cases, conversion of former two- to four-unit buildings to single-family residences. From 1990 to 1999, for example, about twenty-five multi-family units in Westford were converted to condominiums.⁶

As an indicator of housing demand in Eastern Massachusetts, Westford and several nearby towns tend to have low housing vacancy rates. Homeownership vacancy rates of one percent or less have been the norm in Westford for a long time, and rental vacancy rates have hovered below four percent since the mid-1980s. The regional housing market is "soft" today, for home prices have stabilized and in some cases declined, and houses remain on the market longer than during the robust market conditions of 1998-2001. Still, Westford's homeownership vacancy rate remains similar to that of Acton, Carlisle or Harvard (0.5-0.9 percent): communities that also have very high housing prices, excellent public schools, and a housing stock composed primarily of detached single-family homes.⁷

Westford and several surrounding small towns have experienced a gradual decline in number of seasonal housing units. From 1990 to 2000, some parts of the state absorbed more growth in seasonal housing units than total housing units, indicating that vacation homebuyers had begun to purchase homes previously occupied as year-round dwellings. In Westford, the number of seasonal or vacation units declined, as was the case in Groton, Dunstable, and

³ Census 2000, Summary File 3, Tables H26 and H32.

⁴ Westford Assessor's Office, FY 2007 parcel database (user-defined electronic file); Census 2000, Summary File 3 Tables H20, H34; and Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program <www.mass.gov/dph/>.

⁵ 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1 Table H003, Census 2000 Summary File 1, Table H4; Westford Affordable Housing Committee and John Ryan, *Westford Affordable Housing Action Plan*, 22.

⁶ Massachusetts Department of Revenue, "Parcels by Use Class," 1986-2007, *Municipal Data Bank* at <www.dls.state.ma.us/mdm.htm>

⁷ Census 2000, Summary File 1 Tables H4, H5, and Claritas, Inc.

other high-growth towns along or near I-495. Since market demand for homes is so strong in these communities, year-round conversions have become increasingly common.⁸

Towns with large percentages of single-family homes and high homeownership rates tend to have predominantly white households and few if any households with limited English proficiency, and this applies to Westford as well. Of Westford's 6,808 households reported in Census 2000, ninety-five percent were headed by a white householder and four percent by an Asian householder. The remaining one percent included households headed by African Americans, Native Americans or other races not classified by the Bureau of the Census. Moreover, Westford's white householders were almost exclusively white non-Hispanic (99.4 percent). Nearly all of Westford's minority households were homeowners.

The limited presence of minorities in Westford is similar to that of adjacent towns, but quite different from the region's experience. In 2000, eighty-nine percent of all households and eighty-six percent of all people in the Lowell metro area were white. More recent demographic estimates and data from the Department of Education suggest that Westford's Asian population has increased significantly since 2000, but there is no intercensal demographic series that provides estimates of households by race. The percentage of students for whom English is their second language is less than half that of the state as a whole, which is similar to household language statistics reported in the last federal census.⁹

Another trait shared by towns with predominantly single-family home inventories is a limited number of young and elderly households. Statewide, householders under 34 represent twenty-one percent of all householders, and householders over 65, twenty-two percent. The statistics for Middlesex County are very similar, except that Middlesex County

has a slightly smaller percentage of senior citizen households. By contrast, only twelve percent of Westford's householders are under 34 and thirteen percent are over 65. A significant majority – 61.7 percent – fall between the ages of 35 and 54, an age group that represents just 43.5 percent of all householders in the Commonwealth. The age composition of Westford householders relates inextricably to the town's large number of families with school-age children and high levels of household wealth, especially among newer residents. Nationally and statewide, households headed by people between 35 and 54 years have the highest median household income of all age cohorts. Harvard, Carlisle, Groton and Dunstable also have large percentages of householders of child-bearing and child-rearing age.¹⁰

PROPERTY TAXES

Westford homeowners pay fairly high property taxes. The effects of residential growth and spending decisions by town meeting can be seen in Westford's gradual increase in state rank for average single-family tax bill, from 70 out of 351 cities and towns in 1988 to 37 today (FY 2007). In the past ten years, Westford's average tax bill has increased by more than eighty-five percent in current dollars, and twenty-four percent in constant (2006) dollars.¹¹ However, Westford's homeowners pay a somewhat smaller percentage of their annual income for property taxes than homeowners in several communities nearby. In fact, Westford is roughly in the middle of the region for two measures of tax burden: property taxes as a percentage of median household income, and residential tax levy per capita as a percentage of per capita income. These kinds of statistics provide some anecdotal evidence that as Westford has grown, it has attracted affluent homebuyers who can afford the municipal and school services they expect from the town. A challenge for Westford and many growing suburbs is that the economic position of newer households often differs from that of long-term residents.

⁸ 1990 Census, Summary File 1 Table H005; Census 2000, Summary File 1 Table H5.

⁹ Census 2000, Summary File 1 Tables P7, P8, H6, H7, H14, and Summary File 3 Tables P19, P20; Massachusetts Department of Education, Westford Public Schools, *School Profile Series*, <www.doe.mass.edu/>.

¹⁰ Census 2000, Summary File 1 Table P21, and Summary File 3 Table P56.

¹¹ Massachusetts Department of Revenue, "Average Single-Family Tax Bill," 1988-2007, and Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

TABLE 6.3
INDICATORS OF PROPERTY TAX AFFORDABILITY: HOMEOWNERS

City/Town	Levy Per Capita Pct. Per Capita Income	Median Property Taxes Pct. Median Income	City/Town	Levy Per Capita Pct. Per Capita Income	Median Property Taxes Pct. Median Income
Acton	4.7%	4.6%	Groton	4.6%	4.1%
Ayer	2.6%	2.6%	Harvard	3.8%	3.5%
Billerica	3.7%	3.4%	Littleton	4.7%	3.6%
Boxborough	4.0%	4.5%	Lowell	3.1%	3.5%
Carlisle	5.3%	4.5%	Pepperell	3.1%	3.1%
Chelmsford	4.5%	4.0%	Tewksbury	3.7%	3.4%
Concord	5.3%	4.1%	Tyngsborough	3.8%	4.1%
Dracut	3.4%	3.5%	WESTFORD	4.2%	3.7%
Dunstable	4.6%	3.6%			

Sources: Claritas, Inc.; Massachusetts Department of Revenue; Bureau of the Census.

NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC REALM

The neighborhood public realm includes streets, sidewalks, parks and other public spaces. It plays a crucial role in the aesthetic, public safety and social elements of a neighborhood. While Westford's villages and many of its neighborhoods have mature vegetation, the limited number of small public parks or public gathering spaces is striking. Residents at the public meetings for this Comprehensive Plan spoke enthusiastically about the good qualities of their neighborhoods, but they were quite vocal about the shortage of sidewalks and the lack of bicycle paths or dedicated bicycle lanes. Even where sidewalks exist, they do not connect with other sidewalks in many parts of town. The absence of continuous sidewalks near public schools, parks, and other town facilities is a significant concern.

Well-designed sidewalks make it possible for people to meet informally and for children to walk safely to school. Moreover, sidewalks are often the only means available for people with disabilities to move about in their neighborhoods. Westford is a large town, and while some areas have active neighborhood associations that help to inspire a sense of community, this is not the case everywhere. Many Westford residents yearn to walk from their neighborhoods to local destinations such as schools, playgrounds or the village centers. At the same time, people cherish the winding, tree-lined roads that contribute to Westford's rural ambience. Sidewalks can be designed to limit adverse impacts on scenic

roads, but doing so usually requires easements over private property. It is not clear how Westford would afford to carry out a major sidewalks program without a revenue source such as development impact fees or betterments. The legality of impact fees remains debatable in Massachusetts, and in most towns, betterment charges constitute a "last-resort" method of financing public improvements.

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

New Residential Development

According to data from the Westford Building Department, Westford has issued building permits for 625 housing units since 2000: 397 single-family homes, 213 condominiums, and fifteen apartments. Some condominium conversions have occurred, too, as evidenced by a slight decline in housing units assessed as two-family or multi-family dwellings and a corresponding increase in condominiums. The vast majority of residential building permits have been for improvements to existing dwellings, i.e., additions or alterations ranging from decks to major renovations and substantial reconstruction projects.¹² New residential construction and additions or alterations that increase the market value of a home provide "new growth" revenue under Proposition 2½, and Westford clearly benefits from these investments. On average, eighty to eighty-five percent of

¹² Westford Building Department, Building Permits 1982-2007 (user-generated report), July 2007; Department of Revenue, "Parcels by Use Class."

Westford's annual new-growth tax revenue is generated by changes in the residential tax base (the remainder coming from non-residential growth). Compared to the state as a whole, Westford's percentage of residential new growth revenue is noticeably larger.¹³ However, Westford is a very desirable town, nearly all of its land is zoned for some type of residential use, and developers have responded accordingly.

Zoning¹⁴

Westford regulates residential development through zoning and subdivision control, and also issues comprehensive permits for mixed-income housing. The town has two residential use districts, Residence A and B. It also has an overlay district for multi-family housing by special permit in converted mill buildings, and a second overlay district for over-55 housing by special permit.¹⁵ Single-family homes are permitted by right in four use districts – Residence A (RA), Residence B (RB), Business, and Industrial A (IA) – and by special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals in the Industrial B (IB) and Industrial C (IC) districts. In addition, accessory apartments and conversions of older single-family homes to four multi-family units are allowed by special permit wherever single-family homes are allowed. Finally, Westford provides for assisted living by special permit throughout the town except in the Business (B) District and Limited Business (LB) District.

Westford offers developers the option to seek a special permit for "Flexible Development," which involves some waivers or exceptions to the town's usual lot dimensional requirements in exchange for sensitive site planning and the provision of public benefits. Flexible Developments have to provide

¹³ Department of Revenue, "New Growth Applied to the Levy Limit," 1992-2007.

¹⁴ See also, Chapter 5, Land Use & Zoning.

¹⁵ An overlay district usually applies to a sub-area of a conventional (underlying) zoning district and either creates additional development privileges that are unavailable elsewhere in the underlying zone or imposes additional restrictions that do not affect land elsewhere in the underlying zone. The former type of overlay district – an "incentive" overlay – includes zoning like Westford's Mill Conversion Overlay District (MCO) and Senior Residential Overlay District. See also, Chapter 5, Land Use.

housing affordable to low-, moderate- or median-income households in perpetuity. Westford's Zoning Bylaw defines "low-income" as households with incomes at or below fifty percent of area median income (AMI), "moderate-income" as households with incomes between fifty-one and eighty percent AMI, and "median-income" as households with incomes between eighty-one and 120 percent AMI. Flexible Developments are limited to the same number of units that a developer could build in a conventional subdivision, but the Planning Board can approve a modest density bonus to encourage additional open space, age-restricted housing or adherence to design standards established by the Planning Board. Westford has no provision for developers to pay a fee in lieu of creating affordable housing units, which is very unusual.

While Flexible Development is a voluntary special permit, Westford requires developers to seek an Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) special permit for any project on ten or more acres of land or with more than 1,000 feet of new roadway in the RA District. The Planning Board can waive the OSRD submission process for developers seeking approval under the Flexible Development regulations.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

In an effort to control the pace of new residential development, Westford adopted a growth management bylaw after the 1995 master plan was completed. The bylaw contains a ten-year sunset provision with the option to renew for up to five years. Although the growth management bylaw was scheduled to expire in 2007, town meeting voted to extend it for an additional twelve months. In general, Westford's growth management bylaw limits the number of new residential building permits to thirty units per year, but it allows the Planning Board to set alternative development phasing requirements for senior housing and projects with voluntary density reductions and at least five acres of protected open space. Some types of housing units are exempt, too, such as accessory apartments, assisted living residences, homes built on lots that were approved before the growth management bylaw took effect, or housing for low- and moderate-income people.

While the explicit purpose of growth management is to address rate of development, the exemptions a community builds into its growth management bylaw express other policy objectives. Sometimes the exemptions influence the mix of residential uses developed while the bylaw is in effect, and in the long run the exemptions can change a community's overall buildout potential. According to the Planning Department, Westford has not reached the annual cap on building permits because so many of Westford's new housing units have been built in exempt projects or comprehensive permits.

Comprehensive Permits

In November 1969, the state's regional planning law was amended in order to address the economic and fair housing consequences of exclusionary zoning in the suburbs. When less than ten percent of a community's housing units are affordable to and reserved for occupancy by low- and moderate-income households, M.G.L. c. 40B, ss. 20-23 ("Chapter 40B") allows eligible applicants to seek a comprehensive permit if at least twenty-five percent of the housing units in their developments are subject to long-term affordability restrictions and the projects receive prior approval from a state or federal housing program.¹⁶ The prior approval process is known as "project eligibility" or "site approval."

Although not defined in the statute, "low and moderate income" means households with incomes at or below eighty percent of area median income (AMI), adjusted for household size. The same income limits that govern the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 8 Program also apply to low- and moderate-income units in comprehensive permit developments and developments that are subject to Westford's affordable housing regulations. An important difference between Westford's regulations and Chapter 40B is that Westford also requires units for families at and above the median-income range. The housing industry's euphemism for these units is "workforce

housing." Westford refers to them as "Westfordable" housing.

A comprehensive permit consolidates all local permits into one process and overrides zoning and other local regulations that make it infeasible to build affordable housing. Chapter 40B authorizes a Zoning Board of Appeals to approve, conditionally approve or deny a comprehensive permit, but in communities that do not meet the ten percent statutory minimum, the developer can appeal a denied or conditionally approved permit to the state Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) maintains an official roster of Chapter 40B units, the Subsidized Housing Inventory. As of February 2008, Westford has 306 low- and moderate-income units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory, or 4.4 percent of its Census 2000 year-round housing units. To reach the ten percent minimum, Westford would need another 382 low- and moderate-income units, but the gap will increase after official year-round housing counts are adjusted by the next federal census.

Westford has received an unusually large number of comprehensive permit applications. The following recently approved developments have contributed affordable units to Westford's Subsidized Housing Inventory:

- ◆ Rosegate: three affordable units, ten total units
- ◆ Keyes Corner Condominiums: eight affordable units, thirty-two total units
- ◆ Concord Place: four affordable units, sixteen total units
- ◆ Southgate: eleven affordable units, forty-two total units
- ◆ Woodlands at Laurel Hill, eight-four rental units
- ◆ Westford Housing Authority, a thirty-seven unit HUD "202" development for the elderly

¹⁶ Rental developments with twenty percent affordable units are also eligible for comprehensive permits if the affordable units are affordable to very-low-income households.

Westford has some affordable units in projects that did not require a comprehensive permit, including three apartments at the Brookside Mill and a homeownership development, Hawk Ridge. In the past, comprehensive permit units were placed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory as soon as the Zoning Board of Appeals approved a project and the appeal period had expired (without any appeals), but affordable units created through any other mechanism – like inclusionary zoning – did not become eligible for the Subsidized Housing Inventory until building permits were issued. Under new Chapter 40B regulations that went into effect in February 2008, all affordable units that meet basic DHCD requirements will “count” on the Subsidized Housing Inventory upon approval by a local permitting authority, and they will continue to count as long as building permits are issued within eighteen months.¹⁷ Affordable units in a non-comprehensive permit development require more effort on the town’s part because they are not monitored by the state.

HOUSING NEEDS

Housing Affordability

Westford’s home values attest to the wealth of its households. Although it has always been recognized as a fairly affluent community, Westford’s state rank for median household income has increased from thirty (out of 351) in 1980 to twelve in 2000. Today, Westford’s estimated median household income is \$124,514, and ten percent of its households have annual incomes of \$250,000 or more.¹⁸ Every key demographic indicator points to the prosperity enjoyed by Westford households: a highly educated white-collar labor force, a large percentage of married-couple families, high per capita income, top-ranked public schools, and an extremely low poverty rate. These kinds of statistics reinforce Westford’s prestige and make the town a very desirable place to live.

¹⁷ Under pre-2008 DHCD regulations, units were removed from the Subsidized Housing Inventory if a building permit had not been issued within twelve months. Westford’s percentage of affordable units dropped at one point because more than twelve months passed before a building permit was issued for The Woodlands at Laurel Hill.

¹⁸ Claritas, Inc. 2007 Demographic Estimates, Westford, Massachusetts.

Housing sales reported by *Banker and Tradesman* show that Westford’s median single-family sale price increased eighty-five percent from 1997 to 2006. Westford’s home values benefit existing homeowners and provide housing choices for wealthy homebuyers seeking buy-up opportunities in the region. However, the market is not addressing the needs of young people seeking to purchase or rent their first home, the elderly, households with low or moderate incomes, or households with incomes just above the regional median (\$84,800). But for Westford’s affordable housing regulations, market-rate development would not provide any modestly priced homes for sale, and until recently there was little if any interest in new rental housing development. For the most part, Westford has a limited spectrum of new home prices, houses that cater to traditional family homeowners, and few choices for people seeking other types of housing.

Despite the town’s efforts to create affordable housing, Westford does not have many affordable units. Not everyone defines “affordable housing” the same way, however, and Westford does have more affordable housing than the number of units DHCD recognizes under Chapter 40B. The standard definition of “affordable” stems from policy established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and codified in a number of program authorizations by Congress: subsidized housing for households with low or moderate incomes, that is, incomes at eighty percent AMI for a given household size in a given metropolitan or rural area. Over time, “low or moderate” has been refined to include a number of sub-classifications, and not all housing programs adopt the same income classification scheme. In most programs, housing is “affordable” if the sale price or monthly rent does not require low- or moderate-income households to spend more than thirty percent of their monthly gross income on housing costs. A family of three with a household income of \$55,350 (eighty percent AMI) would qualify for subsidized housing in Westford.

AFFORDABILITY GAP

Since the 1930s, the federal government has effectively subsidized homeownership through income tax deductions for mortgage interest and real es-

tate taxes, federal home mortgage insurance, and more recently, low-interest loans and grants that help moderate-income renters become homeowners. While many home-seekers have more resources than lenders require, people with limited savings find it more difficult to buy their first home. While saving to purchase a home they must also pay rent, and because apartments are scarce, market rents have become very expensive.

Under conventional loan underwriting standards, an affordable purchase price for homebuyers at Westford's median household income (\$124,514) is \$515,046.¹⁹ For this group of homebuyers, last year's median single-family home sale price of \$425,000 (2006) was clearly affordable. Condominiums often provide more affordability than single-family homes, and this appears to be true in Westford. A homebuyer with annual income of \$124,514 can afford a condominium purchase price of \$468,106. Since the median condominium sale price last year was \$350,000, it can be said that Westford's condominiums are, on balance, affordable to more than half of its own households.²⁰ Still, the town-wide median income is a poor indicator of condominium affordability because "median household income" is based on a four-person family, which is too large for most multi-family or townhouse units. The more important point is that while houses and condominiums for sale in Westford may be affordable to upper-income homebuyers, they are not affordable to first-time homebuyers.

Westford is a "buy-up" community, which means that most of its homebuyers are trading up from another house. The equity they have to invest in a home in Westford is generally sufficient to meet

¹⁹ Assumptions: thirty year, fixed-rate mortgage at 6.5%, and twenty percent downpayment, property tax rate at 1.31% purchase price (Westford FY07 tax rate = \$13,10 per thousand), and homeowner's insurance at 0.6% purchase price.

²⁰ Assumptions: thirty year, fixed-rate mortgage at 6.5%, and twenty percent downpayment, property tax rate at 1.31% purchase price (Westford FY07 tax rate = \$13.10 per thousand), homeowner's insurance at 0.4% purchase price, and condominium fee at 1% purchase price. The year-end median condominium sale price for 2006 may be depressed by the inclusion of affordable units in the total number of arm's length transactions.

the lending industry's downpayment standard: twenty percent of the purchase price of the house. Homebuyers in this position avoid the cost of private mortgage insurance (PMI), which means they have more monthly income to devote to a mortgage payment, taxes and insurance. First-time homebuyers rarely have this advantage. With less than twenty percent of the purchase price in hand, they usually have to make a monthly PMI payment in addition to a mortgage payment, taxes and insurance, and this can significantly reduce the purchase price they can afford.²¹

AFFORDABILITY NOT RECOGNIZED BY CHAPTER 40B

Another type of affordability barrier involves housing units that are technically affordable but unavailable to low- and moderate-income people because the units are occupied by households with higher incomes. This condition is known as an "affordability mismatch," and it exists to varying degrees in nearly all communities. While people find it frustrating that the Subsidized Housing Inventory does not account for informal or "market" affordability, such as homes for sale or rent at low prices, there are valid policy reasons for excluding affordable but unrestricted housing from the official roster of affordable units.

As of Census 2000, Westford had a fairly large number of rental units – about 492 – for which the monthly rent and utilities would have been affordable to low- or moderate-income tenants. However, only forty-two percent (204) of the affordable units were actually occupied by renters with low or moderate incomes. The affordable units included apartments owned and managed by the Westford Housing Authority, all of which would have been rented to lower-income tenants under the regulations that govern public housing programs. The remaining units were privately owned. Most of the one- or two-bedroom affordable units had low- or moderate-income occupants, but the same can be said for only nineteen percent (forty) of the affordable units with three or more bedrooms. In addition,

²¹ Some first-time homebuyer programs waive private mortgage insurance (PMI), such as lenders offering a "piggy-back" option like the Massachusetts Housing Partnership's SoftSecond Loan Program.

**TABLE 6.4
LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME (LMI) HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSING COST BURDEN**

Household Type	Households		LMI Cost Burden		LMI Severe Cost Burden	
	Total	LMI	Total	In %	Total	In %
Renters						
<i>Elderly</i>	88	73	45	61.7%	8	10.9%
<i>Small Families</i>	238	108	33	30.5%	15	13.9%
<i>Large Families</i>	8	4	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<i>Other</i>	189	72	23	31.9%	8	11.1%
<i>Total</i>	523	257	101	39.3%	31	12.1%
Homeowners						
<i>Elderly</i>	851	401	203	50.6%	94	23.4%
<i>Small Families</i>	4,044	249	169	67.8%	100	40.2%
<i>Large Families</i>	874	59	55	93.2%	15	25.4%
<i>Other</i>	483	88	64	72.7%	35	39.8%
<i>Total</i>	6,252	797	491	61.6%	244	30.6%
<i>Total</i>	6,775	1,054	592	56.2%	275	26.1%

Source: HUD, CHAS 2000 Data.

451 of Westford’s 6,258 owner-occupied homes were in a market value range that would have made them affordable had they been for sale, yet only sixty-four were occupied by low- and moderate-income homeowners.²²

HOUSING COST BURDEN

The national definition of housing affordability assumes that a home is affordable to a low- or moderate-income family if their monthly housing costs – a mortgage payment, property taxes, and house insurance – do not exceed thirty percent of their monthly gross income. Similarly, an apartment is considered affordable to tenants if they are not required to spend more than thirty percent of their gross monthly income for rent and utilities. Under these criteria, “affordable housing need” exists when low- or moderate-income households pay more than thirty percent of their gross income for housing costs. Housing policy analysts classify these households as “housing cost burdened.”

According to data analyzed and reported by HUD (Table 6.4), Westford had 797 homeowners and 257 renters with low or moderate incomes in 2000.²³

²² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data 2000, “Affordability Mismatch,” Westford, Massachusetts, *State of the Cities Data System*, <www.socds-huduser.org>.

²³ Westford’s Affordable Housing Action Plan includes an estimate of 1,425 households with incomes

Approximately forty-five percent were senior citizens. Of the town’s 1,054 low- or moderate-income households, 592 had housing cost burdens. The largest percentages of cost burdened households included seniors in rental units (sixty-two percent) and small and large families in owner-occupied units (sixty-eight percent and ninety-three percent, respectively).

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of low- or moderate-income elderly homeowners in Westford increased twenty-seven percent, yet the number with housing cost burdens increased eighty-eight percent. Moreover, while the total number of elderly renters decreased, the number of cost-burdened elderly renters rose by 180 percent. Still, the most severely cost burdened – low-income tenants paying more than fifty percent of their income for rent and utilities – were small families, which HUD defines as two- to four-person family households. Overall, Westford experienced total household growth of 28.2 percent from 1990 to 2000, low-income household growth of seventeen percent, and growth in cost burdened low-income households of forty-five percent.²⁴ If housing needs were measured by actual

below the regional median in 2000. This includes 1,100 in the low- or moderate-income range. HUD’s estimate, which is based on a special cross-tabulation series, is 1,054 low- or moderate-income households. The difference is minimal.

²⁴ HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data 2000, 1990, “Housing Affordability”

affordability problems instead of the ten percent goal of Chapter 40B, Westford's need would be at least 592 low- or moderate-income housing units, not the 382 required to address Chapter 40B.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING EFFORTS IN WESTFORD

Through zoning, comprehensive permits and the use of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, Westford has done more than many towns to create affordable housing. Participants in the public meetings for this Comprehensive Plan said that rising housing costs make it difficult for middle-income homebuyers to enter Westford's housing market, yet some residents have mixed feelings about inviting more affordable housing into town and others are vocally opposed. The large number of comprehensive permit applications filed in Westford over the past few years may have exacerbated concerns about affordable housing, in part because comprehensive permits produce more housing growth overall than would be possible under Westford's zoning. In addition, some Westford residents believe their neighborhoods have been forced to accept more than their fair share of affordable housing. Other residents believe more could be done to control where and how much affordable housing is built in Westford, and they say town government has not followed through on key recommendations in Westford's affordable housing plan. Still others say that town officials have tried, only to be met with voter resistance at town meeting.

Many of today's concerns about affordable housing and objections to housing growth in general were raised in public workshops held for the 1995 master plan. In the mid-1990s, however, Westford did not have the same level of comprehensive permit activity. At the time, Westford had 120 affordable rental units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory;²⁵ today, it has 306. The 186 units created since 1997 were de-

veloped after 2000, when comprehensive permit activity accelerated throughout Eastern Massachusetts. The region's robust housing market coincided with a then-recent Housing Appeals Committee decision that changed the eligibility rules for comprehensive permits.²⁶ Between 2002 and 2004, at least seven developers sought preliminary approval from the state to apply for comprehensive permits in Westford. The state granted six of those requests and Westford ultimately approved all six applications.²⁷

On one hand, Westford has more than doubled its affordable housing inventory in the past ten years, but on the other hand, the town had to absorb a 259 percent increase in total development units in order to produce the additional affordable housing. Today, the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory in Westford is 4.4 percent of the town's total year-round housing stock; in 1997, it was 2.2 percent. Westford has gained affordable units, but the sheer volume of market-rate housing production has offset the gains, and this pattern will probably repeat when the next federal census leads to adjustments in each community's percentage of Chapter 40B housing. In light of these conditions, it is understandable that many people in Westford want the town to reach the ten percent statutory minimum and gain protection against unwanted comprehensive permits in the future.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN

Westford has an active Affordable Housing Committee and an Affordable Housing Action Plan approved by the state under the "Planned Production" program. Through Planned Production, towns that actively implement a DHCD-approved housing plan become eligible for a certification process that allows them to deny additional comprehensive permits for one or two years. After a Zoning Board of Appeals approves new low- or moderate-income units equal to .50 of one percent of the community's year-round housing stock, the town can request a one-year housing plan certification. If the

Westford, Massachusetts, *State of the Cities Data System*; Census 2000, Summary File 1 Table P15, 1990 Census, Summary File 1 Table P003.

²⁵ DHCD, Subsidized Housing Inventory, July 1997. There is some disagreement in Westford about the accuracy of DHCD's 1997 records, but the town's official Subsidized Housing Inventory included 120 units, or 2.2 percent of its 1990 housing base.

²⁶ *Stuborn Limited Partnership v. Barnstable Zoning Board of Appeals* (1999). In 2007, the Massachusetts Supreme Court upheld the *Stuborn* decision in *Town of Middleborough v. Housing Appeals Committee*.

²⁷ DHCD, Chapter 40B Pipeline Report, 2006.

board approves new low- or moderate-income units equal to one percent of the community's year-round housing stock, the town can request a two-year certification. While the certification is in effect, the Zoning Board of Appeals can still grant comprehensive permits, but if it denies one, the developer has no recourse to the Housing Appeals Committee.

To qualify for a one-year housing plan certification, Westford has to create at least thirty-four new low- or moderate-income units within a single year, or sixty-nine units within a single-year for a two-year certification.²⁸ In fact, Westford had a one-year certification after The Woodlands at Laurel Hill was approved, but the certification expired in December 2006. The town will qualify for a two-year certification for the new Jefferson at Westford rental development off Littleton Road. However, DHCD's new regulations limit the effective period for approved housing plans to five years. Since Westford's plan was written in 2004, the town may have to update the plan soon in order to preserve its approval status under the Planned Production program.

The Affordable Housing Action Plan contains several recommendations for increasing Westford's supply of affordable housing. While some recommendations have been implemented, several have not materialized:

- ◆ Allowing two-family homes in both residential districts;
- ◆ Allowing multi-family housing in the Commercial Highway district, which contains most of Westford's business-zoned land;
- ◆ Establishing a homebuyer program to make existing market-rate homes affordable;
- ◆ Participating in a regional HOME Consortium; and
- ◆ Offering incentives to increase the number of accessory apartments in town.

All of these proposals could help Westford work toward the ten percent statutory minimum under Chapter 40B, although some would be more effective than others. Allowing multi-family housing in the Commercial Highway district may be the least acceptable to local officials and townspeople, but it would probably do more to increase the supply of affordable housing than any other proposal described in the Affordable Housing Action Plan – other than issuing comprehensive permits.

When Westford's housing plan was written in 2004, promoting affordable accessory apartments was in vogue due to Barnstable's successful accessory apartment "amnesty" program. Several communities adopted zoning regulations to encourage affordable accessory apartments, whether by allowing them as of right or allowing affordable apartments in detached buildings (such as a barn or garage). At least one town set aside Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to subsidize accessory apartments that owners agreed to reserve as affordable housing.

Since 2004, DHCD has issued new guidelines that affordable accessory apartment initiatives have to meet in order for the units to be eligible for the Subsidized Housing Inventory. The guidelines reflect state concerns about the potential for housing discrimination in the tenant selection process, yet they also make it difficult for small towns to establish and administer an accessory apartment program. In addition, several Massachusetts communities have considered homebuyer programs to make existing housing units affordable. Unfortunately, "shared equity" housing initiatives are more complicated to design and administer than many people realize. As a rule, they work best when carried out in partnership with an experienced non-profit or when tied to a specific development.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND AND COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

Westford has committed Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding to affordable housing activities every year since 2002. For example, CPA revenue was used to pay for predevelopment costs associated with the Housing Authority's HUD 202 proj-

²⁸ DHCD, "Planned Production Targets by Town," March 2008.

ect, to buy down housing prices in the Brookside Mill development, and to prepare for construction of special needs housing. In 2005, Westford Town Meeting agreed to adopt the provisions of M.G.L. c 44, s. 55C and create an affordable housing trust fund. Although the Affordable Housing Committee requested \$1 million for the new trust fund, the Community Preservation Committee recommended that \$200,000 of CPA revenue be transferred to the trust for affordable housing purposes. According to the Housing Trust's funding application, CPA revenue will be used for assistance such as purchase price buy-downs, downpayment and closing costs, or to exercise the town's right of first refusal if an existing affordable unit is for sale and an income-eligible buyer cannot be found.

Other Housing Needs

The Affordable Housing Action Plan promotes numerical goals for affordable housing production by income level, age range, household type and housing type. These goals are very important, but Westford has other housing needs, too: housing choices for different types of households at all market levels, and the preservation of small, older homes.

HOUSING CHOICES

Expanding housing choices in a community often requires increasing the supply of affordable units, but "choice" is not limited to affordability. Westford has a conspicuously small percentage of renter-occupied units, and nearly seventy percent are single-family homes, two-family homes, or small, older multi-family buildings that pre-date zoning. Of the 550 renter-occupied units in Westford as of Census 2000, ninety percent were built prior to 1970 and fifty-two percent prior to 1940.²⁹ The Affordable Housing Action Plan recommends more rental housing at all income levels. The plan also notes that Westford has a disproportionately small share of all rental units in NMCOG's region, and that overall, the types and costs of housing in Westford do not match characteristics of its workforce: people who work in Westford every day, eighty-one percent commuting from other towns.³⁰

²⁹ Census 2000, Summary File 3 Table H36.

³⁰ Census 2000, "MCD/County to MCD/County Worker Flow Files."

Finally, the plan points out that Westford's median rent dropped between 1990 and 2000, but this is not a surprise. When the total number of rental units declined, subsidized apartments made up a larger percentage of the renter-occupied housing inventory. The same condition occurred in many suburbs during the 1990s; wherever public or subsidized rental housing became a larger percentage of all renter-occupied units, the median rent barely increased and often it dropped even though market-rate rents for the non-subsidized units increased.

Under current policy, the state credits all of the units in a Chapter 40B rental development to a community's Subsidized Housing Inventory. This policy was adopted to promote rental housing, so it creates some advantages for communities seeking to reach the ten percent statutory minimum. However, comprehensive permit rental developments often stop short of meeting the needs of many renters, and occasionally they cause market rents to increase elsewhere in a community. While the affordable units generally help small (two- to three-person) households with incomes between seventy and eighty percent AMI, the market-rate units are expensive, usually commanding rents at the top of the regional market. Sometimes the affordable units are too expensive for very-low-income households, too, including those with a Section 8 voucher.

In addition, most rental developments today – with or without a comprehensive permit – have been limited to one- or two-bedroom apartments, which do not address the needs of households with the greatest rental housing barriers: low-income families. Further, developments for over-55 households cater to a different population than the seniors and frail elders who need affordable apartments, but the subsidies required to create deeply affordable senior housing have largely disappeared or are very difficult to obtain. The Westford Housing Authority's new HUD 202 development is an unusual opportunity to provide housing for elders who could never afford to purchase or rent in a conventional over-55 development.

Westford could use some smaller housing units, not only for seniors but also for other households: single people, young couples, non-custodial parents seek-

ing to live near their children, or single parents with a child. To some extent Westford's zoning includes rules to encourage small units, but only to a point. In each case, the provisions include some noteworthy disadvantages. For example:

- ◆ The Flexible Development bylaw allows multi-family buildings, but the building size is limited to five units. This all but assures that if a Flexible Development includes any multi-family units, they will be homeownership units (condominiums or townhouses), not apartments. In addition, Flexible Development allows the Planning Board to grant a modest density bonus, and all density bonus units must be limited to two bedrooms. Since the Growth Management Bylaw applies to market-rate units in a Flexible Development, the bylaw and its density bonus in particular may not be as useful as they appear.
- ◆ Since Flexible Development is Westford's only mechanism for new multi-family housing construction, the town seems to have established a policy that rental developers will need a comprehensive permit. Rental housing is rarely built in configurations of five-unit buildings, and the maximum density that can be achieved under the Flexible Development bylaw is probably inadequate to make rental units feasible. In some communities, local developers looking for a small investment project will convert an older single-family home or an obsolete commercial building to a few apartments, but these types of projects (and the developers with any interest in them) are the exception, not the rule.
- ◆ Westford chose to exempt Mill Conversion Projects (MCP), assisted living facilities, and accessory apartments from the Growth Management bylaw, and since these are small-unit projects by design, the town does have some provisions in place to diversify its housing stock. Still, the Mill Conversion Overlay District applies to only a few properties, and accessory dwellings require a special permit. Some areas of Massachusetts have absorbed so many over-55 and assisted living developments that the market is saturated. In many communities, developers approved to build over-55 housing have asked local permit-

ting authorities for permission to remove the age restrictions on the projects because they cannot sell the units.

HOUSING PRESERVATION

Westford has a demolition delay bylaw that allows the Westford Historical Commission to impose a six-month stay on demolition permits for buildings deemed historically significant (or "preferably preserved.") The bylaw applies to all buildings over eighty-five years old. The number of residences recently demolished in Westford is not clear, but in the town's 2002 Annual Report, the WHC noted that Westford was in a "demolition mode," for thirteen buildings had been demolished for replacement homes the previous year. Demolition delay is very important for protecting historic buildings, but it does not guarantee housing preservation. In many communities, the small single-family homes that once supplied starter housing for young couples have become key targets for demolition and replacement. As a rule, communities that have had a demolition delay bylaw for several years find that a six-month stay has virtually no effect on tear-towns. Land is so expensive that people will wait six months and proceed with their original plan.

Often, lots occupied by small homes are worth more than the buildings themselves. Due to their age, some of the houses with low building values in Westford would not meet the demolition delay threshold for review by the WHC. Westford's demolition delay bylaw focuses on historic preservation, not housing preservation. Nantucket is believed to be the only town in Massachusetts with a demolition delay bylaw that addresses both housing and historic preservation objectives.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Future Residential Development Potential

Westford has grown considerably in the past twenty 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

TABLE 6.5
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	Percent in District
Residence A	465	2,760.41	1,717.70	136	1,517.06	3,234.76	2,096	93.1%
Residence B	118	65.04	29.24	4	54.47	83.71	88	2.4%
Business	1	0.93	0		0.00	0.00	0	0.0%
Industrial A	19	163.27	149.93	2	5.99	155.92	102	4.5%
Total	603	2,989.64	1,896.86		1,577.52	3,474.39	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.

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 District. These estimates do not include unrestricted land owned by the town or MIT.

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 Residence A and B 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: Residence A, Residence B, Business, and Industrial A. 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 other residential uses by special permit in all but Limited Business. 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.
- ◆ 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 approval of Jefferson at Westford all but guarantees Westford's eligibility for a two-year reprieve from other Chapter 40B developments. Nonetheless,

Westford will continue to receive new comprehensive permit applications after 2009. 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 Table 6.5, this estimate seems to remain valid if buildout potential is defined as additional single-family homes in districts where the town allows them by right.

COMPREHENSIVE 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- ◆ Continue to work toward meeting the ten percent 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 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 DHCD requirements. As part of this effort, Westford could es-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ECONOMIC STATISTICAL PROFILE

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

Population Characteristics

POPULATION AGE

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

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

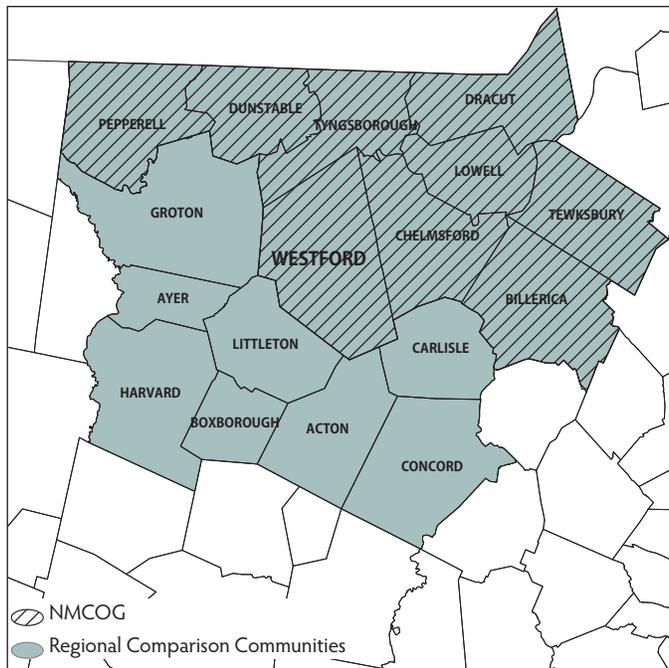


Figure 7.1. Westford region.

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

EDUCATION

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

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

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

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

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

TABLE 7.2
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER

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

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

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

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

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

Households and Families

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Income

PER CAPITA INCOME

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

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

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

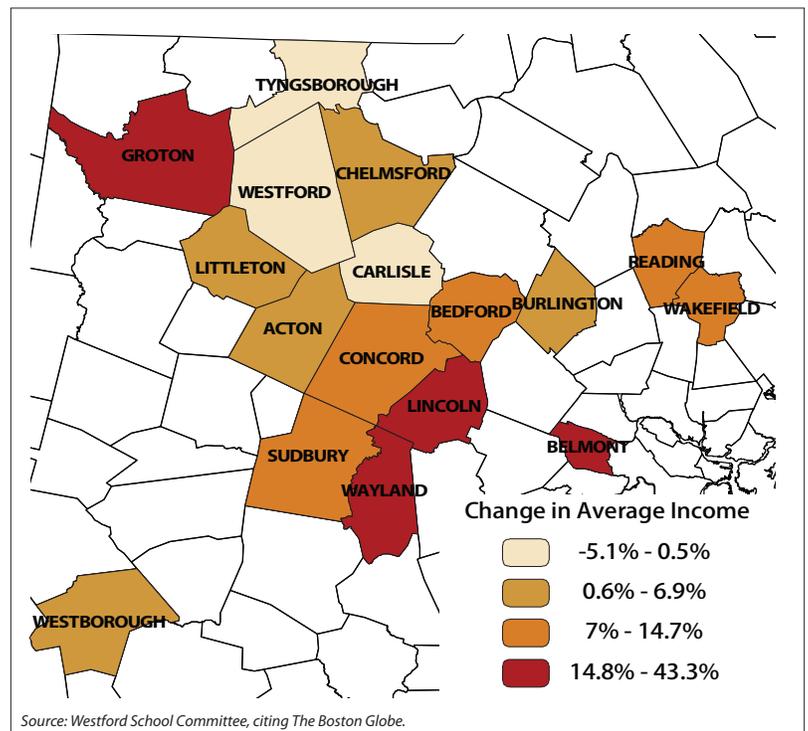


Figure 7.2. Change in Average Household Income, 2001-2005. Westford Public Schools Market Basket.

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

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

POVERTY

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

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

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

The Economy

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

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

TABLE 7.5
CHANGES IN LOCAL LABOR FORCE, 2000-2007

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

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

TABLE 7.6
EMPLOYED RESIDENTS

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

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

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

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

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

TABLE 7.7
ESTABLISHMENTS, EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

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

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

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

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

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

ranked seventh regionally for total number of establishments.

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

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

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

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

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

TABLE 7.8
LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS, 2010-2030

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

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

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

TABLE 7.9
INDUSTRY COMPOSITION: WESTFORD

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

Source: ES-202 Reports.

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Doing Business in Westford

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

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

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

Infrastructure

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

WATER SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

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

TABLE 7.10
WESTFORD'S PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES

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

Source: Westford Water Department.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: 2006 Annual Report, Town of Westford

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

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

Source: Westford Water Department.

**TABLE 7.12.2
QUARTERLY FIRE PROTECTION RATES**

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

Source: Westford Water Department.

**TABLE 7.12.3
CUSTOMER SERVICE RATES**

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

Source: Westford Water Department.

**TABLE 7.12.4
RATES FOR OTHER CHARGES**

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

Source: Westford Water Department.

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

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

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

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

WASTEWATER DISPOSAL

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

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

OTHER UTILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commercial and Industrial Zoning

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

and industrial districts include 1,983.04 acres of land.

BUSINESS DISTRICT (B)

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

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

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

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

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

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

BUSINESS LIMITED DISTRICT (BL)

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

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

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

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

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

COMMERCIAL HIGHWAY (CH)

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

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

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

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

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

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

PLANNED COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS (PCD)

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

INDUSTRIAL HIGHWAY (IH)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PLANNED INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (PID)

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

INDUSTRIAL A DISTRICT (IA)

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

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

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

WESTFORD COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

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

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

INDUSTRIAL B DISTRICT (IB)

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

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

- ◆ Removal of sand and gravel

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

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

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

INDUSTRIAL C DISTRICT (IC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

INDUSTRIAL D DISTRICT (ID)

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

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

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

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

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

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

MILL CONVERSION OVERLAY DISTRICT (MCO)

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

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

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

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

HOME OCCUPATIONS

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

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

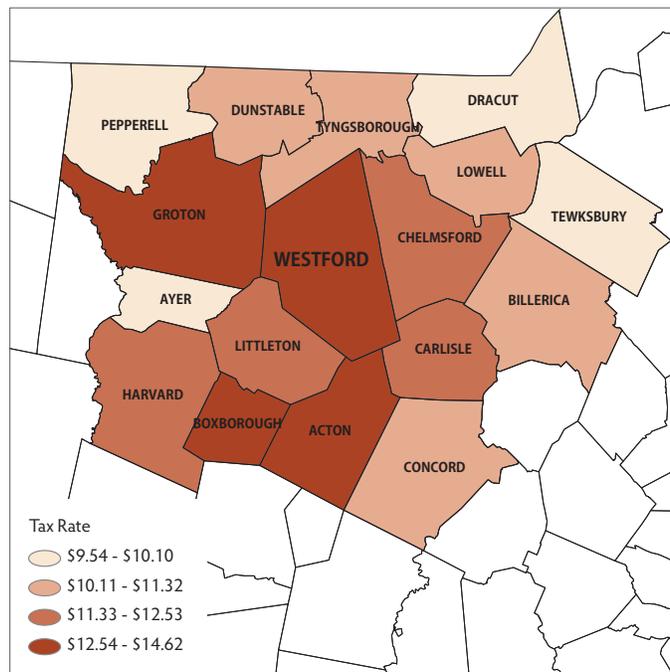
Commercial and Industrial Activity

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

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

Figure 7.2. Residential Tax Rates.

Source: Department of Revenue.



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

TABLE 7.13
BUILDING PERMITS FOR NEW COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

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

Source: Westford Building Department.

TABLE 7.14
COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

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

Source: Westford Planning Department.

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

gether with the estimated construction cost of each project.

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

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

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

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

Balance Between Economic Growth and Quality of Life

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

OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

THREATS

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

WAYS TO INCREASE SUPPORT FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

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

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

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. DEVELOP A PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP.

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

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

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

2. ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT ALONG ROUTES 110 AND 40.

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

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

3. IMPROVE THE PERMITTING PROCESS AND COMMUNICATION.

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

each board and commission in order to receive permits.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Westford and the surrounding cities and towns are served by regional transportation networks composed of several modes of transportation, including automobiles, bicycles and pedestrians, commuter facilities and freight rail service. Westford's roadway system includes a blend of historic local roads and newer regional highways. Old roads were established as Westford transitioned from a farming community to a mill town in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This growth continued into

the twentieth century, with Westford's development as a suburb and the growth of industrial and commercial activity in Lowell. The rise of technology-related commerce along Route 128 and I-495 brought further accessibility to Westford, which has now become the home of major technology firms in numerous office parks along the I-495 corridor.

The railroads in and around Westford also followed the historic development patterns of New England. In the peak of the industrial and manufacturing era, two rail lines served this area. One of them, the Boston and Maine (B&M) Line, still supports freight operations, although no direct freight rail services are provided to businesses and industries in Westford. The rail line runs in an east-west direction through Westford, connecting to Ayer in the vicinity of Devens.

In addition to railroads and roadways, pedestrian and bicycle facilities are an important component of the circulation network. When Westford was a farming community with a sparse population, pedestrians shared the roadway with carts and wagons. As the town developed with the advent of vehicular-based roadways, Westford did not establish a clearly defined infrastructure for pedestrian traffic. Today, Westford continues to struggle with this issue because amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists are non-existent in most parts of town. The lack of pedestrian amenities is a public safety problem and it promotes the use of automobiles even for walkable trips.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Roadways

Located southwest of Lowell and Chelmsford, Westford lies in northern Massachusetts, close to the New Hampshire border. It is well served by regional highways, with direct access from Interstate Highway I-495 and U.S. Route 3 (Map 8.1). Westford is also connected to surrounding towns and cities such as Chelmsford, Lowell, Tyngsborough, Dunstable, Groton, Littleton and Acton through arterials and collector roads.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Roadways are typically classified by their function and purpose. These kinds of classifications identify the hierarchy for the effective collection and distribution of vehicles. Roadways may be classified as interstates, arterials, collectors and local roadways. Westford is a member of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) Regional Planning Agency (RPA), which assists the Commonwealth with functional classification of roadways when appropriate. According to NMCOG,

Westford has a total of 165 centerline miles (333 lane miles) of roadway, ranging from interstate highways to local roads.

For practical purposes, roads in Westford can be classified based on jurisdiction, ownership, and maintenance responsibility, including state-numbered, state-owned and maintained; state-numbered, town-owned and maintained; town-owned and maintained; and unaccepted roads. The main roadways are described as follows:

- ◆ **Interstate Highways and Principal Arterials.**

Interstate highways and principal arterials form the regional network of roads connecting cities over state lines. They provide access to urban activity centers and major commercial areas, and they are state owned and maintained. They serve only motorized vehicles with controlled access, carrying high volumes of traffic. In Westford, I-495 and Route 3 fall into this category.

- ◆ **Interstate 495** bisects Westford. According to the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) Inventory (2002), I-495 has approximately four road miles and more than 26 lane miles within Westford’s boundaries. Westford has one I-495 interchange, Exit 32, providing access to Boston Road/Route 110.

- ◆ **Route 3**, which generally runs in the north-south direction, also provides access into Westford. Poor traffic operations along the Route 3 corridor resulted in a comprehensive improvements program, authorized in August 1999 and substantially completed in 2005. The roadway project has increased capacity and improved safety by adding a third travel lane, shoulders, improvements

to thirteen interchanges and the replacement of thirty bridges. Although approximately one mile of Route 3 lies within Westford, the Route 40 interchange is located just outside the town line in Chelmsford, and Route 40 serves not only as an important

**TABLE 8.1
FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION FOR ROADWAYS WITHIN WESTFORD**

	Interstate	Arterial	Collector	Local	Total
Urban	26.04	68.14	18.18	150.08	262.44
Rural	0	3.54	14.55	46.05	64.14
Total	26.04	71.68	32.73	196.13	326.58

Data Source: NMCOG Transportation Plan for the Northern Middlesex Region 2003-2025

gateway into Westford but also as a connection to the regional highway network and towns west of Westford such as Groton.

- ◆ **Minor Arterials.** Minor arterials are secondary streets that support and connect principal arterials. They support travel within geographic regions with lower speeds and lower traffic volumes than principal arterials. They may also serve long-distance travel movements and connect principal arterials on a regional level. Within Westford, Route 40, Route 110, and Route 27 serve as minor arterials.
- ◆ **State Route 110** is a state-owned and maintained minor arterial south of I-495. It runs primarily in a southwesterly to northeasterly direction parallel to I-495. Land uses along the Route 110 corridor are primarily commercial and industrial, including some major retail developments, office parks and Kimball’s Farm.
- ◆ **Route 40** has predominantly residential uses along its frontage, except near major intersections such as Oak Hill Road and Keyes Road, where there is a mix of residential and commercial uses.
- ◆ **Route 27** is residential in character and provides access to multiple subdivisions.
- ◆ **Major Collectors.** Major collectors gather trips from local roads and distribute them to arteri-

als. They serve a smaller geographic area and provide access at a local level. Compared to arterials, major collectors support fewer vehicles and usually lower speeds. A collector system may access residential, commercial and industrial areas to connect with local roads. Major collector roads within Westford include Depot Street/Road, Boston Road, Route 225 (Concord Road, Carlisle Road), Tyngsborough Road and Dunstable Road. All of these roads are town-owned and maintained.

- ◆ **Local Roads.** Local roads form the most basic unit of roadway systems, and they are designed for lower traffic volumes and vehicle speeds. They provide direct access to homes, businesses, institutional uses, and industrial areas, and access between adjacent properties. In Westford, some of the local subdivision roads have not been accepted by town meeting due to inadequate design standards or incomplete construction. Such roadways are private and are not normally maintained by the town.

COMMUTING PATTERNS

Commuting patterns are usually influenced by a jurisdiction’s location in the region, land use, development density, and roadway connectivity. Westford’s proximity to Route 3 and I-495 provides excellent access to the regional highway network and many places of employment along the I-495 corridor and elsewhere in Eastern Massachusetts. As shown in Table 8.2, the number of workers 16 years and older in Westford increased by more than 1,800 people

TABLE 8.2
MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

Subject	1990 Census		2000 Census		Change 1990-2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Workers 16+ Years	8,881	100	10,745	100	1,864	100.0
Drive alone	7,876	88.7	9,457	88.0	1,581	20.1
Carpooled	612	6.9	570	5.3	-42	-6.9
Public transportation (Including Taxicab)	55	0.6	125	1.2	70	127.3
Bicycle or walked	115	1.3	60	0.6	-55	-47.8
Motorcycle or other means	54	0.6	16	0.1	-38	-70.4
Worked at home	169	1.9	517	4.8	348	205.9

Data Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Census 2000.

between 1990 and 2000, or twenty percent. In 2000, eighty-eight percent of Westford’s commuters drove alone and only 5.3 percent carpooled. The percentage of people taking transit doubled, but still remained low at 1.2 percent. The greatest change involved the number of people working at home, which increased almost 200 percent over ten years and stood at about five percent of Westford’s employed labor force in 2000. This may be due to companies allowing more flexibility to reduce congestion and increase worker productivity. In addition, it could reflect the types of service sector jobs held by Westford residents.

The Bureau of the Census produces a special tabulation series that reports the origins and destinations

for trips of employed workers. Table 8.3 shows that nearly twenty percent of the people who work in Westford also live in the town. Another twenty-five percent of the employees live in surrounding cities and towns such as Lowell, Chelmsford and Tyngsborough. Due to its location close to the New Hampshire border, Westford attracts about eleven percent of its employment from New Hampshire residents. Measured by job destination, more than twenty-one percent of Westford’s residents work locally. An additional thirty percent work in towns that are generally located within a ten-mile radius around Westford. Only four percent of the town’s residents commute to Boston, and another four percent work in New Hampshire.

**TABLE 8.3
ORIGINS & DESTINATIONS OF PERSON COMMUTING TO AND FROM WESTFORD**

Residence of Persons Employed in Westford	Number of Employees	%	Workplace of Westford Residents	Number of Residents	%
Westford	2,307	19.4	Westford	2,307	21.5
Lowell	944	8.0	Chelmsford	801	7.5
Chelmsford	694	5.8	Lowell	500	4.7
Tyngsborough	296	2.5	Boston	424	3.9
Dracut	287	2.4	Bedford	419	3.9
Groton	257	2.2	Billerica	386	3.6
Billerica	251	2.1	Concord	345	3.2
Littleton	251	2.1	Burlington	333	3.1
Acton	245	2.1	Acton	330	3.1
Pepperell	204	1.7	Andover	289	2.7
Ayer	203	1.7	Waltham	286	2.7
Fitchburg	182	1.5	Cambridge	279	2.6
Leominster	168	1.4	Lexington	241	2.2
Boston	146	1.2	Tewksbury	237	2.2
Lawrence	145	1.2	Littleton	184	1.7
Marlborough	118	1.0	Woburn	151	1.4
Other MA Towns	3,732	31.5	Marlborough	150	1.4
New Hampshire	1,369	11.5	Framingham	122	1.1
Connecticut	27	0.2	Wilmington	117	1.1
Maine	15	0.1	Tyngsborough	113	1.1
Rhode Island	14	0.1	Westborough	111	1.0
New York	10	0.1	Other MA Towns	2,137	19.9
			New Hampshire	427	4.0
			Maine	8	0.1
			Rhode Island	6	0.1
			Other	42	0.4
Total	11,865	100.0	Total	10,745	100.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, MCD/County-to-MCD/County Worker Flow Files.

ACCIDENT AND SAFETY RECORDS

Accident data are based on records from the MassHighway department’s crash history information from 2003 to 2005. As reported in Table 8.4, the number of accidents in Westford fluctuated between 2003 and 2005, with an increase in 2005. However, the number of fatalities has declined over the past two years.



Westford intersection with Route 110, with signage partially concealed by vegetation.

Table 8.5 shows that the Littleton Road (Rte 110)/Boston Road/Carlisle Road intersection is a particularly critical area, with an average of over thirty-two accidents a year. The intersections at Boston Road and the I-495 northbound and southbound ramps also have high accident rates. The I-495 intersections were signalized in 2007, which should improve safety and lead to fewer accidents.

TABLE 8.4
OVERALL CRASH HISTORY DATA FOR WESTFORD

Year	Total Number of Accidents	Total Number of Injuries	Total Number of Fatalities
2003	497	113	6
2004	480	119	1
2005	511	112	2
Average	496.0	114.7	3.0

Source: MassHighway Crash Report 2003–2005.

TABLE 8.5
CRASH HISTORY BY CRITICAL INTERSECTIONS

Intersection	Year				Average
	2003	2004	2005	Total	
Groton Road (Route 40) / North Street	1	8	5	14	4.67
Groton Road (Route 40) / Keyes Rd / Nutting Rd	0	1	2	3	1.00
Groton Road (Route 40) / Dunstable Road	8	5	9	22	7.33
Groton Road (Route 40) / Tyngsboro Rd / Depot St	3	8	4	15	5.00
Groton Road (Route 40) / Forrest Road	1	3	0	4	1.33
Depot Street / Nutting Road	3	0	3	6	2.00
Depot Street / Burbeck Way	7	4	3	14	4.67
Depot Street / Plain Road	6	7	2	15	3.00
Forge Village Road / Cold Spring Road	4	6	3	13	4.33
Boston Road / Main Street	6	4	5	15	5.00
Boston Road / Lincoln Street / Hildreth Street	1	1	8	10	3.33
Boston Road / I-495 Ramps	37	26	30	93	31.00
Littleton Rd (Rte 110) / Concord Rd (Rte 225)	5	5	4	14	4.67
Littleton Rd (Rte 110) / Powers Rd	13	9	9	31	10.33
Littleton Rd (Rte 110) / Boston Rd / Carlisle Rd	21	35	42	98	32.67
Littleton Rd (Rte 110) / Tadmuck Rd	5	7	10	22	7.33
Concord Rd (Rte 225) / Powers Rd	5	6	9	20	6.67

Source: MassHighway Crash Report 2003 – 2005

Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

Pedestrian and bicycle amenities are an essential component of a community's transportation network. They offer an alternative, non-motorized and non-polluting means of transportation. They also encourage physical activity, which is a health benefit. In addition, they provide recreational opportunities, enhance community interaction, and provide a vital source of transportation for those with limited access to an automobile. Pedestrian traffic within commercial areas also reduces the need for large parking lots and reduces traffic congestion because sidewalks help to avoid shorter vehicle trips between retail stores within walking distance of each other. In contrast, lack of sidewalks or gaps in existing sidewalk networks, poor maintenance, and substandard pedestrian crossing locations create barriers to walking. Providing continuous and well-maintained sidewalks encourages the public to walk.

SIDEWALKS

Together, Westford's expansive land area, contemporary suburban developments, and narrow, winding historic roadways present a significant challenge for providing adequate sidewalks throughout the town. It may not be possible to provide sidewalks on every street, but the lack of sidewalks at critical areas creates public safety issues that have been the subject of much discussion before and during this master plan process. Existing sidewalks are concentrated mainly in the Town Center and within newer residential subdivisions, and are largely absent from critical areas such as around schools. If sidewalks were constructed in these locations, students living within a one-mile radius and even beyond could be encouraged to walk instead of taking the bus or being dropped off by their parents. In addition, sidewalks along Route 110 are a high priority due to the high volume of traffic in the area and the high concentration of businesses, offices, and retail establishments. Sidewalks on Route 100 would help to separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic, improve overall safety, and encourage non-vehicular trips between the office parks and retail areas.

Past attempts to address this challenge, including the Sidewalk Master Plan in May 2000, have not been successful. The Board of Selectmen adopted the Sidewalks Master Plan as a policy tool for various town agencies and private developers to provide sidewalks and trail installations in new developments. The plan established priorities for pedestrian facilities and provided design guidelines for new sidewalks that would be appropriate to the character of Westford. The priorities included installing sidewalks to serve existing pedestrian generation points such as schools and government buildings, to connect neighborhoods, and to address needs in areas with high pedestrian concentrations.

Westford's inability to implement the Sidewalk Master Plan could be attributed to lack of funding, right-of-way constraints (including stone walls), and the plan's implementation goals and schedule. However, lack of a funding is probably the greatest obstacle to constructing sidewalks in Westford. Sidewalk construction is expensive and without a dedicated funding mechanism, even the most carefully laid out plans would be difficult to implement. The most likely funding source will be local revenue, e.g., a predictable allocation in Westford's capital budget. On occasion, state grants are available for sidewalk improvements, too, but grant programs fluctuate in response to the state's priorities and fiscal condition. In some cases, development impact fees may help to address sidewalk construction needs, but Westford would have to prepare a long-range capital improvements plan that clearly links sidewalk construction in various parts of town with sources of user (pedestrian) demand, estimated construction costs, and the proportional share of those costs that would be assigned to new growth. Westford needs to revisit and revise the Sidewalk Master Plan to provide clear implementation goals, a design, construction and maintenance cost analysis, and most importantly, funding sources to support sidewalk construction.

BIKEWAYS AND TRAILS

Bicycle Routes. Westford's roadways currently have no designated bicycle routes or lanes. This kind of infrastructure is particularly needed around commercial centers, office parks, and public institutions such as schools and community centers.

MassHighway guidelines encourage the provision of bicycle accommodation in the form of wide shoulders or dedicated bicycle lanes on state-funded roadway projects, where feasible. Westford should adopt the same guideline for town-owned roadways when they are scheduled for reconstruction.

Local Trails. Westford has an extensive town-wide trail network.¹ The town has received Transportation Enhancement (TE) grants to design sections of a multi-use trail along the old Red-line Trolley right-of-way. The East Boston Camp site and some of the town's conservation areas also have a network of trails. Residents have supported expanding these trail networks and volunteers currently maintain the existing trails. Westford's policies also encourage new developments to provide connections to existing trails, create new trails, and in some cases, reserve corridors for future trail construction. However, sometimes conflicts arise when the trail easements on private property are not clearly marked and new homeowners realize that members of the public are trying to use the trails.

Regional Trails. On a regional scale, Westford is part of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail project, which runs along the southern end of the town's boundaries. The trail will connect communities from Lowell to Framingham and will be constructed in three phases. The first phase begins in Chelmsford at the Lowell/Chelmsford line and ends at Route 225 in Westford, covering 6.8 miles. Construction for this phase started in the fall of 2007. The second phase of the trail project starts in Westford and connects to Carlisle, Acton, Concord and a portion of Sudbury. Westford appropriated CPA funds for the design phase of this project and construction began in 2008.

Public Transportation

Westford lies within the Lowell Regional Transit Authority's (LRTA) service area, which also provides transit service to Acton, Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Groton, Lowell, Maynard, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Townsend, and Tyngsborough. Transit facilities within the LRTA

include buses and paratransit. Additionally, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) offers commuter rail service.

Commuter Rail. Commuter rail service to North Station in Boston is available to Westford residents via the Fitchburg Line, which is accessible from the Littleton/I-495, South Acton and West Concord commuter stations. Commuters on the Fitchburg Line can transfer to the Red Line Subway at the Porter Square Station in Cambridge and travel to the South Station Intermodal facility in downtown Boston. Additionally, commuter rail service is available on the Lowell Line from the Lowell Gallagher Terminal or North Billerica Station to North Station in downtown Boston.

Bus Service. There is currently no fixed-route bus service to Westford. The closest bus service is the bus serving LRTA Route 15, which travels on Route 110 in Chelmsford and terminates near the Westford town line.

Paratransit. The LRTA provides paratransit services as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The LRTA Road Runner Senior Service is a curb-to-curb paratransit service for residents 60 years or older, operating from Monday to Friday between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. It is a shared shuttle-bus service and all vehicles have wheelchair accessibility. Also, the Westford Council on Aging provides van service to local seniors. Eligible residents can request these services by contacting LRTA Road Runner Service or the Council on Aging and scheduling their trips in advance.

While the town has not supported introducing local bus service in the past, there is an increasing recognition that Westford needs these services along Route 110. Private shuttles are currently being provided for employees at some of the major commercial and retail centers on Route 110. Consolidating these services with connections from the office parks to the retail destinations along Route 110 and extending transit services along Route 110 is anticipated to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles. In addition, creating a 'Park and Ride' facility on Route 110 or on Route 40 near Route 3 could pro-

¹ See Open Space and Natural Resources Element for additional information about Westford's trails.

vide a meeting place for commuters participating in carpools or vanpools, or as a transfer point to bus service.

An excellent spot for a Park and Ride would be on Boston road, on Town land just across from the I-495 southbound exit, possibly in conjunction with other Town uses. Locating such a lot under the power lines would be efficient as no other use is allowed under the wires.

Bridges

MassHighway uses standards developed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) to evaluate and rate all bridges within the Commonwealth. The bridges are rated on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 denoting the highest quality. According to MassHighway's bridge inventory, five bridges in Westford are functionally obsolete, as listed below. "Functionally obsolete" includes bridges that do not meet current AASHTO design standards but are structurally sound.

- ◆ Depot Road over Stony Brook
- ◆ Bridge Street over Stony Brook
- ◆ Stony Brook Road over Stony Brook
- ◆ I-495 Southbound over Tadmuck Road
- ◆ I-495 Northbound over Tadmuck Road

The Beaver Brook Road Bridge over Beaver Brook was classified as structurally deficient, with an AASHTO rating of 38.1 in 2007.

Freight Railroads

Freight rail service in Westford must be considered in a regional context since there is no direct service to businesses or industries in Westford. The area around Westford forms an important connection between Boston's terminal facilities to Western Massachusetts and the surrounding states. The main freight line from Boston to the Devens area crosses

the central portion of Westford. Approximately six freight trains operate daily on this facility, most of which is owned by the B&M Railroad and operated by Pan Am Railways (formerly Guilford Railways).² The closest intermodal transportation and distribution facility is located in Ayer.

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume data are available through traffic counts collected by NMCOG and MassHighway, and in traffic studies prepared for major development projects in Westford. Table 8.6 reports traffic volumes for major roadway segments in Westford based on data collected between 2003 and 2007. These traffic counts do not contain enough historical data to show trends.

Critical Traffic Areas

The Westford Highway Department prepared a Traffic Management Plan in collaboration with the Westford Fire, Police and Planning Departments in order to identify areas that require roadway and intersection improvements. The list below highlights some of the critical traffic areas identified in the Highway Department's plan and in other studies and field surveys.

Route 40. The Route 40 corridor is likely to see new commercial and residential developments in the future as developers take advantage of the excellent access to the regional highway network. Increased development will affect traffic operations if not properly mitigated and managed. Growth in other communities, such as Groton and Ayer will also increase traffic on this road. The vacant 110-acre site at 540 Groton Road near the Chelmsford town line is the most significant developable parcel in the corridor.

Route 40 at Oak Hill Road. Though Oak Hill Road is a local road and particularly narrow near Route 40, it connects to Plain Road and provides a cut-through for motorists along the eastern side of Westford. Intersection geometry improvements

² NMCOG, Transportation Plan for the Northern Middlesex Region 2007-2030.

TABLE 8.6
AVERAGE WEEKDAY DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES ON KEY ROADWAYS IN WESTFORD

Roadway	Route	Location	Year	Source	Daily Volume
Groton Rd.	Rte. 40	West of Nutting Rd.	2004	NMCOG	9,400
Groton Rd.	Rte. 40	East of Dunstable Rd.	2006	NMCOG	9,700
Groton Rd.	Rte. 40	West of Dunstable Rd.	2004/2006	NMCOG/HA	9,500/10,425
Groton Rd.	Rte. 40	West of Depot St.	2004	NMCOG	10,100
Groton Rd.	Rte. 40	West of Forrest Rd.	2004	NMCOG	7,600
Groton Rd.	Rte. 40	East of Forrest Road	2004	NMCOG	7,500
Groton Rd.	Rte. 40	At Groton town line	2003 / 2006	NMCOG/HA	4,000 / 4,400
Groton Rd.	Rte. 40	At Chelmsford town line	2001	NMCOG	11,400
Dunstable Rd.		N. of Route 40	2006	NMCOG	3,360
Dunstable Rd.		S. of Route 40	2006	HA	1,500
Main St.		E. of Graniteville Rd.	2003 / 2006	NMCOG	9,000 / 8,200
Plain Rd.		N. of Stony Brook Rd.	2005	NMCOG	3,700
Tadmuck Rd.		N. of Route 110	2005	HA	6,450
Tadmuck Rd.		S. of Route 110	2005	HA	1,400
Littleton Rd.	Rte. 110	At Chelmsford town line	2003 / 2006	NMCOG	9,100 / 7,900
Littleton Rd.	Rte. 110	At Littleton town line	2003 / 2006	NMCOG	13,300 / 11,100
Littleton Rd.	Rte. 110	W. of Nixon Rd.	2005/2007	VHB/GEOD	16,500/17,530
Littleton Rd.	Rte. 110	E. of Nixon Rd.	2005	VHB	13,750
Littleton Rd.	Rte. 110	W. of Tadmuck Rd.	2005	HA	12,500
Littleton Rd.	Rte. 110	E. of Tadmuck Rd.	2005	HA	9,550
Littleton Rd.	Rte. 110	E. of Boston Rd.	2007	GEOD	19,400
Littleton Rd.	Rte. 110	W. of Boston Rd.	2007	GEOD	18,750
Cold Spring Rd		N. of Forge Village Rd.	2004/2007	NMCOG	3,000/2,000
Carlisle Rd.	Rte. 225	At Carlisle town line	2003	NMCOG	7,200
Carlisle Rd.	Rte. 225	W. of Acton Rd.	2004/2007	NMCOG	9,000/9,100
Carlisle Rd.		S. of Route 110	2007	GEOD	12,170
Boston Rd.		N. of Route 110 – SB	2007	GEOD	31,920
Concord Rd.	Rte. 225	N. of Route 110	2003 / 2006	NMCOG	8,800 / 6,400
Acton Rd.	Rte. 27	At Acton town line	2005	NMCOG	7,500
S. Chelmsford Rd		At Chelmsford town line	2007	NMCOG	2,300

Sources: NMCOG, MassHighway, Hajek Associates (HA), VHB, Inc., GEOD, Inc., Cornerstone Square.

are required at Route 40. Traffic calming measures could be considered if deemed necessary to reduce cut-through traffic. The Route 40 Traffic Study prepared by NMCOG recommended the installation of traffic signals at this intersection to reduce the high incidence of angle collisions and significant delays.

Route 40 at Dunstable Road. The crash rate for this intersection, represented by the number of crashes per million entering vehicles, is almost three times

as high as the MassHighway average. The Dunstable Road approaches also experience long delays. The installation of traffic signals, as recommended in the NMCOG Route 40 study, will improve intersection safety and turning movement operations.

Route 225/Carlise Road/Griffin Road. Sight distance is constrained by a building at this intersection. Realignment of the intersection to improve sight distance should be considered.

Plain Road at Depot Street. At this skewed intersection, it is not always clear who has the right of way. The intersection also faces other challenges with a yield sign on Depot Street, the major street. The intersection is constrained by the railroad bridge and the bridge over Stony Brook. Since Depot Street is one of the main travel corridors in Westford, this intersection requires further study before any improvements are designed.

Route 110 Corridor. The Route 110 Corridor Study made a number of recommendations to improve existing deficiencies and accommodate potential future growth. (See "Trends.") Examples of problem areas include:

- ◆ **Route 110 at Tech Park West.** Routes 110 & 225 north side, Routes 110 & 225 south side, Route 110 & Powers Road are all intersections with poor services times, especially during evening commute. However, all have planning improvements as part of the Tech Park West mitigations.
- ◆ **Kimball Farm.** Located on Route 110, Kimball Farm is a popular destination business that attracts very high levels of activity during summer months. Vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian management are required at this location.
- ◆ **Powers Road/Route 225.** This intersection has numerous issues related to skewed intersection design, poor sight distance, and high speeds. Intersection improvements were completed in 2008 and traffic operations are expected to improve.

School Locations. The lack of sidewalks in many areas of Westford creates an unsafe environment for students trying to walk to school. The "triangle" of roadways around three schools -- Robinson, Crisafulli, and Westford Academy -- is an example of school areas without sidewalks, and should be considered a top priority for sidewalk installations. In addition, Hartford Road, one of the traffic circulation routes near the three schools, is unpaved.

Westford Center. The Town Center, located around the Main Street/ Boston Road intersection and Main Street/Lincoln Street intersection, suffers from poor geometric design and difficult turning movements due to the historic development pattern of the area and the location of the common at the center of a confluence of roadways. Traffic from the north on Depot Road, from the south on Boston Road and Hildreth Road, and from the east and west on Main Street all converge around the Town Common, causing congestion and delays, particularly during the evening peak hour.

UNACCEPTED ROADWAYS

There are about 50 roads covering 12 miles that have not been accepted by the town.³ For a road way to be accepted as a public way in Westford, it must have a minimum width of 22 feet and be constructed to the town's subdivision standards. Westford provides snow removal service but is not responsible for repairs or general maintenance on private ways. The narrow width and the surface condition of some of these roads affect emergency vehicle operations.

Road Maintenance Policies

The Westford Highway Department maintains all public roadways within the town. Until 1994, Westford maintained all roads under local jurisdiction. However, a vote by the Board of Selectmen in December 1994 changed this practice and restricted the use of public funds to maintenance of *accepted* public ways, following the Commonwealth's guidelines. Based on the new regulations, any road created as part of a private development is ineligible for public works services until it is accepted by the town. In the past few years, the development of many new residential neighborhoods and acceptance of their roads as public ways have led to a stress on local maintenance resources. Snow removal along some of the town's existing sidewalks is also performed by the Highway Department. Transferring this responsibility to property owners with sidewalks along their frontage -- a common practice in other

³ Westford Highway Superintendent; see also, "MassHighway Road Inventory: Centerline Miles, 2004-2006," *Municipal Data Bank*.

communities – would help to preserve the Highway Department’s already limited resources.

Westford has a Pavement Management System that documents and analyzes the town’s roadway pavement conditions each year. The PMS is a fiscal decision-making tool used to prioritize maintenance needs and identify repair strategies that will preserve investment in the pavement as long as possible. More resources should be allocated within the town’s existing roadway maintenance budget for preventive maintenance, such as crack sealing and pothole repairs to increase the life cycle of the pavement and thereby defer major maintenance of the roadways.

Roadway drainage in several parts of Westford is antiquated and lacks capacity, in part because each village has changed over time since the drainage structures were originally installed. Some existing drainage “easements” or corridors could also be lost due to construction on “Approval Not Required” (ANR) lots, which do not require drainage review. Under these circumstances, the Planning Board’s limited authority over ANR lots may be in conflict with roadway drainage and stormwater runoff needs. Coordination between the Planning Board and Engineering Department is essential during the ANR endorsement process. Measures to reduce stormwater runoff should be incorporated into new developments that require local review and permits.

As mentioned earlier, the roadway system in Westford includes old roads that were established as the town transitioned from a farming community to a mill town in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These roads later became part of the county roadway system until the county system was abolished. Monumentation is missing on some of these roadways, and in some cases this has led to encroachment in the town roadway layout. As these roads are reconstructed or sidewalks are installed, monumentation should be re-established.

TRENDS

Similar to trends in the Boston metropolitan area, Westford has seen substantial growth and development in the past decade. The town’s proximity to major transportation routes and its proximity to major commercial centers along I-495, Route 110 and Route 128 have further attracted new residential and commercial development. Moreover, population projections prepared by NMCOC anticipate a thirty percent increase in Westford’s population over the next 20 years.

Land Use and Transportation. In Westford, commercial developments are mostly concentrated along Route 110, with a few projects along Route 40. Route 110 is experiencing significant growth. In the Route 110 Corridor Study prepared by MDM Transportation Consultants in 2006, it was noted that over 1.2 million sq. ft. of commercial development was either permitted or under review. Among these is the Westford Technology Park West on Route 110/Robbins Road. Additionally, a major retail development, the Cornerstone Square “lifestyle center” has been proposed at Minot’s Corner west of Boston Road, with access off Route 110. Cornerstone Square was expected to attract regional shoppers to its upscale stores. While the Planning Board denied Cornerstone Square’s special permit application, the site will most likely be developed for some type of commercial use in the future. In addition, several residential developments, including comprehensive permits, have been proposed in Westford, primarily in the southern section of town.

Route 110 Corridor Study. The Route 110 Corridor Study recommended several roadway and intersection improvements to accommodate the anticipated growth in traffic in the Route 110 corridor. These improvements include an additional through lane on segments of Route 110 in Westford, dedicated turn lanes at some intersections, upgrades of existing traffic signals to include pedestrian indications and exclusive pedestrian signal phasing, and installation of new traffic signals at Tadmuck Road, Technology Park Drive, and South Chelmsford Road.

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 plan.

ISSUES

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.

Roadway Geometry. Poor geometry at some non-signalized intersections creates safety concerns. Some examples include Plain Road at Depot Road, Route 225 at Powers Road, Flagg Street at Robinson Road, and Tenney Road at Dunstable Road. These tend to be high accident locations, and improving them should receive high priority attention from the town.

North-South Connections. 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 visibility 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.

Other issues include:

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Planned commercial developments along Route 110 will have an impact on existing infrastructure.
- ◆ Lack of public transportation increases auto-dependency, even for short-distance trips.
- ◆ 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

- ◆ Excellent access from highways and major roadways such as I-495, Route 3, Route 110, Route 225 and Route 40.
- ◆ Strong community interest in supporting trails and open spaces.
- ◆ 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.

- ◆ The Sidewalks Master Plan provides a good framework for expanding Westford’s sidewalk and trails network. Investments in pedestrian facilities will be crucial, especially around schools, commercial centers and civic uses, to provide multi-modal transportation options to residents and employees in the Town.
- ◆ 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.

COMPREHENSIVE 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.
- T.4** Establish and implement a long-term plan for traffic mitigation by managing traffic and land uses to avoid congestion, instituting post-construction traffic monitoring requirements for major developments, and making transportation demand management a review standard for major nonresidential developments.

- T.5** Work with adjacent communities and NMCOG to promote alternative modes of transportation and manage traffic impacts on a regional scale.

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 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.)
- ◆ Adopt the Massachusetts Safe Routes to Schools Program to promote walking to and from school. This is a national program that promotes walk-

ing 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 car-pools, vanpools, guaranteed ride home, preferential

parking, public transportation, and walking, bicycling and on-site services. Section 9.3A.4.6D of the Westford Zoning Bylaw requires that a TDM be submitted for proposed development over 25,000 sq. ft. 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.

WESTFORD COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

- ◆ 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 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.

In Massachusetts, cities and towns administer virtually all local services, yet in other parts of the country, counties provide many of the same services on a regional basis. On one level, Westford is similar to other Eastern Massachusetts communities in terms of the services it provides to residents and businesses. Overall, the organization of service delivery in Westford is fairly traditional, too. Viewed in its entirety, however, Westford differs from other suburbs in noteworthy ways. Its town departments offer an impressive range of programs and services – more than one finds in most suburbs, including suburbs of comparable size and household wealth. The town also has an unusually large number of volunteer committees and public buildings, and its population seems to have high expectations for the services that local government provides.

During the 1990s, Westford was one of the state's fastest-growing towns. The effects of so much new development in a fairly short period of time can be seen throughout town government. To accommo-



Westford Town Hall.

date new growth and a changing slate of demands, Westford built several new municipal facilities and schools and modernized virtually all of its older school buildings. Still, other facilities suffer from deferred maintenance and need major improvements. The CMPC's master plan survey indicates that while some residents think Westford needs more or better community facilities, others question the need for any additional capital investments given the town's already-high tax bills.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Westford's local government is a complex organization with total revenues of \$84 million and total appropriations of just over \$82 million (in FY 2007).¹ The town owns a significant amount of land – about 3,180 acres – and many public facilities, most in good condition. The large number of facilities in Westford can be attributed to the town's size (total area), historic development pattern and broadly distributed population. Further, Westford seems reluctant to sell property as part of a planned approach to asset management, but Westford is not alone in this regard. Many communities view public land and buildings as irreplaceable assets that should be retained even if there are not enough resources to take care of them.

ORGANIZATION

Westford has a board of selectmen-town manager-open town meeting form of government. The home rule charter in effect today was originally approved by the town and the state legislature in 1989, ratified by Westford voters in 1990, and amended in 1992.² Under the present charter, Westford has a five-member board of selectmen that appoints the town manager, town counsel, and many of the town's volunteer boards, commissions and committees. In turn, the town manager serves as Westford's chief administrative, financial and personnel officer. However, the position does not have direct oversight of all municipal operations because of limitations on the town manager's appointment powers. The town manager has appointing authority for department heads and subordinate employees not under the jurisdiction of the Westford School Committee or other elected boards retained under the charter, including the Planning Board, Board of Health and Board of Library Trustees.³ In addition, the town manager appoints some of the town's volunteer committees, such as the Board of Assessors, Cemetery Commission, Water Commission,

Recreation Commission, Roudenbush Community Center Committee, and the Affordable Housing Committee.

Westford reportedly has more than fifty committees, though not all are currently active.⁴ The number of non-elected boards, commissions and committees is intriguing given Westford's movement toward centralization and professional management twenty years ago. Some of its appointed boards have statutory powers and duties, such as the Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Committee, Finance Committee, Cultural Council, Historical Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, yet others have been established to meet local needs or address particularized local interests. For example, Westford has a Recycling Commission, a Commission for Efficient Town Government, and more recently, a Fiscal Policy Committee. In some cases, Westford's volunteer committees are neither statutory nor purely local, such as its Affordable Housing Committee – a group similar to the housing partnerships found in other cities and towns – and the Permanent Town Building Committee.

Westford's legislative body is an open town meeting that convenes in May each year, followed by a regularly scheduled special town meeting in October. Town meeting is open to all registered voters. The quorum requirement for a special town meeting is 200 (General Bylaws, § 51.2B). Town meeting approves Westford's annual operating budget and capital budget, so it plays a crucial role in determining the amount of funding available for departmental programs, services and facilities. Since town meeting also has authority to adopt local bylaws, it also contributes to defining the responsibilities and workload of many departments.

MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Westford owns and uses more than fifty buildings and structures for various municipal operations, along with several recreation areas and the infrastructure that supplies water to residents and

¹ Town of Westford, "FY 2007 Tax Rate Recapitulation Sheet," Recap Sheet 2.

² See also, Chapter 10, Governance. The 1992 amendments replaced an elected board of assessors with a three-member board appointed by the town manager.

³ Westford's elected Housing Authority has statutory power to appoint its employees.

⁴ *Annual Report of the Town of Westford* (2006), 3-14.

businesses. Westford's primary municipal buildings include Town Hall, the police station, three fire stations, the library, the senior center, the highway garage, the water department's headquarters and treatment plant, a collection of former schools overseen by the Roudenbush Community Center Committee, the Westford Museum, the Town Farm and the Millennium School. However, many town services operate in a variety of locations. Some departments have a central office or administrative headquarters, but their employees spend significant portions of each week working in more than one place. The Parks and Recreation Department, Board of Health, and Water Department are examples of municipal services that operate in this manner.

Town Hall

Located on Main Street, Westford Town Hall (1870) is one of several historically significant buildings clustered around the Town Common. It is a beautiful wood-frame structure in the Second Empire style, with a slate roof and a decorative cupola. Town Hall contains 12,252 sq. ft. of gross floor area and approximately 8,252 sq. ft. of net floor area, i.e., usable space, divided among thirteen offices.⁵ Until recently, Town Hall housed all of Westford's administrative and financial departments (general government), together including about twenty-four employees.⁶ In December 2007, the Building Inspector revoked the certificate of occupancy for Town Hall due to structural problems discovered during an inspection. Chronic overcrowding and the sheer weight of records storage, furnishings, and equipment had taken a toll on the structural integrity of the building.

Long before Town Hall closed, it had the hallmark signs of a historic structure stressed beyond its capacity to serve as a modern government office building. Although the first-floor corridor is wide enough to support wheelchair mobility, the offices there did not have an accessible path of travel because they

were so congested. In addition, the lift at the rear of the building was reportedly unusable due to frequent equipment failure, and the rear entranceway into the building is inaccessible. The second floor originally included an auditorium with a stage and balcony, but to accommodate occupancy by town departments, the space had been reconfigured. The stage area was subdivided to create small offices and the balcony, now blocked off, was used for storage. The second means of egress, a metal external fire exit, was largely blocked by furniture, files and boxes. The building has a fire alarm system, but no sprinklers, and heat detectors but no smoke detectors. According to staff, the lift at the rear of the building was frequently unusable.⁷

The departments at Town Hall store many files in the basement, including both permanent records and temporary files. Despite its French drain system, a new internal drainage system installed in the fall of 2007, and sump pump, the basement is humid and often wet. There is no climate control or fire suppression in the basement and the basement and first floor vault doors are not fire rated. There is also not adequate ventilation to move the damp air out of the basement. Although the building has central air conditioning, employees said the system cannot cool all of the offices and, over time, individual air conditioning units were installed. About half of the windows cannot be opened due to their size and weight or broken components.⁸

⁷ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Town Hall Inventory, 10 April 2007, 24 August 2007, and 2 October 2007.

⁸ According to the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee, only seven out of sixty-seven file cabinets are stored on pallets, and limited retention records have been stored on pallets. Most financial records are stored on shelves that are at least four inches off the ground. Town Hall has a forced hot air heating system supported by two twenty-five year-old furnaces, one fired by natural gas and the other, oil. The furnace pipes are insulated. An electric hot water heater has been installed within the past five years. Although the building has central air conditioning, the system is not adequate to cool all of the offices and over time, individual air conditioning units have been added. The building has a relatively new air quality system that exchanges air six times every hour. About half of the windows cannot be opened due to their size and weight or broken components. A generator located outside Town Hall can supply sixty percent of the building's energy needs. All of Town Hall's wiring has been upgraded.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the citation for references to gross and net floor area is a user-defined parcel database generated by the assessor's office for Community Opportunities Group, Inc., in October 2006.

⁶ Acting Town Manager Norman Khumalo, "Town Hall Head Count" (n.d.).

In 2005, the Permanent Town Building Committee recommended relocating the Planning, Conservation, Health, Zoning Board of Appeals and GIS departments (about fifteen full-time employees) from Town Hall to the Millennium School behind the Abbot School on Depot Street. Under this plan, administration and finance offices would have remained at Town Hall and all departments with development review and permitting responsibilities would move as a unit. The committee recommended looking at the Graniteville Fire Department building for records storage. The committee's plan also called for installing an elevator at Town Hall and converting the second floor to a public meeting room equipped for cable broadcasting.⁹

However, Westford did not implement the Permanent Town Building Committee's recommendations. An alternative plan was under review when the building closed in December 2007. Under the alternative plan, the Town Manager and most of the first-floor offices would have moved to the Millennium School, thereby freeing up space at Town Hall for other departments. Several Town Hall departments have relocated to the Millennium School for an indefinite period, and other staff are working out of the Highway Garage. Many department records remain at Town Hall and records storage and access continue to be difficult.

Public Safety

POLICE STATION

The Westford Police Station is located behind the Central Fire Station, facing the Town Hall parking lot. Built in 1999, the Police Station is a modern, spacious public safety building with first-floor administrative offices for management, a fully equipped training room, five cells, and conference rooms. The second floor holds rooms with cubicles for police officers, a gym and shooting range, and restrooms with showers and lockers. The building contains 30,870 sq. ft. of gross floor area and 20,369 sq. ft. of usable floor area. The entire facility is accessible to people



Westford Police Station.

with disabilities, including accessible restrooms on both floors, a fully accessible entrance, and accessible paths of travel throughout. The Police Station shares a seventy-space parking lot with the Central Fire Station.¹⁰

The Westford Police Department has a total of forty-seven employees, including the chief, deputy chief, captain, five lieutenants, five patrol sergeants, eighteen patrol officers, five detectives, six uniformed dispatchers, three office personnel and two custodians. In 2006, the Police Department responded to 8,667 incident calls.¹¹

FIRE STATIONS

The Westford Fire Department provides fire protection and EMT emergency medical services, fire prevention services, and licensing, permitting and inspection services. The Fire Department has a total of thirty-six full-time employees, including the chief and deputy chief, four captains, four lieutenants, twenty-eight firefighter/EMTs, five communications personnel and an office manager. The department is also supported by twenty on-call firefighters and EMTs.¹² In addition to Westford's own EMT ambulances, the town has access to paramedic services

⁹ Permanent Town Building Committee, *Building Use Recommendations Report* (2005), 3-4, 9.

¹⁰ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., *Police Station Inventory*, 10 September 2007.

¹¹ *Annual Town Report* (2006), 156-158.

¹² *Annual Town Report* (2006), 112-113.

from Lowell and Emerson Hospital, and med-flight services from Boston and Worcester.

Westford has a Central Fire Station (headquarters) and two substations, Nabnasset Station on Oak Hill Road and Rogers Station on Town Farm Road. The Fire Department currently uses a decommissioned fire station in Graniteville for additional storage.

Central Fire Station. The Central Fire Station next to Town Hall was built in 1974. At the time, Westford's Fire Department was composed entirely of on-call firefighters and it remained an on-call force until 1985, when the town funded a day shift of career firefighters for the Central Station. Two years later, town meeting agreed to provide the Central Station with twenty-four hour coverage.

The Central Fire Station is a steel-frame, two-story structure with three double-deep bays for fire and emergency medical apparatus, and an administrative office, dispatch center and communications room, and storage on the first floor. The second floor holds offices, bunkrooms, restrooms and lockers, and a kitchen and day room/meeting room. Up to nine people work in the building at any given time, including the chief, three firefighters, two firefighter/EMTs, an office manager, dispatch manager and fire prevention officer. Firefighters work on a 1-2-1-4 schedule, i.e., a twenty-four hour shift followed by two days off and a second twenty-four hour shift followed by four days off.

Most of the department's fire suppression equipment is housed at the Central Fire Station, which covers an area that generates slightly more than half of all calls per year. Central Station holds two fire engines, a tower ladder truck, two ambulances, a service unit, and a rescue boat. It also has a hazardous materials box and a 275-gallon tank that residents can use to dispose of waste oil.¹³

¹³ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Central Fire Station Inventory, 24 April 2007, and Westford Fire Department, "Fire Department Five-Year Plan" (n.d.).



Westford Fire Department Headquarters (Central Fire Station).

Nabnasset Station. The Nabnasset Fire Station on Oak Hill Road is a substation serving the town's northeastern quadrant. It is a one-story, two-bay building constructed ca. 1963, with 2,232 sq. ft. of gross floor area. The Nabnasset station has been staffed with two full-time firefighters per shift since FY 2001. The station is small, so it has limited fire-fighting equipment: an engine, a brush truck and rescue boat. The station has kitchen, restroom and meeting room facilities, and two bunk rooms and a day room located in an addition.

Rogers Fire Station. The George Rogers Fire Station in Forge Village was built in 2002 to replace two small, older substations in Forge Village and Graniteville. At 9,912 gross sq. ft. of floor area and more than 7,000 sq. ft. of usable area, the Rogers Fire Station offers more space for departmental services and equipment, and it has a basement-level training room used as public meeting space. Although it has several pieces of fire suppression equipment, the station remains unstaffed. The Fire Department currently stores three engines, a brush unit and a hazardous materials box unit at the Rogers Fire Station. This facility also has an on-site generator and a 500-gallon water tank.

The Fire Department has a Five-Year Capital Plan that needs to be updated to reflect the recommendations of the fire study conducted in 2007.¹⁴ The study

¹⁴ Municipal Resources, Inc., *Fire Services*

recommends that Westford focus on staffing the Rogers Fire Station first, followed by a restructuring of some departmental operations and relocating both the Central Fire Station and Nabnasset Station. The Rogers Fire Station has been manned since June 2008 through a combination of Town Meeting appropriation and a Federal grant.

OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES

Westford has an Animal Control Department with a full-time Animal Control Officer and an assistant. The department is responsible for investigating animal complaints, enforcing the local leash law, and managing the town’s kennel off Beacon Street, a 500-sq. ft. wood frame building constructed ca. 1970. Through an interlocal agreement, the Animal Control Department provides the same services to Tyngsborough and generates a revenue offset of \$36,000 to help fund the department’s operating budget. In 2006, Animal Control staff responded to 3,800 calls, mainly dog complaints. More than thirty percent of the calls for assistance involved requests to remove dead animals from local streets.¹⁵

Public Works

In Westford, the Highway Department, Engineering Department, Water Department, and Cemetery Department are responsible for most services traditionally classified as public works. The town also provides solid waste disposal and recycling services through curbside pickup contracts with private companies. These functions are neither centralized under a Department of Public Works nor operated from a single facility. While Westford has a municipal water department, it does not have public sewer service.



Westford's new Highway Garage.

HIGHWAY GARAGE

In 2006, Westford opened a new Highway Garage on North Street. This two-story, 71,000 sq. ft. facility houses the Highway and Engineering Departments and Geographic Information System (GIS) services with a combined total of twenty-eight employees. The building is cut into a hillside on a steep site surrounded by existing and former quarrying operations. Since the garage is set back far from North Street at a high elevation, creating access to the site required construction of a steep, winding driveway. The Highway Garage has administrative offices, training space, facilities for employees (e.g., lockers, a bunk room and kitchen), a large one-story garage with shop rooms and facilities for fleet maintenance, radio communications with public safety officials, and a forty-seven space parking lot. In addition, the Highway Department’s salt storage shed and a fueling station for municipal vehicles are located on the same site.¹⁶

The Highway Garage has modern security systems, including security access keys, cameras and an alarm system, and the lobby is secured with pass-through windows for communication. It also has energy-saving and cost-saving features. For example, the building has more than one heating system. The

Organizational Analysis, Westford, Massachusetts (December 2007), 44-45.

¹⁵ *Annual Town Report* (2006), 60.

¹⁶ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Highway Garage Inventory, 13 April 2007 and 24 August 2007; Westford Highway Department, 17 August 2007.

administrative offices are heated with a dual gas/oil burner currently fired by natural gas, but if oil prices drop, the Highway Department can convert to oil. There is an environmental system in the garage that tests air quality (carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide) every ninety seconds and brings in outside air. The air is heated before entering the garage to limit condensation. The garage is cooled through high clerestory windows and ceiling fans.

The building incorporates many energy conservation features. It has a southern orientation, with minimal openings on the northern side. In addition, the building is set into the ground to take advantage of the hillside thermal mass. All roof and wall panels are insulated and the windows are high-efficiency. Although the garage is not air conditioned, it has roof vents to draw out hot air. The radiant floor heating system in the garage results in minimal heat loss. The computerized heating system shuts down on weekends and holidays, and the electric system is a computerized energy management system with sensors. Lights go on in occupied rooms and automatically shut off when rooms are vacated. There are thirty-six skylights on the garage roof to provide natural light.

Westford found it difficult to build the new Highway Garage, as evidenced by a nearly two-year delay in completing the project. Ultimately, the town worked with three general contractors before the facility was finished. In addition, blasting conducted on the site between 2003 and 2004 was later tied to the discovery of perchlorate in the Cote Well, located about a half-mile downgradient of the Highway Garage, and a private well nearby.¹⁷ The Cote Well had to be closed and it was not restored to active service



Westford Water Department's treatment facility and administrative offices, Forge Village Road.

until 2006, following installation of a perchlorate treatment system approved by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

WATER DEPARTMENT

The Water Department has a central administrative office in a new facility on Forge Village Road. It operates two state-of-the-art water treatment plants and eight drinking water supplies that serve 5,300 customers. All of Westford's drinking water is withdrawn from groundwater supplies. In addition, the Water Department monitors and documents Westford's compliance with federal and state environmental laws, and maintains 125 miles of water mains, 900 hydrants, and five water storage tanks with combined storage capacity of 4.85 million gallons.¹⁸

The Forge Village Road Water Treatment Facility (WTF) is a one-story structure with 9,500 sq. ft. of usable floor area. It includes administrative offices for the Water Department, a conference room, kitchen, restroom and locker facilities for the department's thirteen employees, equipment for monitoring the entire water system, and a greensand filtration system that treats water pumped from five of

¹⁷ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, *The Occurrence and Sources of Perchlorate in Massachusetts*, Draft Report (August 2005, Updated April 2006), 12-14.

¹⁸ Westford Water Department, *DEP Public Water Supply Annual Statistical Report 2006* (n.d.), and Jessica Cajigas, Westford Water Department, March 2008.

Westford's operating wells. The WTF at 17 Nutting Road treats water pumped from the remaining three wells. Both facilities were constructed with a \$15M zero-interest loan in 2003.¹⁹ The Forge Village Road WTF includes an on-site laboratory for monitoring all chemicals on a daily basis, a dry chemical storage area, and a storage closet for spare parts. It also has a three-bay garage for storage and maintenance of Water Department vehicles. The Water Department still uses its older garage across the street (63 Forge Village Road) to store supplies, tools, equipment, and trucks.

The Water Department has authority from DEP to pump a maximum of 4.2 million gallons per day (mgd) from its operating public water supplies. Maximum day consumption has been approximately 3.8 mgd, though it fluctuates from year to year based on summer weather conditions. The Water Department serves approximately seventy-five percent of Westford's population and two-thirds of the town's total area. Residential land uses account for more than eighty percent of the Water Department's customers, and commercial or industrial uses, about sixteen percent. The remaining consumption stems from institutional and municipal uses. Eleven of the Water Department's thirteen employees are certified drinking water operators.²⁰

The Water Department is currently updating its water system master plan. Westford operates the department on an enterprise basis, i.e., a self-sufficient service with revenue and expenditures segregated from the general fund.

CEMETERY DEPARTMENT

Westford has a somewhat unusual structure for cemetery operations. A three-member cemetery commission appointed by the Town Manager provides policy oversight for the town's six public cemeteries, and the superintendent and staff are administratively located within the Parks and Recreation Department. The Cemetery Department's central facility is a small building at the Pine Grove Cemetery

on Forge Village Road. In addition to the Pine Grove Cemetery, the Cemetery Department has care and custody of the Fairview Cemetery on Tadmuck Road, Westlawn Cemetery on Concord and County Roads, Wright Cemetery on Groton Road, Hillside Cemetery at Depot and Nutting Roads, and the Old Pioneer Burial Ground (Pioneer Cemetery) on Carlisle Road.

SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

Massachusetts cities and towns are not required by law to provide solid waste disposal service, but most do – in part because residents expect it, and also because providing the service is usually seen as a basic public health obligation. Westford does not have a local solid waste facility or recycling center. Instead, the town offers weekly curbside pickup service for domestic solid waste through a contract with Acme Waste Systems. Similarly, Westford has a contract with Integrated Paper Recyclers to pick up recyclables every other week, also on a curbside basis. Through its Recycling Commission, Westford provides extensive public education about the environmental and cost benefits that recycling has brought to the town. Although most communities in Massachusetts charge user fees for solid waste disposal service, Westford finances both solid waste and recycling services with general fund revenue, i.e., the tax levy. Residents pay extra "one-time" fees only for disposal of large items that cannot be incinerated or for additional recycling bins.

Health & Human Services

BOARD OF HEALTH

Health Care Services. Health Care Services is one of two divisions overseen by the Westford Board of Health. Relocated to the Millennium School after Town Hall closed, Health Care Services performs many of its functions in other locations: the schools, the Cameron Senior Center, and home visits. The department provides a comprehensive slate of public health services ranging from disease prevention to health maintenance, needs assessments, and coordinating health care services for local residents and Westford's town employees.

In a given year, the Health Care Services Department runs at least ten clinics (some on a monthly basis),

¹⁹ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Water Department Inventory, 12 April 2007, and Westford Water Department, 17 August 2007.

²⁰ DEP Public Water Supply Annual Statistical Report, 2006.

provides a dental screening, cleaning and referral service in the Westford Public Schools, and elderly dental care for uninsured seniors. It also offers daily public health services, such as blood pressure screening, tuberculosis tests and health referrals, and provides a range of immunization services by appointment. In addition, the Health Care Services Department is responsible for an employee assistance program, substance abuse programs and licensing and permits for tanning facilities, massage therapists and recreational camps. The department is staffed by a director, two public health nurses, a substance abuse prevention coordinator and two dental hygienists.²¹

Environmental Services. The Board of Health's second division, Environmental Services, carries out many of the permitting powers and responsibilities assigned to local boards of health by state law. Also based at the Millennium School, the Environmental Services director and health agent administer and enforce Title V of the Massachusetts Environmental Code (septic systems) as well as the town's septic system regulations, Hazardous Materials Bylaw and Groundwater Protection Bylaw. In accordance with state law, the department reviews subdivision plans submitted to the Planning Board. In addition, it reviews and issues permits for private drinking water supplies and food service establishments, inspects recreational beaches, camps, restaurants, stables, and promotes integrated pest management as a matter of policy in agricultural, recreational, and institutional inspections.

COUNCIL ON AGING

Cameron Senior Center. The Cameron Senior Center on Pleasant Street (Forge Village) is managed and maintained by the Westford Council on Aging (COA). Built as a schoolhouse in 1872, the senior center is a two-story building with 15,288 sq. ft. of gross floor area and 9,200 sq. ft. of usable floor space. The building includes multi-purpose rooms, offices, restrooms and partial cooking facilities. It has seven entrances, including an accessible side entrance. Twelve people work at the senior center on a full-time basis. The facility has parking for thirty vehicles, including seven accessible spaces

and two van-accessible spaces. In 2007, Westford voters agreed to fund \$3.2 million for a renovations and expansion project at the Cameron Senior Center pursuant to a feasibility study commissioned by the town, pending town meeting approval.²²

The present senior center offers a variety of social, leisure, health care, and support services through COA staff and arrangements with regional service providers. The first floor has a dining hall with limited kitchen facilities, a library and lounge area, two offices, a large front hall and an accessible restroom. The second floor has offices, restrooms, and four classrooms for activities, meetings, games, computers, arts and crafts, and a thrift shop. The basement houses a food pantry, a carpentry shop, a kiln, a model railroad area, and space for home medical supplies (e.g., wheelchairs and canes). The basement areas are crowded and not configured for active use.

Since the senior center was designed and built as a school, its floor plan does not meet current program needs. For example, it has only two private offices, one occupied by the director and the other by the town's veterans agent, which makes it very difficult for the senior center's social worker and outreach worker to provide counseling services. There is also no dedicated space for health care or legal clinics. The senior center's lunch room can accommodate only seventy-two people, so the Franco-American Club donates space in its facility when the COA needs room for larger dinners. One of the most popular activities for seniors, line dancing, is held off-site because the senior center does not have a large enough room. Exercise and aerobics, also popular activities, are held in a second-floor classroom. Although the senior center has a kitchen, it is not a commercial kitchen and as a result, meals must be prepared off site.

The building has poor air quality. It also is difficult to heat due to a lack of insulation, and most of the windows are old. Storm windows were installed on the west side of the building to reduce the impact of

²¹ *Annual Town Report* (2006), 118-120.

²² Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 10 April 2007; J. Sheehan, Westford Council on Aging, 6 August 2007, Caitlin Architecture, *Cameron Senior Center Feasibility Study* (2007), online at <<http://www.westfordma.gov/>>.

winds blowing landward from Forge Pond. The boiler was replaced in 1994 as part of the renovation of the building, but heat flow remained very poor throughout the building. The senior center was recently painted and it has a new roof. In 2004, the senior center's septic system failed. A new septic system has been designed and funds appropriated for construction.

Other Services. The COA provides other services in addition to daily activities at the Cameron Senior Center, such as respite care (in conjunction with Chelmsford's Council) and senior transportation. As a contracted service provider with Elder Services of Merrimack Valley, the COA also operates an Adult Supportive Day Program in the community room at the Tadmuck Road housing development. The town pays for approximately twenty-five percent of the program's operating costs while Elder Services and program fees cover the rest.

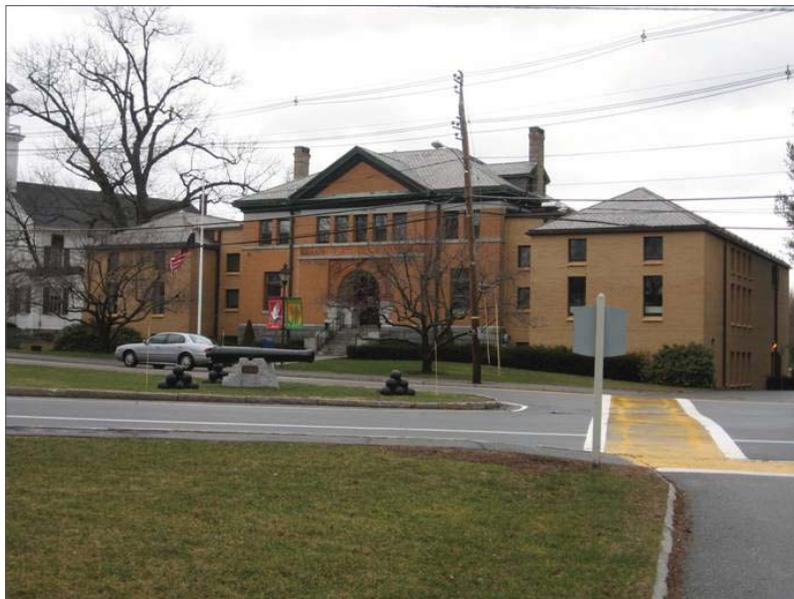
VETERANS SERVICES

In Massachusetts, cities and towns are required to provide benefits to veterans and their dependents. The state reimburses communities for seventy-five percent of the cost of eligible veteran's benefits through the cherry sheet. In Westford, a part-time veteran's service officer performs this function from an office at the Cameron Senior Center.

Culture and Recreation

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The J.V. Fletcher Library is an outstanding Classical Revival style building in Westford Center on the opposite side of the Town Common from Town Hall. Built in 1895, the library contains 17,900 sq. ft. of gross floor area and 14,000 sq. ft. of usable floor space. It has been renovated or expanded three times in the past fifty years, including renovations in 1963, an addition and interior renovations in 1969 and the addition of the east and west wings in 1987-88. The building includes book storage (stacks), circulation and reference desks, six offices, four restrooms and



J. V. Fletcher Library, Westford Center.

three meeting rooms in a 3.5-story configuration. It is currently undergoing a multi-year beautification project that calls for painting, new carpeting and furnishings, decorative rugs, and restroom upgrades. The library is accessible to people with disabilities through a barrier-free entrance at the rear, an elevator servicing all floors, and fully accessible restrooms.²³

The main floor of the original library building includes the circulation desk and stacks for fiction and biography collections. The reference area, half of the adult nonfiction collection and public-access computers are located on the main floor of the west wing, while the main floor of the east wing contains the children's library and a story hour room. The ground floor has rooms for sorting new acquisitions, a storage room, a kitchenette, a technical services area for staff working on acquisition, cataloging, interlibrary loan and duplicating, and a fine arts room. The young adult collection is located here as well, along with video and CD collections, study rooms, computers, and a formal meeting room with capacity for eighty.

The mezzanine level, one flight up from the main floor, overlooks the west wing's main floor. It in-

²³ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., J.V. Fletcher Library Inventory, 12 April 2007; interviews with Ellen Rainville, Library Director, 21 March 2007, 8 August 2007, and 11 October 2007.

cludes an administrative office, glassed-in study carrels in a “silent study” area, and stacks for biography and periodicals collections. The third floor houses Mary Atwood Hall, which doubles as a meeting room with space for fifty people and an archival collection room. In addition, the third floor has administrative offices and a small kitchenette.

The J.V. Fletcher Library functions as the cultural heart of the town. It has over 22,000 registered borrowers and a collection of 149,121 items, including 102,879 books. In FY 2007, the library had 240,252 books in circulation and an entire circulation of 335,429 (books and other items). The library also has a remarkable number of programs, particularly for children and young adults, with a story hour nearly every morning and one of the most well attended summer reading programs in Massachusetts. A bookmobile supplies neighborhood-level services each week. In addition, the library provides space for public meetings and events. The Board of Selectmen meets regularly in the library’s main meeting room because Town Hall has no meeting space. Other town boards and numerous community groups also depend on the library’s meeting rooms, too. In FY 2007, fifty to seventy-five organizations booked a combined total of nearly 1,400 meetings in rooms at the library.

Like most public libraries, Westford’s is financially supported by the town, trust funds overseen by the Library’s Board of Trustees, fundraising by the Friends of the J.V. Fletcher Library, and a state library grant (one of several “cherry sheet” receipts). Access to the state grant depends on financial support from the town. The library has 21.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and a total of thirty-four people on payroll.

The Board of Library Trustees recently completed a five-year plan for the library. The new plan identifies several goals and initiatives, such as:²⁴

- ◆ Planning for expansion of the existing building, beginning with a feasibility study that will be

²⁴ Board of Library Trustees, *J. V. Fletcher Library Long-Range Plan 2008-2012*, online at <<http://www.westfordlibrary.org/longrangeplan.html>>.

needed in order for the library to compete for future library construction grants;

- ◆ Completing the multi-year beautification project;
- ◆ Expansion of the Chinese language collection;
- ◆ Developing plans for a Library Foundation to finance long-term library needs;
- ◆ Increasing library hours; and
- ◆ Improving and expanding the library’s technology services.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Town Farm. The Parks and Recreation Department’s main office is located at the Town Farm at 35 Town Farm Road. The Town Farm is one of Westford’s most challenging public facilities. It includes the original two-story brick building constructed in 1837 and a north wing addition, together containing about 6,000 sq. ft. of usable floor space.²⁵ The yard area includes two storage buildings, a concrete vent stack and a small non-permanent shed that is severely deteriorated. The total gross floor area of all buildings on the property is approximately 12,500 sq. ft. The main building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. Until 2003, the Westford Public Schools occupied the Town Farm for administrative and central special education offices. In 2007, the town relocated the Parks and Recreation Department to the Town Farm from congested space at the Graniteville Fire Station. Funds have been made available to address some of the building repairs identified by the Building Inspector in December 2006, partially described below.²⁶

The Town Farm suffers from moisture buildup, rot, and a history of deferred maintenance. Many of

²⁵ Town of Westford Cultural Resource Inventory.

²⁶ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., *Town Farm Inventory*, 15 April 2007; Robert Servais Inspectional Services, *Building Inspection Report*, 35 Town Farm Rd., Westford, MA, Report #2354, 27 December 2006; Roberta McGuire, Westford Historical Commission, interview, 16 April 2007.

these problems were documented in a 1994 town-wide building study. Portions of the basement have dirt floors and others, poured concrete, which is in reasonably good condition. Following a December 2006 property inspection, the Westford Building Inspector recommended further analysis of the building's structural elements because some of the wood posts show signs of "softness" and others appear to have no footings. He also questioned the condition of the foundation, particularly where mortar has eroded in the southeast corner of the original building.

Since then, the Westford Historical Commission secured Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to replace the roof. While roof replacement will help to protect the Town Farm from further water damage, the building needs extensive repairs: new exterior stairs and handrails, repairs to the porch balustrades, replacement of the shed roof and rolling doors, replacement of all windows, a functional heating system, and upgraded plumbing. The Building Inspector also noted that a tree leaning against the electric service entrance conductor must be cut, and the electrical system in general needs to be upgraded with GFCI (grounded) outlets. Furthermore, the extent of water damage at the Town Farm cannot be determined without uncovering the existing wall materials. The age of the buildings suggests that some of the wall materials probably contain asbestos. In 1994, consultants preparing a town-wide facilities study said the Town Farm's exterior brick work and foundation need extensive repointing. They also found all interior finishes to be in poor condition. Owing to the amount of work required to restore the building and other potential uses of the site recommended in the report, the consultants recommended that Westford sell the Town Farm building on the condition that it be relocated to a suitable site.²⁷

The yard of the Town Farm property abuts an active rail line at the rear. In general, the Town Farm's yard is in serious disrepair. There are small sheds in poor condition, and when the Parks and Recreation Department moved into the facility, antifreeze barrels strewn about the yard appeared to be seeping

liquid into the ground. The site is believed to have archeological significance, but this has not been documented.

Municipal Recreation Facilities. Residential growth brings about an increase in demand for recreational activities and facilities. In addition, many of the traditional single-season sports have now become multi-season activities, with youth sports such as soccer and baseball practicing year-round. Westford is an active, sports-oriented community and residents seem to value having access to high-quality recreation facilities. To plan for its future facility needs, the Parks and Recreation Department completed a *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* in 2003. The plan reviewed the condition of Westford's existing recreation fields and made recommendations for improvements and new facilities. It also established several near-term goals, including:

- ◆ Provide recreation facilities and activities to meet the leisure interests of all residents;
- ◆ Provide parks and open spaces adequate in size, distribution and condition to serve all citizens;
- ◆ Preserve and protect environmentally significant areas for public enjoyment and recreation;
- ◆ Maintain and manage areas in a manner which encourages their appropriate use; and
- ◆ Maximize public/private partnerships to assist in all aspects of parks and recreation planning and development.

Currently the Parks and Recreation Department manages and maintains the following outdoor recreation areas and parks:

- ◆ **Jack Walsh Recreation Area** (Carlisle Road) – Twenty-eight acres with 8.5 acres developed for recreational use. It includes playing field space, mainly for soccer; a baseball backstop, tennis courts, a basketball court, a playground, and a concession stand.

²⁷ Alderman and MacNeish, *Town-Wide Building and Facilities Plan* (1994), 37.

- ◆ **VFW Fields** (West Prescott Street) – 7.3-acres with a softball diamond, a baseball diamond, a basketball court, and skatepark.

- ◆ **Greystone Park** (Russell’s Way)) – A three-acre park with a baseball diamond, tennis court, two basketball courts, and trails around Greystone Pond. The facilities were constructed by the developer of Greystone Estates, a large subdivision completed ca. 1999. The Parks and Recreation Department maintains all of the facilities except the trails.

- ◆ **American Legion Field** (Graniteville)) – 9.6 acres, with baseball and softball diamonds, a tennis court, basketball courts, a playground, restroom facilities, a concession stand, a batting cage and a picnic area.

- ◆ **Frost Field/Whitney Playground** (Roudenbush) – A three-acre facility with a softball diamond, playground, two tennis courts, and fields used for soccer, softball, and Little League baseball.

- ◆ **Captain Stephen Hamilton’s Field** (Roudenbush, Old Nab) – 2.7 acres with a baseball diamond, tennis court, basketball court, soccer and baseball fields, and a playground.

- ◆ **Nutting Road Fields** (East Boston Camps) – These fields will be constructed on a portion of the East Boston Camps property and will include multi-purpose field space. Westford recently appropriated CPA funds to install an artificial turf field at this location.

- ◆ The **Town Common** and grounds of the J. V. Fletcher Library and Town Hall.



Jack Walsh Recreation Area on Carlisle Road (above) and VFW Field on West Prescott Street (below).



- ◆ **Public Beaches.** The annual cost of maintaining Westford’s outdoor recreation areas is mostly offset by fees from local sports organizations.

School Recreation Facilities. Like all towns, Westford has recreational facilities on the grounds of its elementary, middle and high schools. While the schools provide some field and court space for private youth groups, each school establishes its own policies regarding facility use by outside organizations.

All of Westford’s public schools have playing field space, playgrounds, and gymnasiums with indoor basketball courts. Each field is designated for spe-

cific organized sports such as football, lacrosse, and soccer. Two schools, the Blanchard Middle School and the Robinson Elementary School, have tennis courts. In addition the Blanchard Middle School has a complex of multi-purpose fields. Stony Brook Middle School on Farmer Way has a football field with track, fields, softball fields, baseball diamond, one multi-purpose field, outdoor basketball courts, tennis courts, and a small amphitheater and a gymnasium. The Abbot School has a lighted football/lacrosse field. Westford Academy has an outdoor track, multi-use field for lacrosse, field hockey, baseball field, football field and a playground as well as a gymnasium with basketball courts. These facilities are used almost exclusively for the high school's athletic teams and non-competitive sports programs.

Other school-related recreational facilities include the two gymnasiums and basketball courts at the Nashoba Valley Tech School on Littleton Road, and playground structures at the Roudenbush Community Center. Nashoba Tech is a regional vocational-technical school with a governing body separate from the town, and it provides limited outside use of its recreation facilities.

Recreation Programs. Westford is an active, sports-oriented community. The Parks and Recreation Department operates a wide variety of year-round recreational opportunities, from traditional sports such as basketball and swimming to archery and rock climbing. It also offers educational and social programs for children, both after school and during the summer, organized trips to sports and cultural events, and formal and informal recreation opportunities for adults. On average, the Parks and Recreation Department runs nearly 300 programs and events each year.²⁸ During public meetings for the Comprehensive Plan, residents identified Westford's recreational programs as assets to the town.

In the 2003 *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, the Parks and Recreation Department set a goal to become financially self-supporting through fees paid by program participants and fees from organizations that

use the town's outdoor recreation facilities. This goal has nearly been achieved, except that the department's administrative staff salaries are funded with general operating revenue. In 2008, Town Meeting voted to convert the Recreation Department to an enterprise fund, finalizing the department's move to self-sufficiency.

ROUDENBUSH COMMUNITY CENTER

The Roudenbush Community Center is managed by the Roudenbush Community Center, Inc., a non-profit organization with budgetary responsibility for childcare and community education programs operated in three town-owned buildings: the Community Center at 65 Main Street, the Frost School at 73 Main Street, and the "Old Nab" preschool at 170 Plain Road. The non-profit collects, manages and expends all income generated by the programs in these buildings and handles payroll for all program employees except the executive director, a town employee appointed by the Town Manager. Westford also has a town board, the Roudenbush Community Center Committee, which is legally separate from the non-profit corporation, although institutional differences between the town committee and non-profit board are not always clear. Since 2003, the non-profit's programs have generated enough income to pay the town for the full cost of the executive director's salary.

Roudenbush Community Center: Built in 1897, the building known as Roudenbush Community Center was originally home to Westford Academy. It is a beautiful building in the late Victorian Richardsonian Romanesque style, and it makes a significant contribution to the visual character of Westford Center. The building has approximately 14,600 sq. ft. of usable floor area and it contains office space, six activity rooms, cooking and restroom facilities.²⁹

Roudenbush Community Center has twenty employees working on-site on a regular basis. It is a very busy facility that supports about 900 programs and events per year. In addition to programs run by Roudenbush staff, more than 100 organizations and

²⁸ Parks and Recreation Director Patricia Savage, Recreation Program Statistics, 2003-2007.

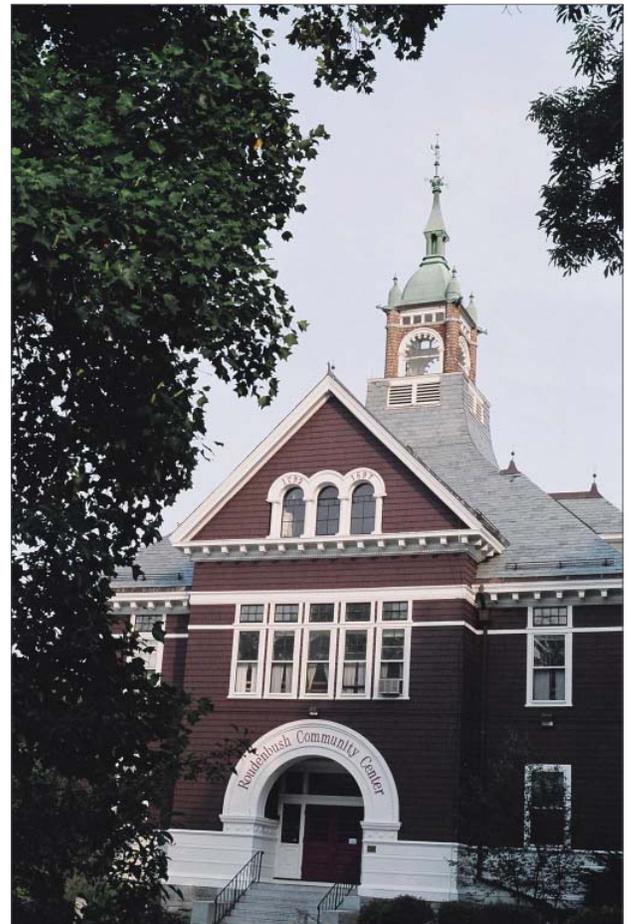
²⁹ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Roudenbush Community Center Inventory, 11 April 2007.

individuals rent the gym or classrooms for events and classes. Classes run from 8:30 in the morning to 11:00 at night and on the weekends from 7:30-12, sometimes extending into late afternoon. Although the building is well maintained, the intense demands placed upon it are obvious. Many spaces are crowded with furniture and storage, and the front registration area is cramped. The center's parking area has sixty-seven spaces, including two accessible spaces for vans.

The front door of Roudenbush opens onto a small entry, followed by doubled doors into the main lobby space. Four first-floor rooms (two offices and two classrooms, one with an adjacent restroom) can be accessed from the lobby, and staircases lead from the main lobby to the upper floors. Three preschool classrooms, a kitchen and restrooms occupy the second floor. A metal fire escape leads from one of the preschool rooms over the gym to the ground. The third floor has two offices and a large attic storage area, which lack a second means of egress. The basement holds three offices, a small sitting area, a restroom and a boiler room. A gym added to the rear of the Roudenbush building has three exits and can be accessed from the basement level. The gym is an older facility in fair condition.

The Roudenbush Community Center has many accessible features, but it is not fully accessible. For example, the building lacks directional signage to the accessible entrance at the side, the lift cannot be operated independently by a person in a wheelchair, and the lift is not suitable for motorized wheelchairs. In addition, the building has two restrooms with accessible features, but the doors lack accessible hardware.

Frost School: The William Edward Frost School was constructed in 1908 as an elementary school. A two-story building with a full basement, the Frost School includes offices and six classrooms used for full-day child care programs operated by the Roudenbush Community Center, Inc. The facility is a licensed day care center serving infants and preschoolers. It has a staff of twenty-two and approximately 100 children



Roudenbush Community Center.

regularly enrolled on a full- or part-time basis. The parking lot includes twenty-five parking spaces.³⁰

The Frost School has classrooms on all floors, including the basement. In addition to classrooms, the first floor contains offices, a small staff lounge, one adult bathroom with one toilet and one sink, and a bathroom with toilets and sinks for children. The hallways have shelves for storage of crafts items and games. The basement provides not only classrooms, but also a changing room for children, a storage closet with food, crafts supplies and a stove, and a boiler room that also has laundry facilities, a refrigerator, and storage space. The second floor includes classrooms, a bathroom with children-sized fixtures and one office. The hallway doubles as storage space and there is a refrigerator on the stair landing.

At the main entrance, two doors open to a landing halfway between the basement and the first floor.

³⁰ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Frost School Inventory, 11 April 2007.

The building has three rear exits which open from the basement level. The first and second floors have external metal fire escapes. The interior staircase is an open wood staircase. These egresses have been allowed because the building is older, but modern buildings require two fire-rated egresses. The Frost School is equipped with a fire alarm and fire extinguishers, but it has no smoke detectors or sprinklers. The building and its associated parking lot are not accessible to people with disabilities.

The Frost School is well maintained, but very overcrowded and cramped. It has only one restroom for twenty-two adult employees, and cooking facilities located in a basement-level storage area.

Old Nabnasset Preschool: The former Nabnasset School, built ca. 1922, has two usable stories with classrooms, offices, restrooms and limited cooking facilities. The building contains approximately 5,028 sq. ft. of gross floor area. The Roudenbush Community Center assumed responsibility for “Old Nab” in 1984 and operated the day care center there until the program moved to the Frost School in 1992. In 1994, Roudenbush resumed use of Old Nab, this time for a preschool with half-day sessions. Today, the building houses a preschool serving fifty-eight children and a staff of sixteen.³¹

The Old Nabnasset Preschool operates on the first floor and a basement-level floor located partially below grade. The first floor has two classrooms on one side of a wide corridor running the length of the building, and offices, restrooms equipped for children, an adult restroom, and storage space on the other side of the corridor. The hallway is used for storage, including a copier, refrigerator, and computer. The basement level has two classrooms, one with kitchen facilities in the corner, separated by a half wall. There is a changing facility/restroom with two toilets and one sink. One of the toilet stalls is an accessible adult stall and the other is a stall with a child-sized toilet. There is a storage room and a boiler room, which is also used for storage.

Like the other Roudenbush facilities, Old Nab is well maintained. It also is crowded (though not quite as crowded as the Frost School), with no room for growth and inadequate storage areas. For example, the accessible toilet stall in the basement is used for storage, effectively making the stall inaccessible to people with disabilities.

The building has two external fire escapes from the first floor, along with two internal exit options at either end of the corridor. The building has a fire alarm and smoke detectors but it does not have a fire suppression system (sprinklers). The first floor is heated with a forced hot water heater, but the heating system does not work well. Unless the classrooms remain open, the hall and offices overheat while the classrooms are too cold. The basement-level classrooms and restrooms are heated by wall-mounted, screened electric space heaters.

WESTFORD MUSEUM AND COTTAGE

The Westford Museum and Cottage buildings are owned by the town, overseen by the Westford Historical Commission, and managed by a private non-profit organization, the Westford Historical Society. The Museum, built in 1794, originally housed Westford Academy. It was occupied as a residence from the late nineteenth century to 1917, when the building was moved to its present location and “reborn” as a fire station. The Fire Department operated a fire station on the property until the early 1970s, when the present Central Fire Station was built. The cottage was built at the turn of the century and provided sleeping space for firefighters.

Westford Museum: The Museum has exhibits on the first floor and exhibit space and storage on the second floor, which is not accessible to people with disabilities. It has several code and safety deficiencies and may have structural problems as well. For example, the staircase at the rear of the Museum was never properly secured to the foundation and it has started to separate from the back wall. There is also a foundation crack and some distortion of wall lines, e.g. a noticeable bulge in the south wall on the first floor. There is significant rot around many windows and doors and rot can be seen along some of the foundation sills. Although the extent of the rot has not been determined, it may have affected the

³¹ Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Nabnasset School Inventory, 12 April 2007.

bottom of the timber posts. These kinds of conditions led the Building Inspector to recommend an assessment by a structural engineer. Town meeting appropriated Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds for this purpose in 2006.³²

Evidence of water infiltration exists in the Museum's basement. The ground around the building slopes toward the foundation in several places, and this may be a contributing factor. Some of the clapboards are open to the weather, which has led to water damage and rot, and the cellar windows need repair. A water leak around the cupola was fixed in 2006 but stains on the second floor ceiling remain. The electrical system is not properly grounded at the exterior and not grounded at the interior. The building lacks GFCI circuits and its electrical panel has obsolete or worn hardware. The building has no insulation and is heated with oil. The hot water heater is about 40 years old. The oil burner is relatively new and was inspected recently. A vent pipe at the roof does not clearly connect to the existing heating system. The attic and restrooms are not vented. Recently two shingles fell off of the museum. The staples that had attached the fallen shingles were rusted to the point of failure. Additional shingles will likely follow. The trim around the roof line has significant rot on the northeast corner. Additionally, the cupola and most of the building needs paint.

Museum Cottage: The Museum Cottage at 4 Boston Road consists of a wood-frame building and an addition with a partial basement and crawl space. It has offices for the Westford Historical Commission and the Westford Museum and Historical Society and some additional floor space used for storage of historical artifacts and records and reference resources. The original building's foundation is field stone, with concrete block supporting the addition. The building has inadequate structural supports at the foundation and basement posts, and portions of the superstructure are not resting on the foundation. The building also has a cracked foundation, and the mortar has eroded so much that some of the rocks in the foundation can be removed by hand. At least

one of the basement posts is rotted. Slopping and sagging floors are evident on the first floor where deviations from level of as much as two inches have been observed. Jack post(s) in the cellar were installed some time ago to correct the problem. In addition, the front, back and basement stairs need repairs. The ground around the cottage also needs to be re-graded, much like the Museum building. The cottage's electrical system is out of date and in poor condition.

Environmental control is an important consideration for the storage of artifacts and documents in both buildings. Window air conditioners provide temperature and limited humidity control in the summer and window shades reduce harmful ultraviolet radiation. The Environment in the Museum and Cottage was monitored from August 2004 to January 2005 by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) with a report delivered to the Historical Society in March, 2005. In response to the report, the Westford Historical Society updated and increased the usage of the air conditioners and humidifiers. However, neither building meets criteria established for the storage and preservation of historical artifacts and documents.³³

Public Schools

Westford has nine public schools and an integrated preschool facility. As testimony to the town's significant growth, six of the schools were constructed within the past fifteen years. Westford takes enormous pride in the quality of its public school system. High MCAS scores reinforce the town's prestige. They also illustrate the benefits of Westford's demographic profile and its commitment to education spending.³⁴ Approximately ninety-one percent of all school expenditures in Westford are paid for with general fund revenue, including the tax levy,

³² Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Westford Museum Inventory, 15 April 2007, and Robert Servais, "Building Inspection Report, 2 Boston Road, Westford, MA," Report #2352, 15 December 2006.

³³ Information in this paragraph supplied by Comprehensive Master Plan Committee.

³⁴ Information in this section based on school facility inventories by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., 10-11 September 2007, Massachusetts Department of Education *School Profile* series and "Long-Term Trends in School District Enrollments, online at <<http://mass.doe.edu>>, the *Annual Town Report* (2006), LPBA/Architects, Inc., *Capital Needs Study, Three Schools* (2004), and Alderman & MacNeish, *Buildings and Facilities Plan* (1994).

other local receipts, and Chapter 70. Various grants and federal aid sources provide support for the remaining nine percent of total school spending.³⁵

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Westford Academy: The town's high school is known as Westford Academy, the name of a private school acquired by the town many years ago. Located on a thirty-eight acre site at 30 Patten Road, Westford Academy is a 296,000 sq. ft. facility serving children in grades nine through twelve. The building was originally constructed in 1973 and renovated in 2000 for approximately \$32M. Westford Academy currently accommodates just over 1,500 students and contains a total of seventy classrooms. Between 2000 and 2007, enrollment at Westford Academy increased by 436. The school offers a wide variety of Advanced Placement courses covering all major academic disciplines. Its faculty is unusually strong, with ninety-five percent holding master's degrees. Well over eighty percent of Westford Academy's graduates attend a private four-year college. The average class size at Westford Academy is twenty-three students per teacher (23:1). Less than ten percent of the students at Westford Academy utilize special education services.³⁶

Stony Brook Middle School: Constructed in 2002, the Stony Brook Middle School on Farmer's Way is one of two schools serving children in grades six through eight. It includes 119,130 sq. ft. of space and thirty classrooms in a three-story configuration. The school has a full range of outdoor athletic facilities, including tennis courts. In 2007, the school's enrollment included 686 students, nine percent receiving special education services and 6.1 percent speaking English as a second language.

Blanchard Middle School: The Lloyd G. Blanchard Middle School on West Street was constructed in 1992. It includes 226,132 sq. ft. of space and thirty classrooms. Its current enrollment is 588 students,

with less than nine percent participating in special education services. Approximately six percent are non-native English speaking students. The average ratio of students to teachers is 11.4:1.

Abbot School: The Abbot Elementary School was constructed in 1966 on a thirty-two acre site on Depot Road. The building includes 56,263 sq. ft. of space and twenty-two classrooms, and serves children in grades three through five. The Abbot School's present enrollment is 403 students, including 10± percent receiving special education services. Less than six percent are non-native English speaking students. A single wastewater treatment facility serves the Abbot and Millennium Schools and the primary municipal buildings in Westford Center. The average student-teacher ratio is 19.3:1.

Crisafulli School: The John A. Crisafulli School on Robinson Road opened in 2002. It is an elementary school with 79,000 sq. ft. of space and serves children in grades three through five. Built to accommodate 525 students in twenty-four classrooms, its current enrollment is 419. Nearly nine percent participate in special education programs and approximately five percent are non-native English speaking students. The average student-teacher ratio is 19.8:1.

Day School: The Norman E. Day School, a 57,900 sq. ft. facility with twenty-three classrooms, was constructed in the early 1960s. It is the third school currently serving children in grades three through five. The Day School has a large percentage of Asian students (twenty-two percent) and students whose native language is not English (seventeen percent). The percentage of students receiving special education services (9.8 percent) is roughly the same as the system-wide average (9.4 percent). Current enrollment is 407 students. The average student-teacher ratio is 19.2:1.

Nabnasset School: The Nabnasset School on Plain Road is a K-2 school with 55,000 sq. ft. of floor area and twenty-one classrooms. Its present enrollment is 364 students and the overall student-teacher ratio is 15:1. Approximately seven percent receive special education services and less than two percent are non-native English speaking students. Nabnasset

³⁵ Department of Education, "FY2007 Expenditures Per Pupil by Function," <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/statistics/function07_note.html>.

³⁶ All average student-teacher ratios in this section supplied by the Westford School Committee to the Planning Board, 30 August 2008.

was renovated and expanded in the mid-1990s. The average student-teacher ratio is 19.4:1.

Robinson School: The Col. John Robinson School at Concord and Robinson Roads is a 54,305 sq. ft. facility built in 1967. It has twenty-two classrooms and its K-2 enrollment includes 383 students, with 4.2 percent in special education programs and 7.8 percent as non-native speakers of English. The average student-teacher ratio is 19:1.

Miller School: The Rita Edwards Miller School on Mitchell Way is a K-2 facility with a current enrollment of 398 students, including a twenty-six percent Asian population. More than twenty percent of its students speak a language other than English at home. This is an 80,000 sq. ft. facility constructed ca. 2000, with twenty-four classrooms. The average student-teacher ratio is 19.2:1.

Millennium School: The Millennium School is a “hybrid” facility that houses school administrative offices and an integrated preschool while providing public meeting space for many town boards and committees. Located behind the Abbot School, the Millennium School consists of portable classrooms purchased in 2000 with a combined total of 32,000 sq. ft. of floor area. The integrated preschool serves approximately fifty-nine children, thirty-seven percent with special needs. Some town departments have moved into the Millennium School. Furthermore, the building is used for general municipal meeting space. The wastewater treatment facility (WTF) at the Millennium School serves both the school property and municipal facilities in the town center.

Westford children have the option to attend the **Nashoba Valley Technical High School** at 100 Littleton Road. In FY 2007, forty-eight students from Westford attended programs at Nashoba, making Westford the fourth largest source of Nashoba enrollments out of the seven communities in the district.³⁷

**TABLE 9.1
DESIGN CAPACITY AND STUDENT ENROLLMENTS, WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS (2007)**

Name of School	Planned Operating Capacity	Enrollment 10/1/07
Blanchard Middle School	750	597
Crisafulli School	528	416
Westford Academy	1,750	1,580
Integrated-Pre School (Millennium School)	75	74
Abbot School	484	386
Stony Brook School	750	670
Robinson	484	380
Norman Day School	506	403
Miller School	528	422
Nabnasset School	462	369

Source: Westford School Department, November 2007.

SCHOOL BUILDING CAPACITY

Westford’s school buildings have capacity to absorb enrollment growth, though not to the same degree. Building capacity can be difficult to measure because it reflects several factors, some objective and some subjective: code compliance for core facilities (cafeterias, gymnasiums, auditoriums, libraries and so forth), programmatic needs for a variety of instructional spaces, such as music and art rooms and science laboratories, and a school committee’s class size policies. A school building’s planned operating capacity refers to the number of students it is intended to accommodate, based on class size policies in place when the facility is designed. Table 9.1 compares enrollments in October 2007 to the planned operating capacity of each school in Westford. It shows that most school buildings have room to accommodate enrollment growth. This helps to explain the town’s participation in the Department of Education’s “School Choice” Program, which allows public schools to accept out-of-district students in exchange for tuition payments.³⁸

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Westford experienced rapid school enrollment growth beginning in 1994, after the housing mar-

and Local Contribution Calculations.”

³⁸ According to the Massachusetts Department of Education, Westford received 70 to 90 School Choice students per year from 1996 to 2000, but the number has declined considerably since then. In the past few years, the town has received less than ten School Choice students per year from other communities and sent two to four Westford students to other school districts.

³⁷ Department of Education, “FY 2007 Chapter 70

TABLE 9.2
WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PK-12 ENROLLMENT GROWTH, FY1989-2009*

Fiscal Year	Grade Levels				Total	Percent Change
	PK-3	4-6	7-9	10-12		
1988	879	585	679	652	2,795	
1989	957	588	647	638	2,830	1.3%
1990	970	625	605	648	2,848	0.6%
1991	1,017	661	607	644	2,929	2.8%
1992	1,029	683	594	655	2,961	1.1%
1993	1,070	704	649	607	3,030	2.3%
1994	1,146	756	701	618	3,221	6.3%
1995	1,153	806	746	609	3,314	2.9%
1996	1,254	875	773	654	3,556	7.3%
1997	1,398	892	783	679	3,752	5.5%
1998	1,473	927	828	702	3,930	4.7%
1999	1,486	973	898	728	4,085	3.9%
2000	1,609	1,078	953	766	4,406	7.9%
2001	1,609	1,107	999	830	4,545	3.2%
2002	1,622	1,164	999	900	4,685	3.1%
2003	1,677	1,197	1,103	948	4,925	5.1%
2004	1,719	1,244	1,149	1,000	5,112	3.8%
2005	1,645	1,271	1,206	1,011	5,133	0.4%
2006	1,631	1,266	1,245	1,074	5,216	1.6%
2007	1,608	1,262	1,241	1,123	5,234	0.3%
2008	1,614	1,239	1,268	1,163	5,284	1.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, "Long-Term Trends in PK-12 Enrollments, Westford Public Schools," <<http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/statistics/>>. *Enrollment counts are based on conditions as of October 1 each year. For example, FY 2009 refers to enrollments reported by DOE for October 1, 2008.

ket recovered from the recession at the beginning of the decade. From FY2000 to FY2008, K-12 enrollments in the Westford Public Schools increased by about twenty percent. Table 9.2 traces the recent history of K-12 enrollment growth in Westford. While public school enrollments in some Eastern Massachusetts suburbs have stabilized or begun to decline, Westford seems to be entering a period of lower rates of enrollment growth, i.e., K-12 enrollments have continued to increase, but not at the very high rates witnessed a few years ago. A similar pattern is occurring in other affluent, high-growth suburbs along I-495.

The School Department's K-12 enrollment projections suggest that in the near future, a modest, short-term space deficit will most likely exist at Westford Academy, but the elementary and middle schools should have enough classroom space to meet future needs.³⁹ The combined K-12 enrollment capac-

ity of Westford's nine school buildings (excluding Millennium) is about 6,300 students.

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 debts for new 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 amenities that residents want while other issues remain unresolved, often for many years. Reaching agreement about service priorities may help Westford set policies to guide the development of each year's operating and capital budgets.

³⁹ Westford Public Schools, "School Capacity 2005-2006 to 2015-2016," [Electronic Version], June 2006.

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/impact of adding new subdivision roads to Highway 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. Still, one of the criticisms heard so often during the Comprehensive Plan process is that town officials do not implement the plans they have commissioned.

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 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.

This capital improvement plan needs to account for new construction needs as well as repairs and 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 it is desirable to keep Town Hall in the center of Westford, it is clear that Town Hall cannot house as many departments as before. A decision must be made as soon as possible 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 service the area south of Route 110. At some point, Westford will probably

also need more classrooms. Considerations should include possible restructuring of grade groupings within existing school buildings as well as the feasibility of adding floor levels or annexes to existing school buildings.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

At public meetings for the Comprehensive Plan, residents expressed distrust of local government and criticized officials for “planning in a vacuum.” Some described local government service in general and town meeting in particular as a “divide and conquer” experience. Others said that fragmented communication between town boards makes it hard to reach consensus and move forward with an agreed-upon course of action. Westford's department heads share many of the same frustrations, but unlike citizen volunteers or motivated residents who choose to attend public meetings, municipal employees do not have the luxury of speaking out. Over time, distrust seems to have accumulated inside town government as much as it has mounted among the critics of town government.

Dismayed by Westford's poor track record of plan implementation, one public official said the Comprehensive Plan should tie 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 Chapter 11, Implementation Guide, extend or build upon previous town plans. However, neither this plan nor any other plan can solve the problems that interfere with Westford's ability to act. Westford has significant leadership needs. Until residents take charge of the political tenor of their town, Westford will probably remain a place that has trouble making major public policy decisions and following through on them. Board training, predictable systems of communication between elected and appointed officials and employees, systems to assure that officials have complete information so they can make timely decisions, a charter with fewer ambiguities, and possibly a town hall “ombudsman” could help Westford establish a more effective town government.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Local governments have record-keeping and records retention requirements that many towns, including Westford, are not prepared to address. On one level, records retention involves technical issues, such as space planning and storage methods to protect the integrity of permanent records. On a more basic level, records management needs to be an organized system, widely understood by the staff and volunteers with records retention duties, and overseen by someone responsible for implementing a records management plan. Employees with day-to-day knowledge of their own departmental records need to be involved with developing a town-wide records management plan. They have hands-on knowledge of the documents they work with, and they will be in the best position to classify records by factors such as frequency of use, confidentiality, statutory requirements (archival or permanent records), need for duplicate records, type of indexing system, and so forth. Although it would make sense for Westford to purchase consulting support to guide staff through the process of setting up a records management plan, several publications and guidance documents are already available. A reasonable alternative to paying a consultant would be to appoint a group of employees to serve as records management plan committee, working under the direction of the Town Manager.

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. 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 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. Still, the line between the public department or agency and the non-profit interest group is not always clear, and the funding supplied by non-profit groups is not always transparent to the general public. Some departments run programs that easily attract organized support and others do not, and this can create tensions within town government simply because not all departments have the same access to outside funding. Moreover, if there is not a clear separation between the town and the organized supporters of a particular activity, the town could be liable for the actions of a non-profit. Some examples of public-private partnerships in Westford include:

- ◆ The Roudenbush Community Center Committee and Roudenbush Community Center, Inc.
- ◆ The Parks and Recreation Department 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.

The town’s relationship with the Roudenbush Community Center, Inc. and the Westford Historical Society is particularly noteworthy because in both cases, private organizations occupy town-owned buildings without a lease procured under Chapter 30B, the Uniform Procurement Act.

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. In Westford, as in other municipalities, it would behoove both the Town and the non-profit support groups to strive for as much clarity and transparency as possible in educating the public about these unique partnerships. Additionally, the Town may need to clarify the legal underpinnings of some of these public-private partnerships.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Westford has opportunities to increase local government efficiency by consolidating some of its existing operations. An obvious 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).

WASTEWATER DISPOSAL

Westford’s villages and some of its older neighborhoods have a higher density of development than new subdivisions. For environmental and land use planning reasons, Westford needs to consider the

advantages and disadvantages of providing local sewer service in these areas. A district-level wastewater treatment facility or possibly allowances for shared septic systems could help to protect the town’s ponds and streams and facilitate private property improvements.

EMINENT DOMAIN

In 2005, the Supreme Court issued a landmark decision in an eminent domain case that sparked controversy at all levels of government. *Kelo v. City of New London* has prompted many communities to think about the conditions under which they would exercise eminent domain in order to meet a public need. In *Kelo*, the Court upheld eminent domain takings by the City of New London, which had seized and assembled several properties in order to carry out an economic development plan. Although suburbs like Westford rarely take property by eminent domain – except for so-called “friendly” takings – the town should consider establishing an eminent domain policy in the event that it needs one in the future. In Westford, this issue surfaced recently while town boards were reviewing a proposed commercial development in Minot’s Corner, Cornerstone Square, as the possibility existed that land takings would be needed to increase the number of traffic lanes on Route 110.

RECREATION NEEDS

In the “Land Use Priorities Committee Final Report (January 2002),” the Land Use Priorities Committee found that to meet Westford’s future recreation needs as defined in the 1995 Master Plan, the town would need sixty-seven acres of additional recreational facilities.⁴⁰ It is not clear if this forecast is still 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 long-range capital plans.

⁴⁰ Town of Westford Land Use Priorities Committee Report (2002), 8-9.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

- F.1** Provide town employees with safe, adequately equipped facilities, and the technology they need to perform their duties.
- 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 advantages of 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.

One way of characterizing governance involves rating a unit of government's organization and authority by degree of effectiveness and efficiency, that is:

- ◆ An *effective* government is typically defined as one that citizens regard as responsive to people, and
- ◆ An *efficient* government is one that citizens regard as high-value relative to cost, with little if any waste of resources.

Although it is possible for a government to rank high on both counts – effective and efficient – an effective government is not necessarily efficient.

Some communities want a decentralized government that works slowly and deliberatively by design, with many avenues for citizens to influence or participate directly in decisions large and small. In contrast, other communities want a centralized gov-

ernment that operates mainly as an administrative unit, with clear lines of authority, a high degree of accountability, and controlled access to the decision-making process. However, most communities seem to want something "in the middle," as evidenced by the number of local government permutations that exist in Massachusetts today.

MASSACHUSETTS MODELS OF GOVERNMENT

Constitutional Home Rule

Incorporated cities and towns constitute the units of municipal government in Massachusetts. Since 1966, the Commonwealth has operated as a "home rule" state, which means that municipalities have a constitutional "right" of self-government and authority to design their own form of government – to a point. Long before 1966, however, the General Court approved local government organizational changes petitioned by cities and towns and over time, Massachusetts has assembled an interesting collection of local governments. They range from the highly decentralized, all-volunteer governments found in very small towns west of the Connecticut River to the City of Everett's unusual bicameral legislature – a Board of Alderman and Common Council – and mayor.

Approximately two-thirds of the communities with a town form of government in Massachusetts have some sort of professional manager or administrator, and eighty-eight percent have an open town meeting. Of the 262 towns with an open town meeting, more than half meet the statutory population threshold (6,000) that entitles communities to

choose a “limited” or representative town meeting. Today, just thirty-six towns have a representative town meeting, but more towns fell into this category until several changed to a city form of government beginning in the late 1970s. In general, towns seem to have shown greater interest in establishing day-to-day management capacity than moving toward a representative legislature.

“Home rule” does not mean that municipalities have absolute control over their affairs. In municipal law, “home rule” is thought of as the opposite of “Dillon’s Rule,” a principle articulated by a nineteenth century judge from Iowa, who argued that local governments possess only those powers explicitly granted to them by the state.¹ An important difference between so-called “Dillon’s Rule” and home rule states is that municipal powers are narrowly construed in the former and broadly construed in the latter. A second difference involves the ease with which states can preempt locally adopted ordinances or bylaws. Nationwide, ten states have constitutional provisions that guarantee the right of home rule to all municipalities, yet even in these states – including Massachusetts – home rule is not without limitations.² Local governments in Massachusetts are prohibited from establishing charters and adopting bylaws or ordinances that are inconsistent with state law or supersede the General Court’s authority over six matters:

- ◆ Regulating elections;
- ◆ Levying, assessing and collecting taxes;

¹ John F. Dillon, *Treatise on the Law of Municipal Corporations*, (1872), 101-102, citing *Merriam v. Moody’s Executors*, 25 Iowa 163, 170 (1868).

² In practice, the differences between “Dillon’s Rule” and “home rule” states are not always clear. The Brookings Institution categorizes 31 states as “Dillon’s Rule” states and another eight as “partially” Dillon’s Rule states, i.e., with home rule powers granted to some classes of municipalities (in most cases, cities). The ten states with constitutional guarantees of home rule include Alaska, Iowa, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina and Utah. Many of the Dillon’s Rule states do have some form of home rule, but not the constitutional “self-executing” home rule that applies to all municipalities in states such as Iowa and Massachusetts.

- ◆ Borrowing money or pledging a municipality’s credit;
- ◆ Disposing of park land;
- ◆ Enacting private or civil laws; and
- ◆ Setting punishment for a felony or requiring imprisonment for any violation of law.³

Here, home rule is mainly the autonomy to adopt a plan of government. It does not include all possible forms of local autonomy, notably fiscal autonomy. Moreover, many state laws in Massachusetts have retained the framework of “enabling” legislation despite the Home Rule Amendment. Accordingly, the authors of a report recently published by the Rappaport Institute argue: “...there is no home rule in Massachusetts in the sense of local independence and autonomy. The state has established a complex mix of grants of and limitations on local power. This mix of powers and disabilities creates the constrained environment within which municipal officials operate...”⁴ As a result, home rule consists of blurred rights with respect to the health, safety and welfare interests of a community’s population. Nowhere is this more obvious than with municipal authority over land use regulation.

Mechanisms for Self-Governance PROCEDURES FOR CHANGING FORM OF GOVERNMENT

The “default” or standard powers and duties of municipal officials appear in the Commonwealth’s general laws. Many of these provisions date to the early 1800s, and most communities in Massachusetts still operate under them to some degree. Cities and towns seeking to change their form of government have access to three methods of doing so:

- ◆ Petition the legislature for a “special act” charter, as Westford did in 1989;

³ Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Article LXXXIX (“Home Rule Amendment”), Section 7.

⁴ Barron, et al., *Dispelling the Myth of Home Rule*, (Rappaport Institute, 2004), 77.

- ◆ Adopt the provisions of “enabling” or local option statutes – a form of *legislative home rule* -- found variously in M.G.L. c. 40N, c. 41 and c. 43C; or
- ◆ Establish a charter commission and adopt a home rule charter under the Home Rule Amendment (Article 89), ratified by voters in 1966, and M.G.L. c. 43B, the Home Rule Procedures Act, enacted by the legislature in 1967.

More than eighty cities and towns have adopted home rule charters following the process prescribed by Chapter 43B, including at least two that eventually created new charters through a special act of the legislature. A total of fifty-five communities operate under special act charters, several having been instituted prior to the Home Rule Amendment. The key difference between home rule and special act charters is procedural. The former requires establishment of a charter commission, an extensive public participation process and a proposed form of government adopted by a majority of voters at a municipal election; the latter requires a proposal to be adopted by a majority of voters at a town meeting and approved by the legislature.

Short of a special act charter, however, communities also may use the special act process to make a single change in their government organization, such as creating a town manager position or consolidating several departments under a single department head. Some of these changes can be accomplished by adopting the local-option models in Chapter 43C, but the legislature’s models are fairly prescriptive and cannot be modified by local bylaw or ordinance.

CITY OR TOWN?

Any municipality in Massachusetts with a population of 12,000 or more may establish a city form of government. Neither state law nor the courts provide much guidance about the legal differences between a city and town. One difference is that cities have independent authority to adopt local ordinances, but town bylaws require approval by the Attorney General. In practice, however, the key distinction lies with the type of legislative body a

Home Rule: “Old habits are hard to break...”

After 1966...“recourse to the statutes was now principally to ascertain whether a state law prohibits some local legislative action rather than to find where it is enabled. But habits are hard to break. Municipal officials and the general public continued to go to the statutes and the Acts to find therein familiar words of enablement, to find in that language a false sense of comfort and legitimacy about local proposals.”

Robert Ritchie, Former Director, Municipal Law Unit, Office of the Attorney General, “Municipal Charters and Forms of Government in Massachusetts,” 2006.

Limitations of Home Rule

Owing to limitations in the Home Rule Amendment, the courts have invalidated a number of local bylaws and ordinances, such as regulating the use of pesticides, banning hazardous waste facilities, regulating condominium conversions, and impact fees.

See Mark Bobrowski, Handbook of Massachusetts Land Use and Planning Law, 2nd ed. (2002), 11-14, and 376-378.

community decides to create. Under a town form of government, each town must hold an annual town meeting and may hold special town meetings if called by the board of selectmen (or petitioned by voters). Towns also have a plural executive – a board of selectmen – and the selectmen control the town meeting warrant. In cities, the council decides when and where to meet and determines its own agenda. There are operating differences, too, such as the tendency of towns to have more elected boards and individual office holders, yet any town with a home rule or special act charter can replace most of its elected positions with appointees. Regardless

of whether a town has a charter, the only offices it is required to fill by election are the selectmen and school committee and, where applicable, members of a representative town meeting. Similarly, a city must elect its council and school committee, but not all city officials with the title “mayor” are elected directly by the voters.

As of 2007, fifty-three communities in the Commonwealth had adopted a city form of government even though several still refer to themselves as towns. The primary types of city governments in Massachusetts include the city council-mayor and city council-manager, but some variety exists within these categories, such as the so-called “strong” and “weak” mayor systems created under a pre-Home Rule enabling statute. About one-third of the communities with a town form of government could convert to a city government because they have a large enough population to meet the minimum requirements of the law. People often assume that the only municipalities with a city form of government are large urban communities, but this is not always the case. In the past thirty years, small- and mid-size communities as diverse as Palmer, Amesbury, Winthrop, Franklin, Watertown and Braintree have changed from town to city forms of government, most with town council-town manager organizations, i.e., without a mayor.

Regionalism

Although many types of regional services exist in Massachusetts, there is little in the way of regional government. The limited presence and authority of regional institutions long pre-dates the Home Rule Amendment and reflects a historical deference to cities and towns.

County Government. Until recently, Massachusetts had fourteen counties, each with administrative responsibility for county courts, jails, a registry of deeds, and maintenance of county roads. The limited jurisdiction of counties in Massachusetts is strikingly different from the powers and duties of counties in other parts of the country. In the late 1990s, the Commonwealth began to abolish county governments and by the end of 1999, eight of its original fourteen counties had been dismantled – includ-

ing Middlesex County, the county geography that contains Westford. While all of these areas still have a geographic identity, they have neither a political identity nor any of the governing powers of a county. The towns in Franklin and Hampshire counties subsequently approved charters for regional councils of government to replace their former county governments.⁵

Regional Planning Agencies. Most of the Commonwealth’s thirteen regional planning agencies have limited authority relative to their counterparts in other states, too. Each regional planning agency serves a central city and its metropolitan area. Westford is a member of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), a regional planning agency with strong ties to the nine communities it serves. NMCOG is unusual compared to most of the regional planning agencies because it serves a fairly small number of communities. It also is unusual because through special legislation enacted about 20 years ago, NMCOG has authority to provide a wider range of services to its member towns than one finds in other regions. In addition to transportation planning, a mainstay function of most regional planning agencies, NMCOG has been an active player in planning for the region’s economic growth and prosperity. NMCOG has also prepared a guidance plan on long-range growth management for the region, *2020 Vision: Planning for Growth in the Northern Middlesex Region* (1999).

Other Regional Organizations. Massachusetts has other types of regional organizations with public or quasi-public powers: regional school districts, economic development agencies and corporations, housing authorities, transit authorities, emergency planning and response districts, regional library consortia, and health care service delivery networks. The boundaries of these regional service areas differ by service type. On one hand, defining regional service delivery areas by factors other than county lines means they could be more responsive to conditions “on the ground.” On the other hand, it all

⁵ N.B. Massachusetts counties have no constitutionally guaranteed right of home rule. The legislature has created an optional process for establishing county charters and adopting alternative forms of county government in M.G.L. c.34A.

but assures that no single regional unit could serve as the administering agency for all of the programs and services. This is quite different from most states in the Midwest and South, where counties serve as the administrative unit for nearly all regional services, including regional schools, and have jurisdiction over regional planning.

Intergovernmental Agreements. Some services in Westford operate under inter-local agreements, contracts with larger regional organizations, and informal arrangements with neighboring towns. For example, respite care for frail elders living at home in Westford is available through a two-town program administered by the Chelmsford Council on Aging. The Westford Council on Aging used to provide a supportive day care program for seniors in Westford and other communities in the Merrimack Valley area under an agreement with Elder Services of Merrimack Valley – an agency serving a catchment area of twenty-three communities in two counties and two regional planning districts. (This program is being transitioned to the Roudenbush Community Center.)

In addition, Westford is host community for the Nashoba Valley Technical High School, which includes seven member towns in the upper Middlesex area. The J. V. Fletcher Library brings Westford residents the resources of libraries in thirty-five cities and towns through the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium. Communities always have cooperative arrangements with neighboring towns, too, such as mutual aid (public safety) and occasional equipment sharing. Although most of these programs and services operate cooperatively, i.e., not as governmental units, they reflect decisions made by municipalities and their governing bodies to seek resources beyond their own corporate boundaries.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN WESTFORD

SPECIAL ACT CHARTER

Westford is one of fifty-five cities and towns in Massachusetts operating under a *special act charter*: a written description of a community's form of government and distribution of powers, approved first

by town meeting and second, by the General Court.⁶ Westford's present charter was adopted in 1989 and amended in 1992. It provides for a five-member board of selectmen, a town manager who serves as the chief administrative and financial officer of the town, and an open town meeting – that is, a town meeting open to any registered voter in Westford. In addition to the board of selectmen, Westford's charter provides for election of the town moderator, school committee, planning board, housing authority, library trustees and board of health. Nearly all other boards and committees and statutory town officers are appointed by the selectmen or town manager, but the moderator also has some appointment powers.

Westford must have anticipated that departmental arrangements existing in 1989 would need the flexibility to evolve in the future. New or more complex legal requirements, opportunities to be more efficient, and the impacts of growth are examples of the conditions that lead communities to consider reorganizing their municipal operations. Accordingly, Westford's charter provides some room to respond to changing circumstances. For example, it empowers the town manager to consolidate or abolish departments and create new ones, with the selectmen's approval, to reassign or redistribute departmental responsibilities and to delegate some duties to staff. Still, the charter confines these options to departments that report directly to the town manager.

Westford's town manager has hiring and firing authority over most town employees, but not employees who report to boards that retained their elected status under the charter. The charter also suggests that even non-elected boards have authority to appoint staff they directly supervise, such as the conservation commission's oversight of the conservation planner. Of course, the charter does not prevent elected or appointed boards from having voluntary, cooperative arrangements for day-to-day staff supervision by the town manager. In general, though, while the town manager position has the responsibilities of a chief administrative and financial of-

⁶ Not all special act charters take effect in the same way. Some become effective upon approval by the state legislature; others have been written to require ratification by a majority of a town's voters at an annual election.

ficer, it does not have authority over all municipal operations. Like so many charters in Massachusetts, Westford's qualifies as something "in the middle." Westford has all of the components of a modern bureaucracy, but not the attendant centralization.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Westford's government is semi-centralized but in practice, it has much in common with the participatory-deliberative governments found in small towns – that is, governance structures that are largely *decentralized*. Reliance on volunteer committees often declines in towns with a board of selectmen-town manager framework, but this does not seem to be true in Westford. The town has more than fifty committees on record, though not all meet or conduct business on a regular basis. A government with many standing and ad hoc committees provides valuable avenues for public participation, which Westford residents say they appreciate. Still, it can be difficult to balance a desire for public participation with a desire for efficiency because a system that accommodates multiple voices in the decision-making process is usually a system that works through deliberation. As a result, decisions take more time and they are vulnerable to being postponed or reversed. A positive feature of participatory-deliberative styles of governance is that residents have lots of opportunities to shape policy. A negative feature is that if the ground rules for participation and the procedures for decisions are unclear, the experience of government service can leave volunteers dissatisfied and discourage them from serving in the future.

Personnel Needs. Several residents attending public meetings for this plan described Westford's "community spirit" and volunteerism as important strengths of the town. Ironically, it seems difficult for Westford to attract broad participation in local government, as suggested by the number of people serving on more than one board or committee. It is not unusual to find the same residents on several committees in other towns, yet Westford has a large number of committees that need members. Residents committed to local service appear to be stretched thin, as are the town's department heads because most provide some degree of staff support to Westford's elected and appointed committees. Unlike the state's small, rural communities that have

Participation & Deliberation

A positive feature of participatory-deliberative styles of governance is that residents have lots of opportunities to shape policy. A negative feature is that if the ground rules for participation and the procedures for decisions are unclear, the experience of government service can leave volunteers dissatisfied and discourage them from serving in the future.

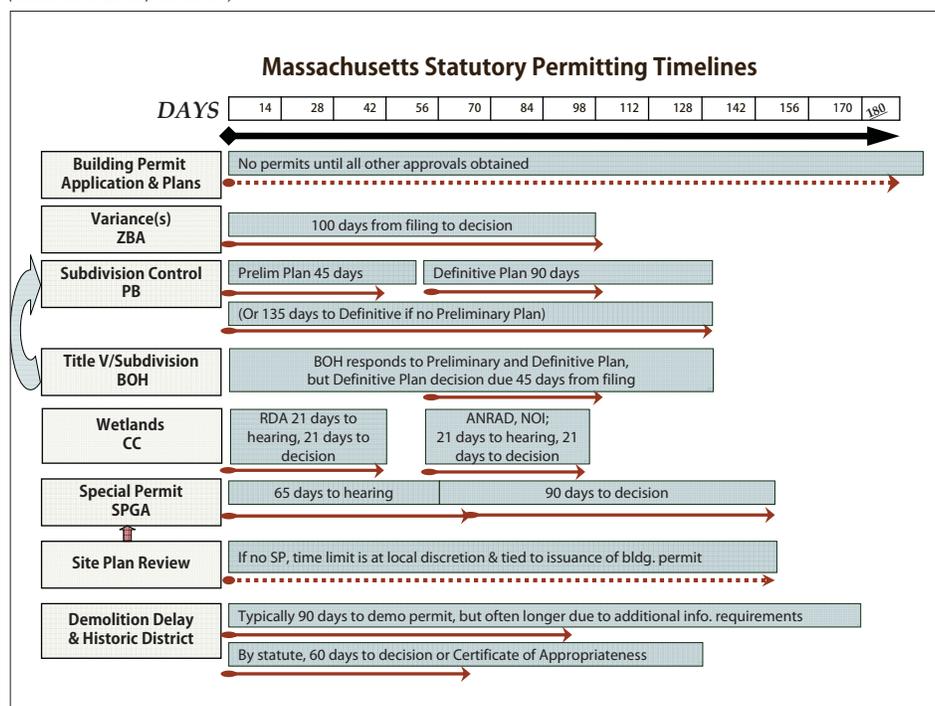
few if any professional staff, Westford's government is a departmentalized organization and for the most part, each department has a professional in charge of day-to-day operations. However, many of these departments also have night responsibilities because they provide technical, research and reporting assistance to one or more boards and committees.

Space Needs. In addition to the human resources required to support a large committee structure, towns with participatory-deliberative governments have special needs for space: conveniently located meeting rooms that are accessible to people with disabilities, records access and parking. Today, the public often expects that meetings will be televised, too, which means that some meeting spaces need cable access. Concerns about securing public meeting space surfaced from time to time during the master plan process, mainly because the town does not have a point-person in charge of scheduling meeting rooms or an online meeting room calendar available to committees. Contacting the staff in charge of each town or school building in order to find a meeting room can be very time-consuming. Residents also said that Westford has a shortage of meeting space, not only for the conduct of public business but also for use by community and neighborhood organizations.

Communication. A third need of participatory-deliberative governments is a process for direct communication between boards and committees. Westford does not seem to have a clear or predictable communications structure in place for its vol-

Figure 10.1. Development Review and Permitting Timelines under Massachusetts State Laws.

(Source: Glenn Garber, Judi Barrett.)



unteers. Department heads supporting the work of town boards help by communicating with each other, but they do not really speak *for* the boards and committees with authority to make a decision. Some towns rely on quarterly meetings or as-needed “all boards” meetings to facilitate communication among volunteers. Like many towns, Westford has established an online repository of meeting minutes. However, minutes reflect actions that have already occurred, they are not official until approved by the governmental body, and they rarely convey the essence of a board’s deliberations. Meeting minutes do not substitute for a conversation, and sometimes what decision-makers need most is a chance to consult with their colleagues.

Coordination. For example, development permitting is a function that usually benefits from inter-board consultation, particularly for large or complex projects. The different procedures and timetables of development review and permitting authorities can make it very difficult for local officials to communicate (Figure 10.1). These differences create complications not only for the elected and appointed officials, but also for staff, applicants, and abutters of proposed developments. Local permitting authorities have jurisdiction over particular matters,

and sometimes their objectives collide. In the interests of making each board’s rules and expectations clear, some communities have begun to require a “scoping session” with developers, much like an all-boards meeting, as a pre-application requirement. A few communities provide the option of joint public hearings as well, though joint hearings can be challenging because the decision periods for various permits are so different. These kinds of practices could help Westford’s town boards develop a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and assure more consistent communication with applicants and abutters.

Cooperation. Finally, communities that expect to attract and retain devoted volunteers need a culture of cooperation, a process for building consensus and a commitment to the work that boards and committees produce. These qualities require effort and a shared sense of public purpose from everyone in government. Many committees in Westford have performed research, planning and reporting tasks for the town, yet sometimes their recommendations have been tabled or forgotten. On occasion, the work of one committee has been repeated or revised by another committee. Problems such as these do not bode well for Westford’s ability to engage volunteers in the future.

ADMINISTRATION

Westford has twenty-one departments, some with divisions composed of once-separate offices that have been consolidated over time. The town’s entire workforce, including the schools, consists of 805 full-time equivalent personnel.⁷ One of the strongest features of Westford’s local government is the degree of cooperation and sense of unity that exists

⁷ Westford Finance Committee, *Finance Committee Report and Recommendations for the 2007 Annual Town Meeting*, 4.

among department heads. Still, many departments seem stressed and some are conspicuously understaffed.

Since Westford's local government includes features of a centralized, professional organization and a decentralized organization, the town has a multiplicity of needs and it is difficult to meet all of them. Employees need space to work, equipment, technology, and a rational organizational structure, i.e., clear expectations, reasonable rules and fairness. In addition, employees with statutory responsibilities need enough resources to meet their legal obligations and those of the boards they serve. It is not evident that Westford meets these needs very well.

Municipal employees have space needs that relate to the administrative functions they serve. Employees require appropriately equipped offices, accessible storage space, small conference rooms, counters or tables to serve the public, a suitable archive to preserve permanent records, and parking for employee and departmental vehicles. Some personnel also need shared or interconnected space because they have related duties, such as administration and finance, public works, or staff serving the regulatory and permitting boards. Westford has taken steps to provide a safe, suitable work environment for many of its local government operations. The town has a new highway garage that houses the highway, engineering and GIS departments. Westford also has built new schools and refurbished others, constructed a new facility for the water department and a modern, well-equipped police station, and is currently pursuing plans to expand the Cameron Senior Center. In addition, the Board of Library Trustees intends to initiate work on a library expansion project in 2008.

Town Hall. Until recently, Westford kept all of its general government offices and some related departments (twenty-four employees) in a single location: Westford Town Hall, an historic building in Westford Center. At Comprehensive Master Plan meetings, residents said they were concerned about overcrowded conditions at Town Hall, and they were right. The problem became dramatically evident in December 2007, when the building's certificate of occupancy was revoked due to structural

problems identified by inspectors. In a remarkable effort, all departments at Town Hall were moved to other facilities and equipped to continue operations within 48 hours. However, the result is that services once housed in the same place have been divided among five municipal buildings, including a fire station that Westford constructed.

The rapid relocation of Town Hall workers illustrates the cooperative team spirit that exists among department heads, yet the event also points to some of the difficulties Westford has with reaching consensus, making decisions and taking action. It is unclear why Westford did not move at least some Town Hall departments quite some time ago. In 2004-2005, the Permanent Town Buildings Committee published reports on departmental space needs and made recommendations to relocate some Town Hall offices to existing space in other buildings. Neither the committee's recommendations nor alternatives explored later had been implemented when the building was evacuated on December 4, 2007.

"Full-Service" Community. Westford provides a wide range of services. Compared to most suburbs, Westford is a "full-service" community. Through its own municipal and school workforce, Westford delivers services that many other towns offer only on a limited basis or do not offer at all. The diverse programs and clinics administered by the Board of Health's Health Care Services Division, the breadth of programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Department, the unique history of the Roudenbush Community Center, the Council on Aging's supportive adult day care program and Westford's commitment to community preservation all point to a town that has traditionally held high expectations for its local government. Town departments have responded in kind, but the cost of providing a "full-service" local government has changed significantly since the late 1990s. This is due to a combination of fixed costs beyond Westford's control, the unpredictability of state aid, and choices Town Meeting has made to keep Westford the kind of place that residents say they want.

Today, town departments are under considerable pressure to reduce costs, generate revenue and generally do more with less – or simply do less, if neces-

sary – but these issues are not unique to Westford. The “structural deficit” described by Westford’s Fiscal Policy Committee and others exists in local governments everywhere. One of the challenges that municipalities face, including Westford, is that decisions to generate more revenue by increasing fees must be mindful of two considerations: local governments may not profit from providing services, and the Home Rule Amendment limits local authority to levy, assess and collect taxes. Fees need to reflect a community’s actual cost to provide a service, yet very few cities and towns undertake the kind of costing analysis required to justify a change in user fees (let alone their existing fees). Moreover, when revenue from fees charged to a particular class of users provides a general public benefit, the fees are vulnerable to invalidation as an unlawful tax.

Service Priorities. Another consideration is whether the services a town provides are mandatory, essential, or locally important but non-essential. Towns offer some programs and services purely in response to local interest, but there are also locally important, non-essential services that work to a community’s advantage because they save money in other areas or reduce liability. For example, some towns periodically hire consultants to train elected and appointed boards in order to build capacity, familiarize officials with their legal obligations, and reduce the risk of mistakes. Larger towns with professionally trained staff usually rely on department heads to train volunteers, research complex issues and provide guidance to boards and committees. To some extent this is true in Westford, yet many employees say their recommendations are ignored. They report that Westford tends to create new committees to study issues that the professional staff are paid to do, and should do as part of their job. They also say the town has a weak track record of following through on plans and studies, whether prepared by the departments, appointed committees or outside consultants. This observation is not inconsistent with comments that residents made at community meetings for the Comprehensive Plan.

CAPACITY TO MANAGE CONFLICT

Since charters require approval by a community’s voters – in some cases by town meeting and in others by ballot – one might expect that governments

in charter communities would have broad public support. However, Westford seems to be a town with a fairly low level of confidence in its local government. There is considerable frustration among volunteers and staff, as evidenced in comments at Comprehensive Master Plan public meetings and meetings with department heads. Residents attending a public meeting for this plan complained about poor communication among town boards, poor coordination of the work of volunteer committees, and inadequate follow-through on committee recommendations. Further, municipal employees have said that their professional expertise is dismissed by town officials. They object to being devalued and criticized for inefficiency when the architecture of the government itself has been designed for a high degree of citizen participation.

Westford’s charter provides for a fairly common type of town government: a board of selectmen-town manager arrangement with a legislative body composed of an open town meeting. The charter consolidates most but not all executive-branch operations under the town manager and locates responsibility for most but not all executive-branch policy with the elected board of selectmen. While there is nothing unusual about Westford’s charter, the degree of political discontent in Westford is unusual. It seems to extend across town government, from elected and appointed committees to staff, and it has been obvious throughout the Comprehensive Plan process.

Perhaps household and population growth have made Westford’s form of government obsolete or caused its political culture to change more rapidly than the town’s governing institutions could accommodate. It also is possible that Westford residents expect more from their local government than they are willing or able to pay for, or that town officials have a fundamentally different view of Westford than that of their constituents. Further, many of the disputes about efficiency, leadership quality, land use, environmental protection, and town finance may be inspired by ideological or partisan differences. Whatever the cause of Westford’s strife, it needs to be addressed and resolved if the town hopes to implement its Comprehensive Master Plan or move

forward with all of the other plans and studies that have been so difficult to execute.

COMPREHENSIVE 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.

- ◆ 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.

- ◆ 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.

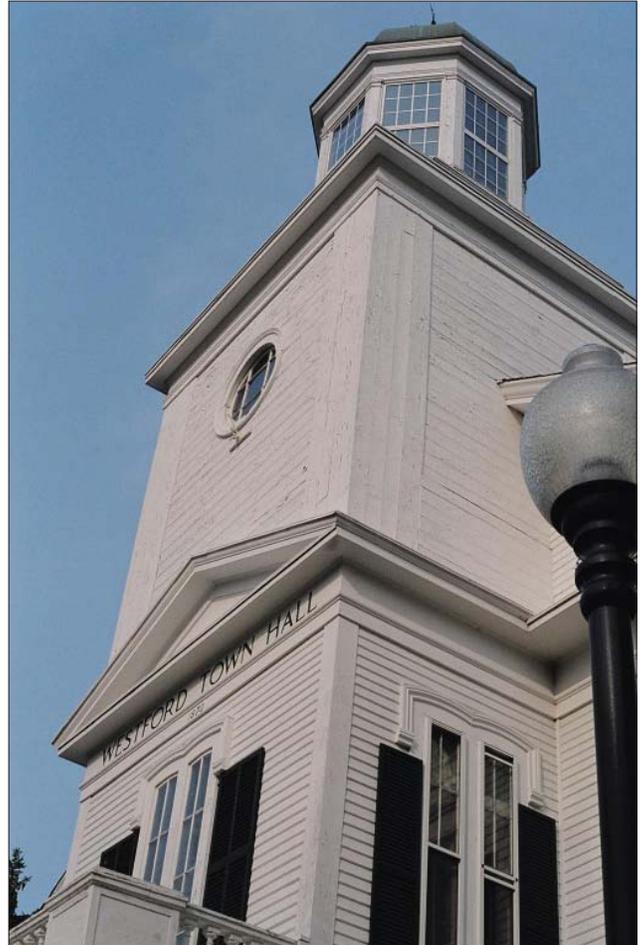
- ◆ The current policy regarding appointment of citizens to committees shall be reviewed with the intention of increase participation by a wider representation of residents.

11. Implementation Guide

The final section of this Comprehensive Plan, 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 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 Plan, the Planning Board has decided to appoint a Comprehensive 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 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 Plan and the Implementation Guide. Its work will help to ensure that efforts to carry out the Comprehensive Plan are unified and consistent, thereby furthering all of the Comprehensive 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	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 NIMCOG 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.	Economic Development, Land Use	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen	Moderate to High	Minimal
Implement the sidewalks recommendations contained in the Route 110 Master Plan.	Transportation	Department of Public Works	Moderate	Subject to capital outlay policy or capital improvements plan
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	Planning Board	Minimal	Minimal (requires amendments to the Zoning Bylaw; may also require investment by the Town)
Attract "green" (environmentally responsible and emerging) industries and institute design guidelines.	Economic Development, Natural Resources, Land Use	Economic Development Committee	Minimal	Minimal
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.	Community Facilities & Services	Town Manager, Applicable Town Departments, Boards and Committees	Moderate	Moderate (Should involve Town Counsel)
Identify and secure incentives for emerging high-tech industries.	Community Facilities & Services	Economic Development Committee	Moderate	Minimal
Complete scenic roads inventory, including descriptions and photo documentation of scenic roads.	Cultural & Historic Resources, Transportation, Land Use	Planning Board, Historical Commission, Tree Warden	Moderate to High	For budgetary purposes, assume \$
Prepare a Development Master Plan for the Route 40 area based on the evaluation of available resources and a review of current zoning.	Economic Development, Land Use	Planning Board	Moderate	Minimal (if done primarily with in-house resources)
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."	Governance	Board of Selectmen	Minimal	None
Seek opportunities to use CPA funds for projects that preserve historic homes and also create permanently affordable housing units.	Housing	Housing Partnership, Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee	Moderate	Moderate to High
Develop formal policy for notifying interested parties when land is being removed from Chapter 61 status	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 bi-annual town board and committee meetings to review the state of the town, goals of each board and/or committee and introduce new members.	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
<p>Seek ways to operate as efficiently as possible through consolidations, economies of scale, and timely investments in technology.</p>	<p>Community Facilities & Services</p>	<p>Town Manager</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>The current policy regarding appointment of citizens to committees should be reviewed with the intention of increase participation by a wider representation of residents.</p>	<p>Governance</p>	<p>Board of Selectmen, Town Moderator</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	



Part 2: Appendix and Supporting Documentation

Appendix

APPENDIX A: HIGHLIGHTS OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The Westford Planning Board and Comprehensive Master Plan Committee (CMPC) sponsored a series of public meetings for the Comprehensive Plan. Community-wide meetings were held at night on November 9, 2006, and November 16, 2006, and during the day on November 15, 2006. They were publicized in the local newspaper, posted at town hall, and announced in other venues.

Several common themes surfaced during the public meeting series. For example, people seem to agree that Westford's key strengths include its peaceful quality, rural character, protected open spaces, an extensive trail network, and preserved historic villages and neighborhoods. Many speakers said Westford is a family-friendly community with an excellent school system and strong cultural institutions. They expressed pride in Westford's community spirit and culture of volunteerism. In contrast, participants in the public meetings described Westford's weaknesses as its high cost of housing, lack of affordable housing and starter homes, and the impacts of growth on the town's open space and rural character. In both the community-wide and neighborhood meetings (Appendix B), many people cited Westford's lack of sidewalks and increasing traffic as significant weaknesses, too.

Participants saw opportunities for Westford in its rich history and existing plans and studies, which provide a framework for the town to be more proactive in guiding new development. In various ways, all of the threats that residents identified relate to Westford's potential for continued growth. They said that if growth is not controlled, Westford would lose its remaining open space and have overcrowded schools, negative impacts on the public water supply, traffic impacts on public safety and quality of life, and higher taxes. They also said Westford would become even more unaffordable and more vulnerable to Chapter 40B developments.

Community Meeting #1

STONY BROOK SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 9, 2006

Attendees at this meeting participated in a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis. The results are as follows:

Westford's Strengths:

- ◆ Open space
- ◆ Library
- ◆ Peaceful and stable community
- ◆ Commitment to preserving open space
- ◆ Volunteerism/community spirit
- ◆ The five villages
- ◆ Town center
- ◆ Sense of Community
- ◆ Trail system

WESTFORD COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

- ◆ Accessibility to town government & open town meeting

Westford's Weaknesses:

- ◆ Loss of open space - due to 40B density
- ◆ Lack of local initiative in affordable housing
- ◆ Poor follow-up on prior Master Plan
- ◆ Out of control growth - largely due to 40B's
- ◆ Lack of sidewalks
- ◆ Housing prices - high cost of "entry"
- ◆ Affordability of taxes
- ◆ Inefficient spending of tax revenue
- ◆ Elderly housing issues: high cost of municipal services and lack of diversity

Opportunities

- ◆ Stronger leadership needed
- ◆ Sustainable development
- ◆ Improve implementation of existing plans, e.g. master plan, sidewalk plan, recreation plan, etc.
- ◆ Implement housing plan
- ◆ Proactive approach to future development

Threats to Westford's strengths

- ◆ Lack of resources to buy remaining open space
- ◆ Overcrowding of school due to growth
- ◆ Water supply impacts of future development (and water quality)
- ◆ Lack of vision for the future
- ◆ Highway access impacts - traffic and litter. Character of Route 110 businesses.

Threats that could exacerbate Westford's weaknesses

- ◆ Vulnerability of the community to 40B developments
- ◆ Traffic
- ◆ Ballooning taxes, increasing unaffordability of the town
- ◆ Incomplete understanding and awareness about Smart Growth
- ◆ Encroachment of urban conditions affecting town, e.g., crime and growth

Community Meeting #2

ROGERS FIRE STATION

NOVEMBER 15, 2006

This meeting was held during daytime hours. Much like the first meeting on November 9, the daytime meeting at Rogers Fire Station was organized as a SWOT analysis.

Strengths

- ◆ Friendly community, particularly family friendly
- ◆ Rural character-yet close to the city
- ◆ Safe
- ◆ Trail systems
- ◆ Open spaces
- ◆ Schools
- ◆ Sense of community
- ◆ Neighborhood groups
- ◆ Recreational areas (beaches)
- ◆ Strong town government
- ◆ Readily accessible, lakes and ponds.
- ◆ Progressive with affordable housing master plan
- ◆ Zoning-dealing with problems
- ◆ Roudenbush Community Center and Parish Center of the Arts
- ◆ Community traditions

Weaknesses

- ◆ Taxes
- ◆ Cost of housing
- ◆ Lack of affordable housing and lack of starter homes/apartments
- ◆ Sense of isolation-need to travel everywhere for services, particularly difficult for seniors
- ◆ Lack of sidewalks-especially connecting schools
- ◆ More parking needed in town common
- ◆ Shortage of pavilions in parks where people can picnic
- ◆ Too rapid growth-losing rural nature
- ◆ No facility for outside entertainment

Opportunities

- ◆ Sidewalks to link neighborhoods/schools
- ◆ Make better use of town common [i.e. town should buy house(s) around common for some town uses/ more businesses (coffee café/book store)
- ◆ More parking-make more like Lexington/Concord
- ◆ Preserve history
- ◆ Promote/protect small businesses

Threats

- ◆ Uncontrolled growth
- ◆ Development not following the master plan
- ◆ Traffic (both in terms of safety & quality of life)
- ◆ Form of government-representative government
- ◆ Loss of rural character/open space

Community Meeting #3

STONY BROOK SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 16, 2006

Attendees were divided into six breakout groups to answer a series of questions about an assigned topic. The topics included housing; environment; employment, goods & services; transportation; community character; and public facilities. Each group was given the same series of questions.

Municipal Services/Town Governance

Attendees were asked for their comments on Westford's municipal services and town governance. Many expressed concerns that maintaining town government in Westford is challenging, noting the difficulty in achieving public participation including town meeting, which many felt was difficult to understand and was often inconsistent. Other comments included:

- ◆ Difficulty in managing so many volunteer committees
- ◆ Lack of implementation of past planning studies
- ◆ Communication between boards is often disjointed with little information sharing
- ◆ Lack of a town newspaper as an information-sharing source

Housing

1. The Situation today is....

- ◆ Hard to get in/ hard to stay in
- ◆ Expensive/ taxes go up
- ◆ Need for less expensive housing/ diversified housing

- ◆ Grown without plan
- ◆ Lack of foresight and planning
- ◆ Pennywise/ pound foolish
- ◆ 40B struggle/ takes matters out of residents hands
- ◆ Market over-priced
- ◆ Concern about water supply
- ◆ Not enough elderly housing
- ◆ Does not facilitate mixed types of housing
- ◆ Need for affordable housing

2. In 10 years, we would want to describe the situation this way...

- ◆ Diversity of housing for all income levels
- ◆ Housing influenced by other factors
 - ◆ Environment
 - ◆ Water
- ◆ Evolved villages
- ◆ Housing tied to services
- ◆ Develop housing near services
 - ◆ Reuse options considered, explored, to implement

3. Change could help to make Westford an even better place by...

- ◆ No Answer

4. Who has a stake in the situation we envision for Westford 10 years from now?

- ◆ No Answer

5. Westford may need some help to ensure that the process of change gets us where we want to be in 10 years from now. What partners does the town need?

- ◆ Partnering with other towns
- ◆ Federal, state, regional grants to improve

6. If we could take only one step to promote positive change, we would...

- ◆ Town owns a lot of land
- ◆ Reports suggest development that allows seniors, young people to stay and buy in town
- ◆ Stricter limits

7. If Westford promoted or accommodated change in this area (housing) it might help to meet other valid planning needs such as.....

- ◆ No Answer

Environment

1. The Situation today is....

- ◆ Beautiful and diverse environment
- ◆ Lots of development
- ◆ Conflict – open space- development
- ◆ Wildlife – 1/3 rare and endangered species
- ◆ Water: supply, quality, recreational
- ◆ Granite Quarry
- ◆ Natural resources: Rocks
- ◆ Views: Bear Hill, Westford
- ◆ Topography
- ◆ Some protected
- ◆ Disappearing agriculture
 - ◆ Hill Orchard
- ◆ Lakes and ponds – town beaches
- ◆ Open space: 3000 acres protected; unprotected near 3000 acres
- ◆ Air Quality: good
- ◆ Town Center vs. Route 110 corridor
- ◆ Traffic/ air pollution
- ◆ Vernal pools

2. In 10 years, we would want to describe the situation this way...

- ◆ More protected open space
- ◆ Adequate high quality water resources
- ◆ Wildlife protected
- ◆ Adapted homes (open space)

3. Change could help to make Westford an even better place by...

- ◆ No Answer

4. Who has a stake in the situation we envision for Westford 10 years from now?

- ◆ All at stake

5. Westford may need some help to ensure that the process of change gets us where we want to be in 10 years from now. What partners does the town need?

- ◆ No Answer

6. If we could take only one step to promote positive change, we would...

- ◆ Well developed, approved and enforced Master Plan that protects and preserves the environment for the people.
- ◆ Wildlife
- ◆ Lakes, ponds/pools
- ◆ Streams
- ◆ Air
- ◆ Water

7. If Westford promoted or accommodated change in this area (housing) it might help to meet other valid planning needs such as.....

- ◆ No answer

Other:

- ◆ Curbside recycling
- ◆ Pay for leaf pick-up
- ◆ Restoring of historic properties
- ◆ Streams

Employment, Goods & Services/ Business Development

1. The Situation today is....

- ◆ Town is the biggest employer
- ◆ No economic development group (advisory/ planning)
- ◆ No outreach to potential new businesses (e.g., assessor)
- ◆ No Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Don't use TIF
- ◆ Some anti-big business feeling
- ◆ 1M square feet empty space (+ 1.5M approved and un-built)

WESTFORD COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

- ◆ No design guidance for new businesses

2. In 10 years, we would want to describe the situation this way...

- ◆ Good corporate citizens
- ◆ Help increase tax base (1995 goal: 20-25 percent)
- ◆ More affordable housing
- ◆ Support services for businesses (more daycare)
- ◆ Traffic management (cooperation among businesses)
- ◆ Tune zoning to encourage desired businesses into desired locations (e.g. Mixed uses)
- ◆ Businesses: friendly attitudes (streamlined permitting)

3. Change could help to make Westford an even better place by...

- ◆ No answer

4. Who has a stake in the situation we envision for Westford 10 years from now?

- ◆ No answer

5. Westford may need some help to ensure that the process of change gets us where we want to be in 10 years from now. What partners does the town need?

- ◆ No answer

6. If we could take only one step to promote positive change, we would...

- ◆ Establish and maintain relationship with business community

7. If Westford promoted or accommodated change in this area (housing) it might help to meet other valid planning needs such as.....

- ◆ No Answer

Transportation

1. The Situation today is....

- ◆ Rt. 495 – shortcut for NH drives
- ◆ Only 3 points to cross north/south
- ◆ Large housing clusters generate large amounts of vehicular traffic
- ◆ Road systems have not changed to accommodate larger numbers of drivers
- ◆ Sporadic sidewalks
- ◆ No public transportation
- ◆ Roads: review complicated/ unusual/ obstructed view intersections

2. In 10 years, we would want to describe the situation this way...

- ◆ Bus and trains: MBTA bus line spur to Littleton commuter rail (would require parking lot)
- ◆ Inter Westford shuttle bus
- ◆ Lowell bus lines extended to Route 110 area businesses
- ◆ Shuttle to service library
- ◆ 110 will be (most likely) 4 lanes

3. Change could help to make Westford an even better place by...

- ◆ No Answer

4. Who has a stake in the situation we envision for Westford 10 years from now?

- ◆ No Answer

5. Westford may need some help to ensure that the process of change gets us where we want to be in 10 years from now. What partners does the town need?

- ◆ No Answer

6. If we could take only one step to promote positive change, we would...

- ◆ No Answer

7. If Westford promoted or accommodated change in this area (housing) it might help to meet other valid planning needs such as.....

- ◆ No Answer

Community Character/Sense of Place**1. The Situation today is....**

- ◆ Suburb
- ◆ Bedroom town
- ◆ Rural
- ◆ Still maintains open space, trees, long rolling roads, stone walls, town center
- ◆ Villages have neighborliness
- ◆ Some areas of town have no character, Route 110

2. In 10 years, we would want to describe the situation this way...

- ◆ Maintain character
- ◆ Rural perception

3. Change could help to make Westford an even better place by...

- ◆ List some ways that change could benefit the town/the region
 - ◆ Protect town center and village center and add retail and meeting spaces in appropriate scale and vocabulary
 - ◆ Keeping quality as amenity to region vocabulary of traditional New England

4. Who has a stake in the situation we envision for Westford 10 years from now?

- ◆ Seniors, new comers, children... All
- ◆ The right kind of businesses and developers
- ◆ Master Plan needs to be used to guide community character, i.e., traffic calming, parking lots, and signage

5. Westford may need some help to ensure that the process of change gets us where we want to be in 10 years from now. What partners does the town need?

- ◆ Strong community organizations
- ◆ Enlightened developers
- ◆ Designers

6. If we could take only one step to promote positive change, we would...

- ◆ Design Advisory Committee to formalize design guidelines to impact regulatory process.

7. If Westford promoted or accommodated change in this area (community character/sense of place) it might help to meet other valid planning needs such as.....

- ◆ Mixed use on Route 110
- ◆ Villages- compact forms

Public Facilities/ Public Amenities

1. The Situation today is....

- ◆ Over crowded town hall
- ◆ Not enough meeting space (need to prioritize)
- ◆ Public meeting space- informal groups (mother's groups)
- ◆ Emergency services: need to evaluate, plan for future staffing, etc.
- ◆ Staffing: professional vs. volunteer
- ◆ Sports fields: seems to be ok now because have worked on increasing; well distributed in town
 - ◆ Are any under utilized?

- ◆ Schools are excellent
- ◆ Sidewalks: Many streets where you have to drive
- ◆ Scenic narrow roads: hard for bikes, people, parking
- ◆ Beaches: good
- ◆ No town-wide sewer system: parts of town need them, storm water problems

2. In 10 years, we would want to describe the situation this way...

- ◆ More sidewalks/ "trails" (pedestrian friendly)
- ◆ Bike lanes
- ◆ Emergency services
- ◆ Training staff- volunteer or professional
- ◆ Expand Senior Center
- ◆ Sewers: Town wide: no; localized: yes/maybe

3. Change could help to make Westford an even better place by...

- ◆ Fire Station south of 495
- ◆ Better town hall: centralized location, "one-stop shopping for town departments
- ◆ Public utilities: power outages: fix so not so often/ higher amps in Forge Village

4. Who has a stake in the situation we envision for Westford 10 years from now?

- ◆ Residents
- ◆ Young residents
- ◆ "some agents of change don't have a stake (e.g.: developers)
- ◆ Businesses (local service. Now= bias against them)

5. Westford may need some help to ensure that the process of change gets us where we want to be in 10 years from now. What partners does the town need?

- ◆ State
- ◆ Businesses
- ◆ Developers
- ◆ Elected officials (town, state...)

6. If we could take only one step to promote positive change, we would...

- ◆ Give plans/reports teeth
- ◆ Implement the plans

7. If Westford promoted or accommodated change in this area (community character/sense of place) it might help to meet other valid planning needs such as.....

- ◆ Employment
- ◆ Character
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ All other topics

APPENDIX B: NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

SUMMARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS					
Comments by Neighborhood; Westford Precincts					
	1-3	2	4	5	6
Neighborhood's Distinctive Qualities and Features <i>(What makes the neighborhood an identifiable place? What are its unique landmarks and special qualities?)</i>	<p>Stony Brook</p> <p>Town Beaches</p> <p>Grassy Pond, Nabnasset Lake</p> <p>Agriculture, including Hill Orchard, Drew Orchard, Stony Brook Farms, and other farms along Carlisle and Concord Road</p> <p>Scenic views of Boston and views from Chamberlain Road</p> <p>Open space, fields, and large tracts of conservation land</p> <p>Nashoba Ski Area, Butter Brook Golf Course</p> <p>Trails</p> <p>Employment on Route 110</p> <p>Access to Route 3</p> <p>Parker Village, which has no businesses or municipal facilities</p> <p>Parkerville School House</p> <p>Nab Center</p> <p>Town Center Historic District and Town Common, Town Hall, Museum, Parish Center, Roudenbush, Frost School</p> <p>Brookside Mills</p> <p>Nashoba Vocational School</p>	<p>Quarries and the historic neighborhood, developed to support them</p> <p>Two mill structures, though in various states of disrepair and in partial use</p> <p>Stony Brook</p> <p>Stone arch bridge</p> <p>More diverse housing than other parts of town, and smaller lots</p> <p>Very "down to earth" part of town, and very community-oriented, e.g., Graniteville Pride, Forge Village</p> <p>Improvement Association</p> <p>Town beach</p> <p>Freedom Park</p> <p>MIT Haystack Observatory</p> <p>Rail (freight)</p> <p>Wildlife, especially birds</p> <p>Designated historic area</p>	<p>Commercial District</p> <p>Town Center</p> <p>Substantial amount of new housing development, especially in southern part</p> <p>Stone walls</p> <p>One of the largest contiguous areas of open space (mostly permanently protected)</p> <p>South of 495 is more expensive (proximity to 128)</p> <p>Nashoba Valley and Kimball's Golf Course</p> <p>Post office also a gathering spot</p>	<p>East Boston Camps</p> <p>Ponds</p> <p>Graniteville ballfields</p> <p>Quarry</p> <p>Tom Paul Trail</p> <p>Sliffer Trail</p> <p>Former Wyman's Beach (to be redeveloped as cottages)</p> <p>Sargent Mill</p> <p>Butterfly Place</p> <p>Villages at Stone Ridge, a 55+ development</p> <p>House and Barn Rocks</p> <p>Stony Brook School complex, athletic fields</p> <p>Railroad line</p> <p>Several large remaining pieces of open space, including Stepinski land</p>	<p>Lakeside is a family-oriented development</p> <p>Nab Lake; beach, swimming</p> <p>Fairly isolated area (people in neighborhood chose it for this reason)</p> <p>Ability to easily associate with other towns for shopping, mail, etc.</p> <p>Park</p> <p>Two beaches nearby</p> <p>Children can walk to school</p>
	Distinctive Features, cont'd				

SUMMARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS					
Comments by Neighborhood; Westford Precincts					
	1-3	2	4	5	6
<p>Adequacy of Town Services <i>(Rate town services in general, and comment on whether neighborhood receives its "fair share" of local government services)</i></p>	<p>Generally equitable and good Lower level of spending, less attention to road maintenance in Nabnasset & higher-density neighborhoods New schools and fire station in Precinct 3 Precinct 1 has good snow removal, great soccer field Reverse E-911 good service Lack of town water in some areas Poor fire department coverage in portions of Precinct 1; need fire station in Parker Village</p>	<p>Perception that this neighborhood and others "come second" for some town services (second in relation to the town center) Examples: infrastructure, road maintenance, and playground at Graniteville recreation complex took four years to rebuild, issue of whether it needs to be expanded Has a lot of public facilities: schools, town garage, soccer fields, fire station, Water Department</p>	<p>Lack of equity in public spending, e.g., no fire station, limited public water No schools</p>	<p>Fire: adequate, fast response especially close to center of town center; more hydrants needed Library is cramped and straining in all areas; needs to be expanded Questions about development and long-term use of East Boston Fields Stony Brook Middle School fields are good. Snow plowing is excellent Questions about need for expanded town hall facility Limited town water on north side</p>	<p>Excellent sports facilities for children, schools and special education services, ambulance service Northeast side: police, fire far away, little to no patrol presence, area is closer to other town's emergency services Northeast side: street doesn't get plowed well Town roads and buildings have been neglected Lakeside neighborhood: plowing, road salt and sanding excellent Lakeside: no streetlights (although it does have sidewalks) Southeast side: some roads can't be plowed due to poor condition (about 12 roads in disrepair) Property taxes too high; town overall very expensive</p>

SUMMARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

		Comments by Neighborhood; Westford Precincts				
		1-3	2	4	5	6
Housing & Neighborhoods <i>(How could the neighborhood contribute to town's housing needs – housing diversity and/ or affordable housing?)</i>	Large new homes – town needs more variety Concerned about proposed apartment complex on South Chelmsford Road <i>(Chapter 40B-Jefferson at Westford)</i>	Has smaller lots than other areas in town Housing is relatively affordable, even though units don't count on the 40B Inventory Area in general, Graniteville in particular, going to become a "younger" area as older people leave Loss of starter homes, empty-nester housing Need to look at incidence and locations of tear-downs Town needs to look at expiring use restrictions because units could convert to market housing in the future Graniteville Mill could be redeveloped for housing, to include affordable units and possibly mixed-use development	Concord Road has potential for smaller scale multi-unit development Mixed-use development Concord, Carlisle, Forge Village Tech Park West (in lieu of office and R & D)	Create a variety of types of housing including affordable housing and senior housing Place senior housing near center of town, close to services, stores, doctors Emphasize connectivity in housing New services should be built with new housing	Keep construction in scale and character of existing neighborhoods Wary of increase in affordable housing as a burden on town's resources/ services; against 40B or subsidized family housing Would like more apartment housing	
Housing, cont'd						

SUMMARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS					
Comments by Neighborhood; Westford Precincts					
	1-3	2	4	5	6
<p>Goods and Services, Commercial Areas <i>(Evaluate/describe the condition and quality of business districts; goods and services available to the neighborhood)</i></p>	<p>Route 110, and growing number of businesses there Light pollution from inappropriate lighting design Precinct 3 has good access to services Neighborhood services should be constructed in new large subdivisions Need more small businesses; fewer franchises- more neighborhood establishments Focus on village center and mixed-use development Route 110 needs sidewalks between businesses, mixed-use zoning, traffic improvements for vehicular and pedestrian safety Town needs more entertainment for teens</p>	<p>Small businesses are mixed bag Functional, friendly businesses Commercial area not in the best of shape</p>	<p>Prefer locally owned, independent businesses instead of chains Existing businesses reflect an odd mix of design Do we need two mattress shops? Need impact standards and evaluation of impacts during permitting Examine redevelopment opportunities (area near post office)</p>	<p>Need master plan for Route 40 Route 40 lack of vision for commercial development Limited commercial development Increase local family- based businesses Not necessarily a desire for a market within Precinct 5, but want to make sure that food markets just outside district are maintained and supported Westford needs more gathering spaces in center of town and more gathering types of commercial uses, such as coffee shops and cafes</p>	<p>Difficult to access commercial areas from Lakeside Best post office in Westford Preference for commercial pockets, possibly on abandoned property on Route 40 between Greystone and Lakeside, not strip development like Route 110 Would like to see hospital, health care or urgent care facility somewhere in Westford</p>

SUMMARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

Comments by Neighborhood; Westford Precincts					
	1-3	2	4	5	6
Getting Around <i>(Evaluate/describe neighborhood's connectivity to other parts of town)</i>	Lack of sidewalks in commercial area; needs safe routes for pedestrians, bicycles, low-powered scooters No or limited interconnectivity of existing sidewalks, need sidewalks along major thoroughfares in center of town In some areas, installing sidewalks complicated by stone walls and large trees (scenic roads) New sidewalks should be concentrated near schools and recreation facilities Traffic during rush hour; Route 225 and Town Center, and cut- through traffic on Depot Street Trail system walkable for recreation Need extended LRTA bus route into Westford	Graniteville relatively walkable, but most streets are not Need walkable connection from Forge Village to Graniteville No walkable connections between the schools: five schools with no pedestrian access Areas has narrow roads with heavy traffic	No walkability along roads – no sidewalks Need for sidewalks along and connecting Boston Road, Concord Road, Route 110, Carlisle Road schools, "service area," Post Office, Walsh playground Need bicycle-safe routes Need to consider traffic calming in town center Potential for interchange at Route 225/I-495 Need incentives for alternatives to car, e.g., public transportation, Littleton MBTA station	Traffic Lack of connectivity/walkability: Narrow roads/busy streets and no sidewalks or paths Can't walk or bike to other neighborhoods, to center of town Need bus service, especially for older people. "The Roadrunner" has limited service Need more parking in center of town	From Lakeside, difficult to get anywhere without a car Sidewalks near school are not shoveled

SUMMARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS					
Comments by Neighborhood; Westford Precincts					
	1-3	2	4	5	6
<p>Open Space, Active & Passive Recreation Areas <i>(How could the neighborhood contribute to town's open space and recreation needs? Does the neighborhood have unique open space needs?)</i></p> <p>Open Space, Active & Passive Recreation Areas, cont'd</p>	<p>Not enough Need to preserve what we have Need more multi-use space/ passive unorganized recreation Overuse of some open space areas (East Boston Camps, Grassy Pod) Few large parcels such as East Boston Camps Cost & taxes have impact on space acquired 4-H Fairground are critical parcels as well as Adams land, Tzikopolis, House and Barn land, Stepinski Land, greenway along stony brook, Aldrich Ranch on Chamberlain Road Texas Road Orchard is potential major development site Farm land on corner of Concord and Carlisle Road</p>	<p>Almost no open space in Forge Village Not much vacant, privately owned land left in general in this part of town; 182 acres across from school, Sportsman's Club property Reed Brook Stony Brook greenway Need to look at some smaller parcels, some may be partially developed Access to recreation areas: playing fields at all schools, lake and park, and walking trails, but Forge Beach is becoming run down, not "quality" it used to be Westford overall has low state rank for open space per capita</p>	<p>Overall, area has more open space than balance of town, and more protected open space Areas around Nashoba Beaver Brook (land surrounding) Dick Emmett's land and adjacent parcels in other ownership Kennedy Pond Area Recreation, conservation, passive</p>	<p>Lack of public access to lakes and ponds</p>	

SUMMARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

Comments by Neighborhood; Westford Precincts					
	1-3	2	4	5	6
<p>Environmental Concerns</p> <p><i>(Does the neighborhood have unique environmental concerns?)</i></p>	<p>Environmental hazards: perchlorate contamination, e. coli from geese in town water</p>	<p>Contamination associated with town facilities, e.g., town garage Reed Brook watershed Chris Franklin's property (Graniteville) Auto body shops Conservation Commission needs to maintain conservation land (beavers) Westford has poor forestry program; needs to assess forestry oversight, and management because shade trees being lost and not replaced Unique tree issues in the villages</p>	<p>Powers Road – printer contamination Vigilant monitoring of commercial uses for groundwater protection Beaver Brook Water Supplies</p>	<p>Getty station spill-status unknown</p>	<p>Failing septic systems, especially in Greystone</p>

(Footnotes)

¹ Neighborhood meetings were held on the following dates: November 27, 2006, Precincts 1 and 3 combined, Millennium School; November 28, 2006, Precinct 2, Blanchard School, and Precinct 5, Stony Brook Middle School; November 29, 2006, Precinct 4, Robinson School, and Precinct 6, Miller School.

APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF CMPC SURVEY

The Comprehensive Master Plan Committee (CMPC) conducted a town-wide survey as a component of the Comprehensive Plan process. The survey was designed to elicit responses from residents on a variety of issues including: Community Character; Environmental Issues; Housing; Transportation; Economic Base; Public Facilities and Amenities, and Achieving the Master Plan goals. The survey included a brief demographic section, which attempted to determine a respondent's length of residency in Westford, which "village" they live in, their commuting distance and type of household. Two types of responses were solicited by this survey. The first included a list of questions specific to future wants and needs that allowed a range of response from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The second section included additional space for open response comments.

The CMPC received survey responses from 1,128 residents and 128 Westford Academy high school seniors. In addition, comments were received from 73 respondents. Due to the limited number of comments relative to the size of the respondent pool, the comments should not be weighted more than the value of any one question response. The comments may be used to support general trends, however. Results from the CMPC survey are reported under specific topic headings, along with a summary of the comments received in the open response section.

Housing

The CMPC survey included 13 questions on a range of housing topics. The questions were divided into two parts: eight questions about the types of housing Westford should promote, and five questions about actions Westford should take to meet the 10 percent minimum under Chapter 40B, the comprehensive permit law.

KEY FINDINGS

Several trends can be seen in the statistics and comments on the first eight questions. In general, respondents expressed strongly-held opinions either for or against some types of housing:

- ◆ Overwhelmingly favored a mix of sizes of single-family homes and lots in new developments.
- ◆ Overwhelmingly favored more housing for senior citizens.
- ◆ Overwhelmingly favored promoting "in-law" apartments.
- ◆ Strongly favored promoting small rental housing (less than 10 units).
- ◆ Strongly favored promoting housing for people with physical or mental disabilities.
- ◆ Favored more small housing having 1 to 2 bedrooms only.
- ◆ Overwhelmingly against large rental housing
- ◆ Strongly against zoning that allows less than 1 acre lots for single-family homes.

As for actions to address Chapter 40B, the survey respondents expressed these points of view:

- ◆ Overwhelmingly favored requiring developers to include affordable housing in large housing developments (inclusionary zoning).
- ◆ Overwhelmingly favored developing unused municipal/school buildings for affordable or special needs housing.
- ◆ Favored promoting small affordable housing developments.
- ◆ Slightly against developing portions of town-owned land for affordable housing.
- ◆ Overwhelmingly against a few large affordable developments to meet the 10% minimum under Chapter 40B.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments under the eight questions about housing types were fairly mixed. In general, respondents expressed disdain for overdevelopment of Westford. Some commenters said there should be a mix of house and lot sizes only if developers agree to provide more protected open space. Many commenters supported one-acre zoning and disliked “McMansions.”

Respondents also strongly favored small Chapter 40B projects spread out all over the town. They also expressed a notion that some parts of Westford were being “punished” more than others due to more numerous Chapter 40B developments. In addition, the comments reveal a keen and potent dislike for the Chapter 40B statute itself. Many comments also displayed a misconception that town government was responsible for the creation and determination of location of Chapter 40B developments when these are actually the acts of private developers. Considering the number of survey responses (1,128 from residents, on average), the number of comments received is relatively small and not statistically significant. This small number of comments limits their use to more of a suggestive role rather than one of helping determine a course of action.

Students responding to the Westford Academy survey were neutral about all of the housing questions. They mirrored the agreements/disagreements of the adult respondents, except that students opposed “in-law” apartments. There was only one written comment: “I live in a house.”

The results of the Westford Academy student survey showed that the students had a much more flexible outlook regarding solutions to Chapter 40B by favoring in various small degrees all the different suggested ways of dealing with Chapter 40B including a few large developments and using town land.

Economic Development

The CMPC survey included 11 questions on the Town’s Economic Base, i.e. its commercial, industrial and retail development. Three response levels were calculated - disagree, neutral or agree. The categories addressed in these questions related to aesthetics, retail type, zoning, tax impacts, utilization of space, size and growth.

KEY FINDINGS

Several trends can be seen in the review of the 11 questions relating to the town's economic base:

- ◆ Respondents are generally not in favor of increasing commercial development.
- ◆ Resident respondents are opposed to more industrial development. High school students were neutral.
- ◆ The majority of respondents were opposed to commercial zoning spread.
- ◆ A clear majority, 78 percent, desired small retail developments.
- ◆ A clear majority (72 percent) were opposed to large retail developments.
- ◆ A majority (63 percent) were opposed to large office parks. An equal number were in favor of small office parks.
- ◆ A strong majority were concerned about the appearance of development, favoring set backs (82 percent) and landscaping (90 percent).
- ◆ Seventy five percent (75 percent) were satisfied with the current commercially zoned locations.
- ◆ Respondents were equally divided, 1/3 agree, 1/3 neutral and 1/3 disagree, on the need for a business development coordinator.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments focused on several general categories including aesthetics, type of retail businesses, zoning, tax impact, utilization of existing space, development size and growth. Half of the respondents to the aesthetics question expressed dissatisfaction with the current appearance of the town's commercial/retail development. Approximately a quarter expressed a desire to see uniform standards applied to new development while another quarter desired a more "New England" or downtown area with sidewalks.

Respondents to the zoning question were fairly mixed in their desires for the town. Comments included a desire for mixed use, more retail and restaurants in the Town Center, a limit on commercial retail on Routes 110 and 40 and a limit on all new development in town. Half of the respondents to the type of retail business question preferred small, franchise or unique, boutique retail while a small minority desired a new grocery store. Only one suggested that the town needed large retail, such as Home Depot. Of the 14 respondents who made written comments, the majority felt that the town is currently over developed with several noting specifically that the town should control growth. Only a few respondents expressed a desire for the town to encourage growth in order to increase its tax base. Eleven respondents recommended that the town consider increasing commercial/retail and/or industrial taxes to mitigate tax impact on residential taxes.

ANALYSIS BY QUESTION

30. *There should be more commercial zoning in Westford.* A general disagreement to this statement at 43 percent of respondents overall. Respondents from the villages of Nabnasset and Forge Village were more ame-

nable to increasing commercial development. Long time residents, more than 20 years of residency, had the strongest disagreement.

31. *There should be more industrial zoning in town.* A general disagreement with this statement at 47 percent of respondents overall. Respondents from the villages of Nabnasset and Forge Village were more amenable to increasing industrial development. Of age groups, those who have resided in Town less than 10 years disagree more.

32. *Commercial zoning should be spread throughout the town.* A general disagreement with this statement at 54 percent of respondents overall. The trend was uniform across all demographic groups, village, type of household and years of residency.

"I prefer these types of businesses for future developments"

Respondents (78 percent) strongly agreed with encouraging small retail businesses this statement (62 percent for high school students). In contrast, residents strongly disagreed (72 percent) with encouraging large retail buildings while a smaller number (63 percent) disagreed with encouraging large office parks. As expected, 60 percent of residents agreed with encouraging small office parks.

The following commercial design elements were considered important to respondents:

- ◆ Buildings set back from the road (81 percent)
- ◆ Natural plantings, e.g. screenings, greenways, etc. (90 percent)

The majority of respondents (76 percent) were satisfied with the location of Westford's business areas, while high school students were split on this question, with 44 percent agreeing and 46 percent neutral.

Residents were almost evenly divided on whether they were satisfied with the overall appearance of the town's existing businesses. Fifty-seven percent of resident respondents agree with the statement and again high school students split between agreeing and neutral.

Residents were evenly divided on whether the town should fund an economic (business) development coordinator, with 1/3 agreeing, 1/3 neutral and 1/3 disagreeing. High school respondents were neutral at 56 percent. Long-time residents, more than 20 years, did not favor a coordinator, whereas the opposite was true for residents with less than 20 years. A coordinator was favored more by residents of Forge Village, Nabnasset and Graniteville. Households with children and grown children were slightly more favorable.

This section of the survey also indicated the community's preference on future business development. This list is ranked from most desirable to least desirable as follows:

- ◆ Landscaping (including sidewalks)
- ◆ Satisfied with current commercial zoning and set backs

- ◆ Small retail development
- ◆ Small office parks
- ◆ Satisfied with the look of current business
- ◆ Increase in commercial zoning
- ◆ Increase in industrial zoning
- ◆ Spread of commercial zoning
- ◆ Large office parks
- ◆ Large commercial development

Land Use and Zoning

Four questions were designed to illicit responses about the use of the Master Plan to guide decisions of town boards, the funding of two new positions and funding the televising of public meetings. Respondents overwhelmingly (80.4 percent) approved the use of the Master Plan as a guide for town boards.

The three questions on funding new positions and funding for televising public meetings were viewed less favorably, with larger numbers (30 percent to 32.6 percent) of neutral responses. Respondents were less enthusiastic about funding for new positions for economic and grant coordinators. Less than a majority were in favor of either with a significant negative for the economic coordinator (30.7 percent) and large neutral votes on both. Comments reflected the same concerns seen in other parts of the survey: Costs and additional taxes, too many employees already. Many of the comments focused on alternatives to new positions: Use current employees, part time, shared position. Some supported as long as the new positions were revenue neutral, self supporting. There was some feeling that a new development coordinator meant increased development which some respondents do not want.

Respondents were positive about funding the televising of public meetings, with 44.2 percent in favor, 30 percent neutral, and 20.9 percent against. Comments were generally in favor with concerns about residents without cable, recommendations that residents attend meetings instead of watching on TV and continue to use volunteers as we do now and/or students at Nashoba Tech.

Transportation

KEY FINDINGS

In general, most respondents were satisfied with the condition of Westford's roads and snow removal in Town. While Nab and Forge Village respondents were less likely to feel that traffic congestion seriously affects their commutes, the overall responses were fairly balanced. However, the length of a respondent's residency in Westford appears to relate to their tolerance for traffic. Newer residents (those who have lived in Westford less than 5 years) expressed less concern about commute time and congestion than residents who have lived in the community for a longer period of time. Longer-term residents also expressed more concern about traffic speeding with the majority of senior respondents shared this concern.

Construction of new sidewalks and bike trails were favored by about 3 to 1, especially around schools. However, respondents were more ambivalent as to the removal of stone walls or trees to facilitate sidewalk construction and mixed as to the use of the town's eminent domain power for this purpose. While respondents were mixed about bringing Lowell Rapid Transit to Town, they were in favor by about 2 to 1 on creating transit bus service to existing commuter rail stations. The widening of roadways for turning or reducing congestion was favored by town-wide respondents, but not favored by Westford Center or Graniteville participants.

Environmental Issues

KEY FINDINGS

The raw data and comments in the "Environmental Issues" section of the town-wide survey indicate a strong awareness from students to senior citizens of the importance of preserving and protecting Westford's natural resources. Westford residents have clearly indicated that the preservation of open space through controlled development and judicious acquisition of additional open space should be a priority for town management. This is reflected in the positive response to requiring developers to provide for significant open space; 52.9 percent from the town-wide mailing selected "strongly agree" and 88.2 percent combined "agree and strongly agree." Comments, however, stressed the importance of balancing this need against other needs in the community such as high tax burden and affordable housing. As in past town surveys, protection of water resources had the highest agreement, almost 90 percent and a high 80.9 percent urged the usage of alternative energy sources. Five people indicated their concerns about how septic systems are affecting our water resources. And, while nearly 73 percent support additional protection for wildlife resource, many indicated the need to balance those protections with the need to control the population of a few "nuisance" animals for the safety of Westford residents. On the whole, Westford residents overwhelmingly support the need to protect open space, natural resources and alternative energy sources as part of a balance approach to town planning.

Community Character

KEY FINDINGS

In general, respondents were in favor of projects that would preserve the physical characteristics that contribute to Westford's rural and historic character such as:

- ◆ Preserving the town's historic buildings by reusing them for a mix of residential and commercial uses (84 percent);
- ◆ Encouraging agricultural uses on town-owned land (71 percent);
- ◆ Preserving the town's existing winding roads (73 percent);
- ◆ Designating additional scenic roads in town (52 percent);
- ◆ Maintaining trees & stone walls when improving roads (88 percent);
- ◆ Establishing beautification projects along its roadways (adopt-a-site, etc.) (75 percent).

While respondents were generally in favor of promoting land uses that maintained Westford's rural and historic features, their enthusiasm was more tempered than for the preservation-based projects listed above.

On average, half of the respondents approved of:

- ◆ Mixed use developments (mixed housing, small retail shops and/or small businesses) along Westford's major roadways (52 percent);
- ◆ Developing commerce mixed with housing within the villages of Forge Village, Graniteville and Nabnasset (46 percent).

Most respondents were generally neutral about the following land use, but of those who expressed an opinion, a slight majority was in favor.

- ◆ Allowing closely-spaced (cluster) housing that would maximize open space (like Blanchard Farms on Graniteville Road; and

In sharp contrast, almost half of respondents (49 percent) disagreed with promoting any commercial development in the primarily residential Town Center.

Respondents were moderately supportive about preserving the town's social characteristics. While a slight (58 percent) majority of survey respondents agreed with the goal of achieving a diverse population in Westford, support was weakest among new residents and was progressively stronger the longer a respondent lived in Westford.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Respondents supporting closely-spaced (cluster) housing to maximize open space tended to be longer-term residents of Westford – people who may have lived through the debates and passage of the town's open space and flexible development bylaws. Of those who supported this kind of zoning, most were in favor in order to preserve open space. Opponents (12) either thought the land preserved was just wetlands, or that ultimately the open space would be developed, or they simply preferred traditional 1- or 2-acre lots.

Of those who agreed with mixed use developments along Westford's major roadways, many stressed that the businesses should be small local businesses that fit the surroundings, as opposed to chain stores. Several noted the advantage of being able to walking to stores, citing both community character and traffic benefits. Opponents generally either wanted to restrict all commercial development, or to limit it to Rte. 110. Support for developing a mix of commerce and housing within the villages of Forge Village, Graniteville and Nabnasset was primarily from residents of these villages. While residents of Graniteville and Forge Village agreed with this question most strongly, the overall community was slightly less enthusiastic, only 46 percent of respondents were in favor with mixed use development. Of the 40 comments on this subject, 18 spoke in favor with 9 in strong agreement. Some people remarked that they opposed any commercial development, or that it should be kept to Rte. 110. Small, local retail shops were stressed by some commentators, but others noted that smaller shops are usually expensive. Once again, people said that having shops in walking distance kept traffic off of the roads and promote a "village" feel.

For those who commented on allowing commercial development in the Town Center, most were in agreement that any commercial development should be restricted to small retail establishments, such as a coffee shop. But those who disagreed (10) felt that even these types of businesses would detract from the Center's character.

Slightly more than half of the respondents approved of designating more scenic roads in town. While several commentators expressed an overall concern for safety, most expressed a belief that scenic roads are important to maintaining Westford's community character. One commentator noted that scenic roads slow traffic. While only half of the respondents favored designating additional scenic roads, an overwhelming majority favored preserving Westford's winding roads intact, although safety was also a concern. Those who responded said keep these roads for character, historic significance, and to build homes away from roads, and keep roads clean. Other respondents suggested keeping them only when appropriate, and to widen them, install sidewalks, and add signage for safety.

Commenters also suggested beautification projects such as building new sidewalks, planting trees, enhancing landscaping and cleaning roads. One noted that these improvements would help keep the rural character of the town. Safety and signage was also noted as issues. Others suggested that beautification should not block line of sight and trees should be cut down near roads.

Respondents suggested that there needs to be a balance between roadway improvements and protection of stone walls and trees. Others suggested adding more trees. Safety was identified as an overarching determinant. Comments also included cutting down trees, moving stone walls, and adding sidewalks as necessary.

APPENDIX D: HIGHLIGHTS OF BUSINESS OUTREACH

In November 2006, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) conducted the Westford Business Forum in order to assure that Westford's business establishments had opportunities to participate in the Comprehensive Plan process. NMCOG sent a mailing to more than 900 businesses in Westford and worked with the Greater Lowell and Nashoba Valley Chambers of Commerce to inform businesses of the Westford Business Forum. The purpose of this meeting was to hear directly from business owners regarding their impressions of doing business in the community. The Westford Business Forum was structured to provide an overview of the Westford Comprehensive Master Plan process, describe the economic development section of the plan, and illustrate how it ties in with NMCOG's regional economic development planning process under the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis enabled representatives of the business community to express their ideas, concerns, suggestions, and recommendations within a familiar framework.

The Economic Development Subcommittee to the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee conducted a second Westford Business Forum in February 2007 to provide the business community with further opportunities to participate in the Master Planning process. Various development-oriented businesses participated in at least one of the forums, but there was very little attendance from other types of businesses in town. In order to gain input from a greater diversity of businesses, the Economic Development Subcommittee undertook to contact as many businesses as possible over the phone. The format used was the same as established by NMCOG. Not much feedback was received from the businesses contacted, but in general, the feedback received was consistent with the feedback received from the forums.

The following is a summary of all the comments received during the two business forums and the telephone outreach.

Strengths

- ◆ Highway access

- ◆ Level tax rate/ single tax rate

- ◆ Good residential and business location

- ◆ Highly educated workforce

- ◆ Population sufficient to support diverse businesses

- ◆ Wealth of population

- ◆ Reasonable cost of living compared to inner - Boston and other high tech corridors

- ◆ Lower commercial rents compared to Route128 area.

- ◆ Nice aesthetics/character (Route 110 corridor)

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- ◆ Convenient support services
- ◆ Perceived as a desirable place to work and live
- ◆ Industrial base is good for retail
- ◆ Quality of life / quality schools

Weaknesses

- ◆ Loss of character
- ◆ Zoning is not flexible – doesn't allow for traditional/colonial style development and is complicated
- ◆ Prior Master Plans weren't implemented
- ◆ Multitude of "Master Plans" make policy direction and permitting difficult
- ◆ Retention of planning/permitting staff
- ◆ Site Plan Review takes too long
- ◆ Lack of outreach to the business community on the part of the Selectmen and Planning Board
 - ◆ important in a global economy
- ◆ Loss of technology businesses
- ◆ State isn't pro-business
- ◆ Building permit cap limits housing development
 - ◆ causal relationship with 40Bs
 - ◆ most 40Bs on small lots in residential neighborhoods
 - ◆ encouraged by town 40B design guidelines
- ◆ Impacts of inexperienced staff in advertising public meetings, completing peer reviews, etc.
- ◆ Attempt to regulate aesthetics
- ◆ Requirement of monetary gift as condition of permits (discourages Mom & Pop type businesses)

- ◆ Need for pedestrian amenities impacts traffic operation
- ◆ Lack of sewer and other infrastructure (retail interconnectivity, sidewalks)
- ◆ No business identity – the establishment of a Chamber of Commerce or Partnership with business community was recommended in the 1995 Master Plan
- ◆ Lack of a coordinated permitting process
- ◆ Lack of training/education of volunteer and elected boards/committees
- ◆ Anti-growth mindset/attitude
 - ◆ perception that the public is empowered to stop development
 - ◆ biased process that favors residents and abutters
 - ◆ perception that Westford is a difficult place to do business or permit projects
 - ◆ high fees

Opportunities

- ◆ Examine zoning requirements for continuity/common vision
- ◆ Clear and comprehensive bylaws that provide certainty for land owners
- ◆ Investigate traffic improvements along Route 110/Develop a Long Term Plan
 - ◆ Provide more lane capacity and pedestrian accommodations
- ◆ Examine Route 40 in terms of future development (particularly 110 acres near Route 3)
- ◆ Create a forum for Businesses
- ◆ Identify a person to serve as the town's Economic Development contact
- ◆ Redevelopment of vacant mills for specialty retail and neighborhood commercial businesses
- ◆ Provide more management power over boards and commissions
- ◆ Develop Master Plan conformance rating system for projects
- ◆ Educate citizens on benefits of commercial/industrial growth

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- ◆ Educate all boards on the Master Plan and gain buy-in to the policies set forth
- ◆ Take advantage of the fact that many/most developers are also Town residents interested in the public good

Threats

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

Needs & Wants

- ◆ Spend money on professional planning staff/retain planning staff
- ◆ Treat applicants in a professional manner
- ◆ Changes in regulations shouldn't always be more restrictive
- ◆ Establish Zoning Bylaw Review Committee
- ◆ Provide adequate time for healthy review of zoning bylaw changes by the community
- ◆ Establish unifying vision/motto; provide information on businesses and locations
- ◆ Town leaders need to educate community relative to the importance of business
- ◆ Promote convenience/contribution in taxes and employment opportunities
- ◆ Create a stronger Master Plan Implementation Committee
- ◆ Town needs to be more proactive in terms of business

- ◆ Establish a “Point Person” for businesses
- ◆ Create a more efficient permitting process or “one-stop shopping”
- ◆ Change the sign bylaw
- ◆ Need continuing education for board members

As a final question, participants in the Westford Business Form were asked: what can the Town of Westford do within its Master Plan to ensure future support for the business community? The responses to this question included the following suggestions:

- ◆ Provide more financial and technical support to the planning staff and boards
- ◆ Change the way the town does business in relating to the business community
- ◆ Establish a Zoning Bylaw Review Committee and stronger Master Plan Implementation Committee
- ◆ Promote the location of businesses to be supported by local residents.

APPENDIX E: SMART GROWTH IN WESTFORD

What is Smart Growth?

The term “smart growth” has become common in discussions about future development in American communities. The smart growth movement was spurred by a collective recognition that the typical development pattern of isolated land uses and low-density development serviced solely by the automobile – which many identify as “sprawl” – poses acute economic, aesthetic, environmental, and social costs on communities and households. Smart growth presents an alternative pattern that focuses new growth in already established or otherwise appropriate areas and steers development away from undisturbed land or important natural and cultural resources. Smart growth also promotes a form of development that is more compact than conventional development, is mixed-use, and is well-connected to other areas by alternative forms of transportation, notably transit and pedestrian facilities.

A smart growth approach to new development is entirely within Westford’s reach. In fact, as a community with a traditional New England town form, Westford has an advantage over many communities that do not have intact village centers, old, winding roads, or agricultural and forested lands. Indeed, Westford has the two very elements that serve as the foundation for smart growth: land with qualities worth protecting (environmental, scenic, and cultural), and areas that lend themselves to absorbing more concentrated development – existing village centers. Westford is well-poised to adopt a smart growth approach.

Conventional development tends to pit one interest group against another. In contrast, smart growth is a balancing act that acknowledges and meets the needs of development, preservation, housing, transportation, and other interests that often collide on matters of growth policy. While friction between these groups does not disappear, a smart growth approach goes far to find a middle ground, identifying areas of overlapping interests and objectives and focusing attention and resources in those areas. The result is a strategy for growth that is mutually beneficial and can be supported by a diverse spectrum of a community’s population, not just certain groups or constituencies.

The Concept of Smart Growth

Smart growth is a broad concept that encapsulates social, physical, and economic aspects of community life, and it is difficult to pin down a neat, singular definition. Rather, smart growth is a general and somewhat flexible set of ideas – or principles – that satisfy a variety of goals while exacting fewer costs. This flexible definition makes smart growth relevant at a range of scales and in a variety of community types. The smart growth principles can guide development decisions in cities, suburbs like Westford, entire metropolitan regions, and small towns.

THE SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES¹

- (1) Create a range of housing opportunities and choices: Expanding housing options creates diversity in both housing form and cost, and may therefore provide environmental, social, and economic benefits.
- (2) Create walkable neighborhoods: Sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly streets are important amenities in any community, providing an alternative to driving and promoting more active lifestyles.

¹ Smart Growth Online: A Service of the Smart Growth Network, “Smart Growth Principles” at < <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/principles/default.asp>>..

- (3) Encourage community & stakeholder collaboration: In order to be appropriate and successful, a smart growth strategy must include community input and participation.
- (4) Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place: Smart growth encourages communities to identify and promote development that represents community's aesthetic, cultural, environmental, and social values.
- (5) Make development predictable, fair, and cost effective: In order to be successful, smart growth must be an attractive option for the private sector.
- (6) Mix land uses: Allowing conventionally segregated land uses to mix can create more vibrant and convenient places to live, work, and play, and also lends itself to a more efficient and less wasteful land use pattern.
- (7) Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas: By targeting development in certain areas and promoting more efficient and compact development, smart growth creates opportunities for preserving areas that matter to a community most without losing development potential.
- (8) Provide a variety of transportation choices: Expanding access to transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities and reducing dependence on the auto improves the form, feel, and function of a community, and also improves the health and often the happiness of its residents.
- (9) Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities: Smart growth directs development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure, seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer, and conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe.
- (10) Take advantage of compact building design: Smart growth provides a means for communities to incorporate more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.

The smart growth principles serve as a foundation for action in planning and shaping a community's future. It is important to note that because of the inter-disciplinary and comprehensive scope of smart growth, the principles align with many of the issues and recommendations identified in other elements of this Comprehensive Plan. In many ways, the entire plan already integrates and promotes smart growth without explicitly naming it as such. This chapter explains what smart growth is and pulls together the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations to illustrate how it might work in Westford.

The following matrix summarizes issues pertaining to transportation, housing, and land use and zoning, and shows how they relate to the smart growth principles. The result is a strategy for achieving Westford's smart growth goals. Since taking on smart growth may seem daunting, the highlighted recommendations are logical first steps to apply the smart growth principles to future planning and development decisions.

SMART GROWTH: BARRIERS, PRINCIPLES, RECOMMENDATIONS		
Barrier	Smart Growth Principle	Smart Growth Recommendation
TRANSPORTATION		
Lack of pedestrian connectivity between adjacent land uses and discontinuous or nonexistent sidewalks makes walking unpleasant and unsafe.	Create walkable neighborhoods.	Develop and implement a Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan. Revive the Sidewalk Master Plan Committee and update the Sidewalk Master Plan. Organize a Safe Routes to School Program.
Lack of public transportation forces people to use cars for all travel, even short trips.	Provide a variety of transportation options.	Consolidate existing transit services and extend LRTA bus service along the Route 110 Corridor.
Parking requirements, especially in the CH district, are excessive, requiring large amounts of land and posing visual and environmental costs.	Take advantage of compact building design. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.	Tailor parking requirements to reduce the amount of land devoted to parking for commercial developments. Parking maximums, temporary reserve parking, and compact car spaces may be appropriate. Locate parking behind buildings when possible.
LAND USE & ZONING		
Dimensional standards and landscaping requirements call for large buffers and deep setbacks. This segments land uses from one another and prevents connectivity and walkability between developments.	Create walkable neighborhoods.	Consider decreasing the minimum required buffers between developments and different uses in the business and industrial districts. Require pedestrian infrastructure and connections between developments.
Dimensional standards create low-density, sprawling development in commercial districts. Together with parking requirements, these measures waste land and reduce the development potential of business-zoned property.	Take advantage of compact building design.	Consider amending zoning regulations to allow tighter, more intense development in commercial areas. At the very least, the requirements should not force a development to use more land than the minimum lot required in commercial areas.

SMART GROWTH: BARRIERS, PRINCIPLES, RECOMMENDATIONS

Barrier	Smart Growth Principle	Smart Growth Recommendation
<p>Minimum lot sizes and frontage requirements for residential development in Westford's villages prevent compact building form and development in the places where they are most appropriate.</p>	<p>Take advantage of compact building design.</p>	<p>Consider amending zoning to allow tighter development in residential areas, especially in village centers. More appropriate dimensional standards could be part of a mixed-use zoning bylaw in village centers, such as a Chapter 40R district.</p>
<p>Westford's Open Space Residential Design and Flexible Development Bylaws allow some variation on underlying zoning, but do not fundamentally change Westford's land use pattern by reducing pressure on outlying land and targeting development toward designated growth areas.</p>	<p>Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.</p>	<p>Consider adopting a Transfer-of-Development Rights (TDR) bylaw that allows more intense development in already developed or otherwise appropriate areas and preserves environmentally sensitive or undeveloped areas.</p>
<p>Zoning regulations make it difficult for developers to anticipate how much they will be able to build on a given site or what the associated permits and fees will cost.</p>	<p>Make development predictable, fair, and cost effective.</p>	<p>Make the development process less discretionary. Establish clear standards for project approval and reduce reliance on special permits in the approvals process. Consider publishing a "Developer's Guidebook" to illustrate the process, requirements, and possible outcomes of Westford's development process.</p>
<p>The absence of public sewer service prevents compact building form and development.</p>	<p>Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities.</p>	<p>Take an "adequate facilities" approach to managing residential density: allow greater density where there are adequate facilities (such as public water and wastewater treatment facilities) and lower density where there are fewer public facilities.</p>
<p>Westford currently does not have a way to influence or control the visual quality of development in commercial and industrial areas, leaving them vulnerable to bland, conventional development that does not reflect the character of the Town.</p>	<p>Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.</p>	<p>Create Design Guidelines for various districts. Establish a Design Review Committee and integrate an advisory Design Review process with existing Site Plan Review process.</p>

SMART GROWTH: BARRIERS, PRINCIPLES, RECOMMENDATIONS		
Barrier	Smart Growth Principle	Smart Growth Recommendation
HOUSING		
Westford's zoning inhibits opportunities to create a mix of residential units in three ways: 1) Multi-family housing is not a by-right use in any zoning district; 2) When allowed by special permit, multi-family housing is limited to a maximum of five units per building, (except in the MCOB). 3) There are significant size limitations on housing units other than single-family homes.	Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.	Allow multi-family and commercial mixed uses by-right and "free-standing" multi-family uses by special permit in the CH and industrial districts. Use Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirements to regulate density instead of units/acre or bedrooms/SF of land. Allow a "rolling" eligibility for single-family homes to be converted to multi-family units instead of only for homes that existed when the Zoning Bylaw was created.
Zoning regulations allow little by-right opportunity for mixed use development, especially in commercial areas that might accommodate appropriately scaled multi-family housing.	Mix land uses. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.	Identify areas appropriate for mixed use zoning, like village centers and commercial districts. Consider amending zoning to allow mixed use development in identified areas.
Special residential development regulations (MCOB and OSRD) require developers to provide affordable units without guarantee of additional density or other offsets to reduce developer risk. This may discourage developers from pursuing this option and encourage them to pursue comprehensive permits.	Make development predictable, fair, and cost effective Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.	Replace existing affordable housing regulations with a comprehensive inclusionary zoning bylaw that provides a fair system of density bonuses or other offsets for affordable units included within a development.
Accessory dwelling units are allowed by special permit only, a process that tends to discourage homeowners.	Provide a range of housing opportunities.	Consider allowing accessory dwelling units as a by-right use in certain zoning districts.

First Smart Growth Steps

Smart growth principle:	Smart growth recommendation:
Create walkable neighborhoods	Organize a Safe Routes to School Program

A Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is both a logical extension of and a good way to reinvigorate Westford’s efforts to improve its pedestrian facilities. With its roots in research and advocacy that began in the 1970s, Safe Routes to School is now a national program funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration.² The national program is administered and managed by each state’s Department of Transportation. The Massachusetts SRTS program is managed by MassRIDES (the transportation resource center operated by the Executive Office of Transportation) and assists communities in starting and implementing their own SRTS programs.

A Safe Routes to School program is a feasible way to reinvigorate and sustain efforts to improve walkability in Westford. While SRTS may include physical improvements to pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks and street crossings, it is largely a programmatic effort that seeks to improve the walk to school through education, encouragement and advocacy, and enforcement of existing traffic laws. Efforts to increase awareness of the importance of a safe walking environment can, therefore, begin immediately, and need not focus solely on physical interventions that will inevitably be long and complicated. Should Westford be ready to implement a physical intervention, the state SRTS program is a potential funding source for such projects.

A Safe Routes to School program begins with an assessment of interest in the community and organization of an SRTS taskforce. These efforts may dovetail with reinstating the Sidewalk Master Plan Committee. Also, they will help rejuvenate interest in pedestrian issues by broadening the constituency for walkable streets and sidewalks. Parents, educators, public health and safety advocates, the real estate community, and other people or groups who care about good schools and the health of those who attend them can all buy into a Safe Routes to School Program. By focusing on schools, Westford can create a broad coalition for pedestrian issues that lends momentum to other sidewalk and walkability projects.

RESOURCES

National Center for Safe Routes to School:

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/about/history_of_srts.cfm>

Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program

<<http://www.commute.com>> select Safe Routes to School

National Center for Safe Routes to School

<<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>>

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration

<<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/>>

² National Center for Safe Routes to School, “History of Safe Routes.” Online at <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/about/history_of_srts.cfm>, [accessed 6 March 2007].

Smart growth principle:	Smart growth recommendation:
Make development predictable, fair, and cost effective.	Publish a “Developer’s Guidebook” to illustrate and explain the requirements and possible outcomes of Westford’s development process.

Achieving smart growth goals requires the political and financial support of the private development community. While Westford can provide the planning and regulatory framework that shapes smart growth, much of the necessary capital needed will come from private sources. In order to make smart growth opportunities attractive to developers, Westford’s development process must be transparent, consistent, and moreover, efficient. Only by making the local development process cost-effective will developers undertake the financial investments necessary to make smart growth happen.

Applying for, negotiating, and receiving approval for development at the local level is a complicated process in any community. Westford can lay the foundation for a clearer, more efficient development process by issuing a local development guidebook that presents clear and explicit guidance on the rules, regulations, and processes for development. A development guidebook helps to clarify the process by providing an overview of all requirements for development, contact information for all departments and boards involved, and a timeline for various approval processes. Providing a clearer picture of the requirements, duration, and possible outcomes of the development process will save both developers and Town staff valuable time without sacrificing quality or control.

Many communities, both large and small, have created some type of development or permitting guide. In addition, the Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office has created a sample permitting guidebook (see “Resources” below). These guidebooks typically include an introduction to the community and the purpose of the guidebook; an overview of each board and department involved in the development process with contact information and meeting schedules for each; an overview of all permit types; a calendar that synthesizes the meeting schedules for the various departments; and flowcharts that illustrate the approvals process for different permits. Also, some communities include information or facts about their community for the developer. In this way, the guidebook serves as a way to convey the history and character of the community, which may help the developer create a more appropriate development proposal. As Westford’s smart growth efforts continue, a well-written and up-to-date development guidebook will prove an invaluable tool to help the Town grow in the way it wants and to do so as efficiently as possible.

RESOURCES

Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office, Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting: <<http://www.mass.gov/>> [select State Government, select Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, select Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office, select Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting]

Town of Douglas Development Guidebook: A Guide to Douglas’ Development and Permitting

<<http://www.douglasma.org/cdd/cdd/resources/reports/guidebook.pdf>>

Town of Northborough Development Guidebook

<<http://www.town.northborough.ma.us/>> [select Town Departments, select Planning Department, select 2005 Development Guidebook]

Town of Lincoln Land Use Permitting Guide

<<http://www.lincolntown.org/depts/planning.htm>>

Smart growth principle:	Smart growth recommendation:
Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.	Create Design guidelines for various districts or areas.

Design review is an increasingly popular tool for communities concerned about the appearance and quality of new development. When implemented well, design review can be a relatively low-cost way to create a sense of place in newly developed or re-developed areas. Part of a well-developed and well-implemented design review process is a good set of design guidelines. Without well-researched and well-written guidelines that accurately capture and express Westford’s community character, the design review process will not be able to communicate effectively the type of development Westford wants from developers, architects, and builders. Paying careful attention to the crafting of design guidelines is a critical part of fostering distinctive, unique communities and an important first step in Westford’s smart growth strategy.

As Westford creates design guidelines for various areas and districts, care should be taken so the design guidelines both capture the qualities and characteristics that are important to Westford, and that they explain or communicate those qualities in a way that can be easily understood. In historic districts, capturing the area’s important qualities is relatively simple as many of the buildings adhere to an accepted architectural style. However, as Westford creates design guidelines for non-historic areas, important place-making qualities will have to be agreed upon and defined. Design guidelines are different in every community, and so is process used to create them. However, the following general recommendations will help Westford create design guidelines that are effective, creative, and work to enhance Westford’s unique characteristics and sense of place:

- ◆ **Include local input:** Part of the function of design guidelines is to communicate local knowledge to those who are less familiar with a place. Therefore, the creation of design guidelines must include input from community members who are familiar with the look and feel of Westford. Consider establishing a special committee for the creation of the design guidelines that includes local residents.

- ◆ **Look beyond architectural style:** Although many people think mainly of architectural style when they think of design guidelines, this is actually only a small part of what constitutes the quality of the built environment. Among the most important factors contributing to the feel or sense of a place is the relationship of buildings to the street and to each other. When identifying the important qualities of Westford’s existing development, consider all aspects of the built environment, including setbacks, building height, fenestration, placement of entrances, and location of parking. It will be important to later ensure that the guidelines to do not conflict with zoning or subdivision regulations, however.

- ◆ **Consider suggestions rather than prescriptions:** It is tempting, once a community has decided on some of an area's defining qualities, to write guidelines that ask that those and only those qualities be replicated in new development. While this approach may result one type of acceptable development, it may also rule out other possibilities that would be equally suitable, if not better. Instead of writing guidelines that are prescriptive, therefore, consider writing some of the guidelines as suggestions. For instance, instead of specifying a building be made of a certain material, provide a list of acceptable materials. If the focus of the guideline is to *prevent* a certain outcome, include a list of what *not* to do. This approach will ensure that Westford will avoid undesirable development without ruling out new solutions and possibilities.

- ◆ **Use precise language:** As with writing any rule or regulation, care should be taken to make design guidelines clear and precise. Whenever possible, include examples, lists, and quantitative measures. While there will usually be some discretion in any design review process, the clearer and more operational the guidelines, the easier the process will be for the design review committee and the developer, and the more likely the Town will be to get what it wants.

- ◆ **Use photographs and other visual aids:** While precise language is critical for effective design guidelines, words alone are not enough to convey a sense of place. Very often, an image will be able to explain a design concept far better and more efficiently than a description. When crafting design guidelines, use images as frequently as possible. As with written descriptions, examples of what *not* to do are as helpful as examples of what is desirable.

Once Westford has arrived at a working set of design guidelines, it will be important to assess and update them frequently, depending on how well they function in the design review process. Ideally, over time they will develop into a clear, concise tool for communicating and promoting the desired form and appearance for Westford's residential, mixed use, commercial, and industrial areas.

RESOURCES

City of Lowell, Residential Design Guidelines for Traditional Neighborhoods

<<http://www.lowellma.gov/depts/dpd/projects/DG>>

City of Cambridge, North Massachusetts Avenue Urban Design Guidelines Handbook

<http://www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~CDD/cp/zng/nmass/nmassave_guide.pdf>

Town of Boxborough, Design Review Guidelines

<<http://www.town.boxborough.ma.us/Documents.html>>

APPENDIX F: OUTLINE ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

DISTRICT OR PROVISION	MINIMUM LOT AREA	MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)	MAXIMUM PROJECT SIZE	EXPANDED USE REGULATIONS	COMMENTS
Rural Residential (Proposed)	80,000 sq. ft. or average density of one unit/60,000 sq. ft. for open space-residential developments	N/A	None	None	OSRD by special permit, under proposed revisions to existing OSRD bylaw. OSRD should be subject to site plan review and design review.
Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)	Sending area density one unit/80,000 sq. ft. Receiving area density one unit/20,000 sq. ft. for townhouses and one unit/10,000 sq. ft. for multi-family units (average transfer "exchange rate" or density bonus of 4 to 8 receiving area units per 1 sending area unit)	1.0 in sending area	Subject to underlying district regulations	Sending area development can be free-standing townhouses or multi-family dwellings or a mixed-use development. If mixed-use, commercial uses subject to regulations of the underlying district.	Subject to special permit with site plan review, and design review. Exempt affordable units from maximum FAR.
Open Space Residential Development	Average density subject to regulations of the applicable zoning district	None	None	Allow townhouses and multi-family units by special permit.	Change existing mandatory OSRD to comply with recent case law; reorganize and build upon existing Flexible Development bylaw, provide minimum performance standards for common open space.
Inclusionary Zoning	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Exempt affordable units from density or FAR calculations, as applicable, where affordable units are encouraged or required.
Business, Limited Business	No change	N/A	N/A	Allow upper-story multi-family units in commercial buildings	Allow by right, subject to site plan review and design review. Assume average density of one unit/8,000 sq. ft. of lot area.

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DISTRICT OR PROVISION	MINIMUM LOT AREA	MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)	MAXIMUM PROJECT SIZE	EXPANDED USE REGULATIONS	COMMENTS
Commercial Highway District	No change	.40 Bonus to .50 for major commercial projects (MCPs) and Planned Commercial Developments (PCDs) when consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals. Bonus to 1.0 for TDR developments.	MCP not to exceed 250,000 sq. ft., except when carried out under TDR provisions. Note: This should apply to any MCP approved by Planning Board in other districts as well.	Mixed-use development with minimum 20% residential use, authorized by special permit from Planning Board. May include multi-family and clustered housing, up to 4 units per acre or up to 8 units by TDR.	Exempt affordable units from maximum FAR. All developments subject to site plan review, design review. Provide flexibility to increase 10-ft. buffer strip where appropriate. (This should apply in all nonresidential districts.)
IA	No change	.40	N/A	N/A	None
IB	No change	.30 .35 for Planned Industrial Developments (PIDs)	N/A	N/A	Increase side yard and rear yard setbacks from 60 feet to 80 feet for some uses if located adjacent to residential districts.
IH	No change	.30 Bonus to .50 for Planned Industrial Developments (PIDs) when consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals.	N/A	N/A	All developments subject to site plan review, design review.
IC	No change	.30	N/A	N/A	None
ID	No change	.30	N/A	N/A	None

APPENDIX G: CMPC RESPONSES TO POLICY QUESTIONS¹

Natural Resources and Open Space

From your point of view, what does the term “open space” include? Conservation land? Active recreation land? Development of water supplies? Other?

The Subcommittee has chosen to use the definition of open space found in the Massachusetts Open Space Planners Workbook: “the term “open space” is often used to refer to conservation land, recreation land, agricultural land, forest land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation. However, the term can also refer to any undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interest. Some open space can be used for passive activities such as walking, hiking, and nature study while others are used for more active recreational uses including soccer, tennis, or baseball.”

Note: One member of the full CMPC felt that the definition should be broadened to include open areas with scenic or cultural value.

Note: Notably missing from this definition are parking lots, including grassed islands, or other open areas that do not have buildings on them and that have no open space value.

Overall, has Westford adhered to the land acquisition/protection priorities of its last Open Space and Recreation Plan? If not, why?

Yes, in general Westford has adhered to the land acquisition/priorities of its last Open Space and Recreation Plan. Westford has recently protected water resources, woodlands and forests through the purchases/ protections of EBC, Stony Brook, and portions of the Woodlands project (the Cons. Comm. accepted the CR on this land at their 11/14/2007 meeting) as well as smaller purchases done through the Conservation Commission and CPA. In addition Westford has passed zoning bylaws like the Flexible Development by-law and the Open Space Residential bylaw that provides incentives to developers to protect open space.

Overall, has Westford been successful at balancing conservation and recreation interests? If not, what factors contribute to an imbalance?

Overall, Westford has been successful at balancing conservation and recreation interests. As opportunities become available, the Town is taking both into account. For example, with the much acclaimed purchase of the EBC property, a portion of the land was set aside for recreation fields. Recently, the CPA funded both the application for an artificial turf field and the application of the Conservation Commission for funds to purchase small parcels. While the funding of the artificial turf was controversial, we acknowledge that one artificial turf field replaces the need for 3 grassed fields.

Despite the town’s efforts to protect valuable open space, many properties remain vulnerable to development. Although it is unrealistic to assume that Westford could preserve all of its vacant land, could

¹ Editor’s Note: Appendix G contains notes prepared by the CMPC in response to a series of policy questions that the consulting team and NMCOC presented with the original working papers for this comprehensive plan.

the town do more to save the most important parcels? If yes, what are the impediments to local action: financial, political, lack of adequate capacity (personnel and volunteers), or something else?

Yes, Westford could do more to save the most important open space parcels in town. The impediments to local action are numerous. The primary impediment is financial. There is a serious lack of general funds available in the current economic climate as well as in the CPA fund because of the debt associated with the recently purchased EBC property.

There are also political barriers to preserving open space. The Conservation Restriction tax laws could be more favorable. The Town could add more incentives to protectors of open space. And, the Flexible Development bylaw needs to be revised to prevent narrow “strips” of land that do not serve a conservation or recreation interest rather than “chunks” of land to be preserved. Yet, at the same time, there exists a movement for less government protection of open space because of a perceived loss of property rights. We saw this in the resistance by the Town to expand protection for vernal pools at Town Meeting.

The Town also lacks the appropriate level of personnel to care for the open space land it currently owns. The volunteer effort has its limits. The Town needs a ranger for management of all open space land in its possession.

What do you think is an appropriate way to define and measure “adequate” open space? What about adequate protected open space?

When defining and measuring adequate open space the first step is to break the space down into protected and not protected lands. Protected lands include those placed into CRs and Article 97 lands. These lands, while not protected in perpetuity, are difficult to remove from protected status. Examples of not protected lands include private land, land in a Chapter 61 and public lands for active recreation. The question of what is adequate open space should then be restated as what is adequate protected open space and what is an adequate amount of non protected open space. The ultimate answer is somewhere between what is available and what the Town wants and is able to have. The Subcommittee does not feel the 1995 Plan is adequate in either its definition or goal. We need a new metric. Do state guidelines exist? Is there a regional ratio? What do other towns do?

Note: The 1995 Master Plan calculated that the existing ratio of open space per capita was 290 acres per 1,000 residents, and then set a goal to retain this ratio. “Open Space” was defined as waterways, protected land (Conservation Commission, Water Dept., CRs, APRs, and private conservation organizations) and semi-protected land (Ch 61, 61A, 61B). The 2002 Open Space and Recreation Report re-affirmed this goal, but excluded semi-protected land since it can easily be developed (as local history has confirmed). Given this goal, Westford would currently need about 6,000 acres of open space; a population of 30,000 would need 8,700 acres of open space. We are far short of this goal, with approximately 3,500 acres of protected open space. There is not enough remaining undeveloped land in Westford to reasonably achieve this goal, given that much of it will be developed and the Town cannot afford to purchase 2,000+ acres for open space. Hence, the Open Space and Recreation Subcommittee feel that this is not a realistic goal, and that it needs to be replaced with a better, defensible goal.

The last Open Space and Recreation Plan (2002) identified Westford’s private camps and clubs in the northern section of town as some of the most vulnerable land in town. Does this still seem to be true, or

have other types of property become more vulnerable since 2002? If the latter, what properties, or what areas of Westford, seem the most likely to change in the near-term? Why?

Some of the private camps and clubs in town identified in the last Open Space and Recreation Plan as the most vulnerable land in town are no longer the most vulnerable because they have been purchased by the town and/or protected in Conservation Restrictions, e.g. the East Boston Camps property. In addition, some have been developed, such as Camp Weetamoo and Wyman's Beach. Other lands such as the Westford Sportsmen's Club, Stony Brook Fish and Game and the MIT property remain among the most vulnerable land in Westford. The nature of the 40B law has made even smaller parcels of land susceptible to development. As the economy continues to change and social and community pressures come to bear other large parcels of land such as the Butterbrook Golf Course, Bobby's Ranch, Volo Farms, the 4H property and Nabnasset Country Club may be at risk for development.

Aside from new development, what factors or conditions present the greatest risk of unwanted change on Westford's remaining vacant land? Does the town have an effective strategy to address these conditions?

Aside from development there are other factors or conditions that present great risk of unwanted change to Westford's remaining vacant land. These include invasive plant or animal species such as those listed on the Massachusetts Invasive Plant List. In addition there are native species, such as beavers, that are continually changing the landscape in such a way that may present a nuisance to abutting residents. Another factor is further degradation of water quality through the loss of open space, both locally and downstream. Other factors that change the landscape are overuse (as on trails) and abuse (as in trash and violations of bylaws). But perhaps the greatest threat to unwanted change to Westford's remaining vacant land is the absence of a plan to preserve it and the manpower to implement it. While the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, the Trails Stewards, the WLPF and the WCT are all working to protect vacant land through bylaws, education and volunteer efforts, the Town must commit funds to hire or contract individuals who will make this their primary concern.

Setting aside any concerns you may have about specific properties, what areas of Westford do you think the town should prioritize for acquiring or otherwise protecting additional conservation land?

The Land Use Priorities List should drive acquisition of conservation land; however, the list should be revised to include a new criterion: conservation value. Conservation value includes water protection, connectedness, wildlife migration, unique lands, endangered species, historic/culturally interesting lands and agriculture.

Westford's open space inventory includes some large parcels. Still, the inventory is not evenly distributed throughout the town, and some residents feel that their neighborhoods should have more open space. Sometimes small open space holdings are just as important as (if not more important than) large, contiguous tracts of open space, e.g., pocket parks or neighborhood parks. Do any small parcels (less than three acres) in Westford strike you as particularly important to preserve because they make an important contribution to the visual, cultural or environmental quality of their surroundings? If so, where are these parcels located? (You don't need to name specific parcels; a street reference and approximate location would be fine.)

Yes, some small parcels in Westford are important to preserve because of their visual, cultural or environmental qualities. Some of these small parcels have already been developed into pocket parks. A couple of examples are Freedom Park and the Indian Meeting Grounds. Through the Master Plan implementation process a complete list of these parcels should be developed by the Land Use Priorities Committee using a new criterion in addition to the current criteria. The new criterion should be to turn some of these small parcels throughout town into small neighborhood parks, good for Frisbee or for throwing a football around. The Planning Board expressed support for this idea, including the need to amend current bylaws to encourage developers to include small pocket parks in new developments.

Should isolated open spaces be connected, or should they remain isolated to reduce public access and preserve unique ecological communities?

In general isolated open spaces should be connected to provide for habitat migration and town trail development. It is also easier to manage larger, contiguous spaces than many isolated open spaces.

The future use of East Boston Camps may be a very challenging issue for the town. The recent master plan recommends closing the south side camp and only using the camp on the north side. It is presently unclear who would manage the remaining camp, both day and overnight camp: East Boston Camps Social Agency or the Parks and Recreation Department. It is also undetermined how this large, 300-acre facility will be managed and maintained. Does Westford need to establish a conservation ranger position to oversee the EBC and other multi-faceted properties?

Yes, the town does need to establish a conservation ranger for EBC land as well as other sensitive conservation areas in Westford. This individual or individuals should be placed in the Conservation Dept under the Conservation Agent. However, not all members of the BOS or the Planning Board support this idea.

The town cut the budget of the Conservation Department a few years ago resulting in the loss of personnel in this department reducing it to a one man operation, the Conservation Agent. With the numerous large projects affecting wetlands that have entered the public meeting process in the past few years, the Conservation Agent's time has been overtaxed. It is important that personnel be reinstated so that the Conservation Department can service the town properly. In the past few years the Conservation Agent has wisely sought out additional low cost help in the form of summer interns from local colleges but funding for even this has dried up.

Note: Many of the items in this question have been addressed or have changed. This is a "moving target". Town Meeting voted to turn control of the EBC over to the Conservation Committee pending state legislative approval. And, the town is currently in the process of submitting an RFP for running of the summer camps.

Does the town need habitat management plans for unique open spaces – and if so, who should be responsible for developing them?

It would be nice for the town to have a habitat management plan for the town's large inventory of open space. In the current budget climate, implementing this plan is not a high priority. Alternative funding sources, such as CPA, should be investigated to try and implement the plan using professional not volunteer habitat management personnel. The priority areas outlined in the plan for oversight should include

NHESP-designated sensitive areas. The town should also begin to implement the plan through such low cost measures as educating the public.

Where should the town focus on providing new sidewalks and trail connections? What are the most significant needs, and what do you think are the most significant opportunities to address them?

The town cannot have all of the sidewalks where it wants them because they are too expensive to build and maintain. By working on connecting the sidewalks and trails in town we might put together a system of sidewalks and trails, thereby creating a usable grid. The town should focus on providing new sidewalks and trail connections in certain critical areas. The most significant need is around the schools in general.

While the Nabnasset and Miller schools do have a network of sidewalks around them, the other lower elementary school, the Col. John Robinson, does not. The proximity of the Abbot school to the center of town affords its connection to a network of sidewalks but the other 2 upper elementary schools, the John H. Crisafulli and the Norman E. Day do not. The Robinson and Crisafulli schools have a newly built trail connecting the 2 schools. The Day school may benefit from having a more formal trail developed to connect it to the Blanchard Middle School. The Blanchard and Stony Brook Middle Schools as well as Westford Academy could all benefit from having sidewalks built to access the schools to allow for students to walk safely to school.

Two other locations where there is a significant need for sidewalks or trails are connections to the isolated sidewalks in existing neighborhoods and along commercial corridors such as Route 110 and Route 40. In order to ensure that the existing sidewalks in commercial corridors are not lost, new commercial developments should be required to replace any sidewalks they remove in road widening to accommodate traffic for their development. Trails to town recreational areas would also be welcome.

The primary steps in achieving this is are: 1. Revisit and revise the Sidewalk Master Plan, 2. Renew the Town Trails Committee and task them to develop a Trails Master Plan for the Town of Westford and update the trails map and, 3. Encourage the new Sidewalk Master Plan Committee and the Town Trails Committee to look at how the trails and sidewalks intersect.

Trail maintenance must be kept up. We are losing trails on easements either because of trail overgrowth, because trails were never built or because trails were not clearly marked. Consistently placing obvious physical markers could be addressed through a bylaw amendment. The Trail Stewards Program is a volunteer program that does the majority of trails maintenance in Westford. The Town should work with the Trail Stewards Program to facilitate creating and maintaining trails. Also, the re-activated Town Trails Committee should seek CPA funds to build and maintain critical trails.

Does Westford have a common understanding of “natural resources” and their importance to the Town’s sense of place?

Somewhat. There is a spectrum of understanding including the formal side through town regulations, by-laws and orders to the informal side spearheaded by non profits, school programs, the Recreation Department, state wide organizations, and individuals. From the Comprehensive Master Plan survey results, it’s clear that Westfordians value open space and clean water; however, only small groups of people have more focused interest beyond that. We have groups of people associated with the Westford Conservation Commission, Westford Conservation Trust and the Water department who maintain conservation land and

trails, monitor water quality; tackle the problem of invasive species, inventory the fauna and flora of the town, and generally look out for the town's environmental well-being. Historically, the Town has shown its commitment to protecting our natural resources in the passing of a local Wetlands Protection bylaw which is stronger than the Commonwealth's laws, significant land acquisitions for protection of groundwater and open space, and adding several other provisions to our Zoning Bylaws which also serve to protect natural resources (but see below) along with the character of the town.

Historically, town residents have a strong "sense of place," of a "semi-rural" Westford which values its open space, forests, winding roads, wildlife and historic resources. Water, air, farmland, habitat, etc. would all be considered part of this whole, but it's clear that recently this sense has drifted. To facilitate a reasoned dialogue on the issues, the Master Plan must lay down a common foundation based on material conditions for understanding the natural resources of this "place."

Do the Zoning Bylaw and other development regulations provide enough protection for natural resources and if not, what are the specific deficiencies? (If there are deficiencies in the existing framework for natural resource protection, some may be beyond the Town's control.)

While Westford has several zoning measures designed to protect wetlands, surface waters and other natural resources, there is ample evidence that our natural resources, especially our surface water resources, suffer from insufficient protection.

Seven of our nine major streams exceed three or more EPA water quality standards (Table 1).² This is most likely due to insufficient treatment of storm water runoff, erosion, excess agricultural or residential fertilizers, wildlife activity and possible illicit discharge of wastewater³. A bylaw to prevent illicit discharges with a stronger enforcement component is being written for consideration by Town Meeting next year.

A study commissioned by Westford's Conservation Commission⁴ has shown, as have other studies⁵, that undisturbed upland habitat surrounding vernal pools is important to their survival. The first attempt to amend our local wetlands bylaw to allow the Conservation Commission the authority to review development within an extended buffer around these pools failed to win support at Town Meeting.

Various other measures for protection of natural resources have been incorporated into some of our zoning bylaws, such as Flexible Development (7.2.4), Open Space Residential Development (7.1), Assisted Living (7.3.3), Water Resource Protection Overlay District (8.1), etc. There is a lack of consistency in the protection of natural resources across our zoning bylaws. Table 2 lists various Natural Resource-oriented interests expressed in our bylaws.⁶ The simple conclusion from this table is that some interests appear in some bylaws and are missing or weak in other bylaws. Leaving aside consideration of other interests that the town might

² Editor's Note: Table 1 appears in Chapter 3 as Table 3.1 and has not been reproduced here.

³ EPA: Polluted Runoff (Nonpoint Source Pollution). <http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/>; Mass. DEP: Nonpoint Source Pollution. <http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/resources/nonpoint.htm#aboutnps>

⁴ "Determining the Effects of Residential Development on Vernal Pool Amphibian Populations in Westford, Massachusetts." Bryan Windmiller, Hyla Ecological Services. February 9, 2005,

⁵ "Conserving pool-breeding amphibians in human-dominated landscapes through local implementation of Best Development Practices," Aram J. K. Calhoun et al, 200. cited in <http://www.springerlink.com/content/w2350q6507675l72/>

⁶ Editor's Note: Table 2 appears in Chapter 3 as Table 3.2 and has not been reproduced here.

want to establish, those that we already have, in their present form, do not go far enough in protecting our natural resources.

The current open space provisions are vague about what makes a good plan versus a bad plan. Most often, open space is not land set aside first for resource protection; it's simply leftover land. Our local bylaws are also vague on post construction management components, accountability and the penalties.

We learned from the Tech Park West process that our Water Resource Protection Overlay District special permit criteria are weak and ineffectual. This bylaw needs to be much more specific on criteria to be presented to support a finding granting the permit.

There is a lack of coordination between state and local needs. For example, we have no say in permits issued by DEP. State law on zoning and land use lack incentives for developers to preserve open space. There is also a lack of strategic connection between open space and affordable housing. While 40b laws might allow a developer to build more densely, there is nothing in the statute that leverages that benefit to the protection of open space. Indeed, in cases where local resource protection bylaws go farther than state regulations, 40b laws are used to sidestep these regulations.

How well do municipal boards and commissions coordinate their planning and development review procedures today? Should consideration be given to a joint review process? Should the Comprehensive Master Plan Update promote policies that would improve coordination among boards and commissions, the public, and the land trust?

The Master Plan should indeed promote improved communication among Town boards, commissions and stakeholders. There is a general sentiment that recommendations from other boards or from staff, submitted in writing to another board are often not implemented. While ConsComm and Planning tend to share information well; there is apparently little or no process in place to coordinate actions with the ZBA, BOH & BOS. Town Boards should plan for at least one joint public hearing when appropriate [or...on projects which meet some threshold].

A joint review process focused on areas of overlapping jurisdiction impacting natural resources, such as site plan, would directly improve the current situation.

Another perspective on this problem rises from the oft-stated observation that the town has a problem following Master Plans that the town creates and approves. The vision of the Master Plan must be incorporated into the town Bylaws and policies. If the vision of the Master Plan and leadership on its stated interests is not codified and strictly enforced, the influence/process of the developers will result in the abandonment of the Town's interests.

Does Westford need Habitat Management Plans for unique open spaces? If so, who should take the initiative and how should the Town fund this kind of planning effort?

Habitat management plans provide useful planning information to decision makers. Habitat management is not covered under regulations but is implied in certain bylaw. The Town should identify goals of habitat protection, and review relevant bylaws in order to begin to establish the town's interest in certain kinds of habitat protection. The conservation commission should play a major role in this review. Using fees collected from the developer to cover the town's expenses incurred to conduct the review, consultants

with experience in habitat management should be hired to evaluate habitat needs, specific to Rare and Endangered Species or rare or unusual Natural Communities that should be protected, as recognized by the Commonwealth's Natural Heritage program. This should be done on a town-wide basis, so that the information plays a role in land use planning.

What could Westford do (that it is not already doing) to contribute to the development of a regional system of open spaces and participate in other regional preservation issues? For example, should isolated open spaces be connected or should they remain isolated to reduce public access and preserve unique ecological communities? Should the town seek to obtain easements/parcels to develop/expand a regional open space network?

Westford is doing a reasonable job of connecting open spaces where possible. Still, The Conservation Commission and the Westford Conservation Trust should meet with complementary groups from neighboring towns to hold a once-a-year forum to discuss common natural resource/habitat/open space protection efforts, to facilitate cooperation and joint action. We should continue coordination efforts already underway through NMCOG and SUASCO. In general, we believe that isolated open spaces would have greater protection with additional protected space around and adjoining them, so as to have the flexibility to steer land users away from sensitive areas. Whatever joint preservation efforts that can be made should be made, with Community Preservation funds used to fund such purchases.

What are the barriers - if any - to implementing a greenway trail system? If barriers exist, what steps could the Town take to overcome them?

Barriers include control of land, strong opposition by abutters, cost of acquiring rights to cross private land or outright purchase of land, and limitations in with state regulations that come along with grants (Westford is not always willing to take these provisions). Also, such an effort would require additional Trail volunteers with time to create and maintain this network. Often there is no feasible physical connection possible between trails. From the survey, it's clear that the desire is there. Is the political will?

What measures could Westford take to strengthen the balance between new development and the preservation of open space that protects natural resources? For example:

- ◆ **Should local boards and commissions require or recommend the inclusion of pedestrian and bike-way infrastructure as part of the permitting for new residential and nonresidential development? If these kinds of practices are already in place, are they effective?**

- ◆ **Should protection of unique ecological areas be included as part of new development permitting and review - and for all types of residential, commercial or industrial land uses?**

Several of our bylaws have sections on protecting unique natural features of sites subject to development, (see above), but they don't have much teeth, and it's not a priority for the Planning Board to extract mitigation in this regard. As much as we say we want to do environmentally sensitive site planning, we don't.

We need to protect groundwater and drinking water resources by providing sufficient protective open space and regulations which control hazardous materials on land in our Zone I and II protective districts which is already developed. Habitat should be left unfragmented and protected from alterations which im-

pact breeding, migration, and overall diversity. We need to protect air quality by crafting land use measures which reduce car trip generation and provide services which are walkable or bike-able.

The Master Plan rationale for the resources we are protecting, and the quantity, type and distribution of open space with respect to natural resources to be protected should be explicit and definitive. At present, these interests are vague and ill-defined. We need to protect wetlands and surface water resources from alterations in chemical and nutrient input, sediment loading, flow and temperature characteristics and over-withdrawal.

To do this effectively, we need better planning and regulatory changes in the Commonwealth. We need changes in state zoning laws which give towns the real authority to protect these interests. To be effective in the long term, we need to balance human land use needs **at build-out** with the inherent capacity of the land to sustain these natural resources.

The Planning Board usually does not take a strong advocate position on these, and not much has been gained in this area recently. Pedestrian access is improving, mostly through the persistent advocacy of private citizens. The Conservation Commission has limits to its jurisdiction, so we need additional enabling language in our bylaws to gain additional protection.

Could Westford do more to encourage or require development practices that will help to preserve and protect natural resources, such as:

- ◆ **Provisions for low impact development in zoning and subdivision regulations;**
- ◆ **More aggressive recycling policies;**
- ◆ **Incentives to preserve natural resources and supporting landscapes, and development standards to help applicants understand what is expected of them?**

Make flexible development and open space provisions by right and not special permit. We could protect surface and ground water by setting limits on impervious surfaces, and requiring recharge of rainwater in a natural way. We are currently working on these issues through the Smart Growth Technical Advisory Committee. Enhanced protection of open space is critical to this effort. We could also explore ways to incentivize development and business to build buildings certified (or better) using the environmentally sustainable construction standards promulgated by the U.S. Green Building Council (<http://www.usgbc.org>). Consistent design standards for larger developments, written to serve town-wide land use policies could utilize creative solutions similar to transfer of development rights.

What key areas should be prioritized in the Comprehensive Master Plan Update for doing more to preserve natural resources and supporting landscapes?

The key areas are surface and ground water protection, air pollution, and habitat protection. Implementation of the Phase II storm water requirements and the towns Smart Growth Committee recommendations will improve this. CMP should outline standards for protecting natural resource and then propose mitigation and measures that the town should pursue to achieve them. For example, it is well-established that development which pushes the amount of impervious surface in a watershed beyond 10% results in degraded

water and habitat qualities in our streams and lakes. We need to craft our zoning bylaw and, more importantly, work regionally to redevelop and reuse previously-developed land before exploiting green space.

Does Westford have adequate local measures in place to protect water quality (ground water, surface water, and wetlands)? If not, what are the deficiencies?

From Table 1, we do not have adequate local measures in place to protect water quality. We need to set standards commensurate with state standards on water quality, and come up with methods to achieve mitigation of problem areas. Furthermore, we need to expand our surface waters monitoring program to monitor our Great Ponds and other water bodies. We need to look at the larger watershed and land use to plan for overall protection. We also need to review progress on the recommendations of Source Water Assessment Program reports in order to maximize protection of our drinking water resources.

Does Westford need public education and awareness programs to encourage the protection of natural resources? If these kinds of programs are already in place, are they effective - or how should their effectiveness be measured?

The natural resources subcommittee has identified public education as the critical factor in achieving protection of natural resources. There are some significant programs underway which are doing this: the schools have the Living Lab program for elementary schools. Education programs for adults need to be expanded. The Water Department has the Healthy Lawns for Healthy Families Program which educates people on low- fertilizer and low-pesticide lawn maintenance practices. We have volunteers from the Conservation Trust that conduct walks and provide other public education programs in the schools, and help out with public education for community groups: sponsoring walks and talks. But we're not doing enough. Public education is critical, as most enforcement and monitoring is driven by the publi [sic]

Policy Statement

The residents of Westford have shown strong, continuous support for the purchase of land for open space use. This was clear from the 1994 Master Plan Survey and the 1999 Open Space and Recreation Plan survey. Support was re-affirmed with the following resolution that was passed during Special Town Meeting, 12 November, 2002:

Town Meeting hereby requests that in allocating future CPA funds, the CPA Committee shall give the highest priority to acquiring land for open space.

Support for protecting parcels for various conservation purposes continued with the 2006 Master Plan survey. However, the support was tempered by a concern about the cost of purchasing land, and that any land purchased for open space should conform with pre-defined open space land-value criteria.

Cultural and Historic Resources

How far should Westford go to protect scenic roadways? For example: Should the Town designate more scenic roads? It is complicated to balance public safety concerns with the protection of scenic roads and their associated attributes, such as narrow pavement and adjoining vegetation and stone walls.

However, allowing these resources to be altered with modern engineering designs would forever alter the retained elements of rural, historic Westford.

People want scenic roads, as a way to preserve the look and feel of the road and their neighborhood as they pass through. There is strong community support for scenic roads and the Town should review the remaining candidate scenic roads. One alternative is to enable abutters to petition for a scenic road designation. The WHC website provides guidelines for moving through the process. The Historical Commission has talked about adding more scenic roads such as Lowell Road. Public safety and preservation considerations should both be met. The Town Engineer in consultation with the Highway Department should be the lead person on road design and safety issues.

Should Westford complete a scenic roads inventory that includes descriptions and photo documentation? Adopt design criteria relating to roadway improvements? If so, who should lead these initiatives and how should the Town provide funding for them?

This could become an objective if the town had a part-time preservation planner. Inventory and photo documentation is a great place to start. Descriptions and photo documentation can be accomplished by abutters. The Highway Department would have to be directly involved. Where documentation is lacking it will need to be undertaken by the town.

Does it seem reasonable to pursue a scenic overlay district with a no-disturb buffer along scenic roads? (Note: a no-disturb buffer does not prevent property owners from using their land. Instead, it usually requires a site plan approval process for construction within N feet of the road, which serves as an incentive to place buildings toward the back of a parcel, beyond the area that triggers site plan approval, in order to protect the view from the road.) Would anyone object to these kinds of regulations?

Residents wish to preserve what they value, but at the same time, they do not wish to have any limitations or restrictions on land that they own. This applies to roads, walls, trees, and houses. The current Scenic Road Bylaw provides a no-disturb buffer zone. Tree removal, stone wall removal, or road changes must be approved by the Planning Board. An overlay district for the protection of scenic roads might be considered excessive regulation, in light of the fact that many people who responded to the survey consider our Scenic Road bylaw reasonably effective as is.

Develop policies and standards for public road maintenance and reconstruction, including reconstructions of Westford's historic bridges and roadways over cow passes?

Design criteria for scenic roadway improvements, bridges, and historic infrastructure should be developed jointly by the Planning Board, Town Engineer, Highway Department and the Historic Commission. Pedestrian access should be focused on trails where road widening is not practical. Leaving roads narrow and winding has the advantage of traffic calming. Federal and State preservation guidelines should be used where applicable.

Should the Comprehensive Master Plan Update recommend local historic district designations in Westford? While National Register Districts are an important preservation tool, they do not protect privately owned historic buildings from inappropriate alterations. (Note: the Westford Heritage Landscape Report recommends designating Westford Center as a Chapter 40C Local Historic District and designating Forge Village and Graniteville as Architectural Conservation Districts.)

The CMP should follow the recommendations. The Heritage Landscape process emphasized public involvement and participation and so should be considered a valid community planning document. A current example is the demolition or inappropriate alteration of historic cottages built in the last century along lakes and ponds. This has occurred at an increasing rate within the last decade.

The Historic Commission has spoken with homeowners about creating Historic Districts and found that their primary concern was the possibility of losing control of their property. Once they were assured that with National Historic Districts that would not happen they gained their support. The issue was raised again when adding more roads to the scenic road inventory. Homeowners do not want to be told what they can or can't do with their property. The residents want it both ways: they want to preserve character etc but don't want any of their rights removed.

Should the Historical Commission's role in town planning be expanded? For example, the Commission could function as a review authority on development proposals affecting historic resources, much like its review powers under the Mill Conversion Bylaw. Westford could also encourage historic preservation-minded individuals to serve on review boards, and provide a primer on historic preservation to boards and commissions. Other initiatives might include enhancing 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.

Yes, the Historic Commission's role should be expanded. The Historical Commission should be consulted on any project located in a Historic District. What are lacking are policies, procedures and bylaws which support the historical point of view. Existing bylaws in some cases may hinder the ability of the Historic Commission to be more involved. The zoning bylaws should be amended to incorporate historic values. The Planning Board and Historic Commission have discussed the idea of expanding the demolition delay bylaw to include stone walls, and foundations. Additional paid resources will be required. Consideration should be given to requiring that developers cover the cost of a consultant in the case of alteration/demolition of a historic resource. Adding the historic perspective to the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals would be the better way to go on reviewing projects for protection of byways, stone walls, trees, abandoned foundations, existing historic structures, etc. Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals staff should be trained to accomplish Historic Preservation objectives.

Members of The Historic Commission could benefit from further training from the State as to what role they can play in the Town.

Does Westford do all that it could do to protect historically significant Town-owned properties, particularly vacant or underutilized properties such as the Town Poor Farm, camp structures at East Boston Camps, or the historic fire stations in Graniteville and Forge Village? Budget limitations make these kinds of activities difficult for many communities. Relative to other local needs, how much financial priority should Westford place on revitalizing these structures?

While the Historic Commission has done a lot to preserve the Town Farm, they were not consulted on the preservation of camp structures at East Boston Camps. In general, WHC would offer comment, suggestions if asked, i.e. part of the review loop; or added to reviewing bodies above as in #3.

Town-owned historic properties have a department or commission that is responsible for the care and custody of the building. Nevertheless, some buildings have fallen into disrepair despite department funding to maintain the historic structures. The designee is responsible to maintain these buildings - including the basic structure and utilities. Funding for such is included in their budget. That department should consult with the Historical Commission should structural changes, renovations, or improvements need to be made, but at this time there is no requirement to do so.

The Historical Commission and the Historical Society could expand their private fundraising and grant-writing activities. Some CPA funds have been used to restore facilities and this resource could be applied to future projects through CPA funds for Historic Preservation.

All of the above initiatives require staff and volunteer resources, and in some cases they may require specialized consulting support. Should the Town consider hiring a part-time preservation planner who could also serve as staff for the Historical Commission? If so, how would the Town fund this position?

The questions and answers above show the need for a part-time preservation planner, and members of the Historic Commission are very much in support of this. The position could be created in cooperation with one or more neighboring towns to share the cost. However, under current budget constraints it appears unlikely this position would be funded. Attempts in the past to obtain funding for a part-time preservation planner were not approved. The best means to achieve historic preservation objectives would be to provide training for existing town staff including the Town Engineer, and Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals staff.

Land Use and Zoning

How could zoning changes contribute to a smart growth policy for Westford?

Westford should expand the Flexible Zoning Bylaw to incorporate Smart Growth Principles as appropriate. The mixed use aspects of 40R zoning may be a good model to begin with. Westford should undertake a very comprehensive review of all current zoning bylaws for smart growth conformance as well as internal consistency. For example, the increase of density in the commercial zones would result in more efficient use of space and make for more walk-able zones. The use of a Smart Growth Overlay District would ensure that Smart Growth Principles are addressed during the permitting process.

Some specific examples are: Enhance the smart growth mixed use aspects of existing villages by allowing mixed commercial/residential development; Require sidewalks in all developments along Rte. 110 so people can walk between offices and stores

Westford should also extend design standards to include Smart Growth strategies, especially mixed use. TDR's or other techniques could be used to meet density targets.

Can you think of opportunities that Westford may have to collaborate with neighboring towns on shared smart growth interests?

Westford should take advantage of existing organizations such as NMCOG, especially in the area of transportation, to improve coordination with neighboring communities. NMCOG would be especially helpful in bringing the LRTA to Westford and the potential development of park and ride facilities. Westford is al-

ready working with regional communities in the protection of natural resources. Westford should take the initiative to form ad hoc working groups with neighboring communities to share information on current and future developments and to identify areas of potential cooperation such as resources in terms of smart growth, shared opportunities for housing and commercial development and common zoning/continuity and transportation issues.

Example: Regional Planning Committee for projects like Avalon. Such an initiative will depend on the desire by other communities and affected landowners to participate.

Note, however, that Acton, an important neighbor, is not in NMCOG. There have also been some challenges in working jointly with other communities at the political level. Special efforts or mechanisms need to be developed to fill these voids. Other third parties, such as EOEEA or DHCD could be brought in to help facilitate communications with neighboring towns.

Please identify two or three “best-case” examples of development in each of the town’s existing zoning districts? What makes them “Best Case” examples?

- ◆ OSRD: Jarvis Way-Griffin Road has open space and trail easements. Lakeside Meadows has a large contiguous area of open space and watershed values.
- ◆ Flexible Development: Elderberry has a mix of two family and single homes. Hawk Ridge is a good example with a group home, 30% plus of affordable housing and protection of wetlands and open space.
- ◆ Commercial: Primrose has mixed use with hotels, restaurants and businesses.
- ◆ Rte 110: Minot to Chelmsford line represents build-out of a development plan.
- ◆ Townhouses: Blanchard, Hildreth are examples of a clustering approach with open space and trails.
- ◆ Limited Use: Grey Fox Lane is an example of clustering to provide more open space.

If the town were to adopt a TDR bylaw, what areas would be more appropriate to designate as receiving areas and sending areas?

All boards and organizations contacted expressed a positive interest in the potential of TDR’s. Sending areas would include undeveloped land in critical areas of the northwest corner, Parker Village and parcels along Stony Brook. The CMPC criteria for critical/priority undeveloped land includes land with biological significance near other, preferably protected open space, e.g. MIT/northwest corner, Parker Village near Nashoba open space and Greenwood Farms; water resources such as wells and existing or potential aquifers e.g. East Boston Camps, Stepinsky Property, etc. and not near excellent transit access such as northeast Westford near Rte 3 which is preferred for development.

Receivers would include: Fletchers IA zoning along Rte 3, and Rte. 110 commercial areas. Potential receiving areas would include the villages which have existing density, could be preserved to maintain way of life, encourage mixed use, etc; IA zoning near Rte 3 in NE Westford with Redevelopment opportunities

and near good highway access; and Rte 110 , especially commercial/industrial zoned areas, with Increased density more consistent with mixed use, walk-able commons, smart growth techniques.

Issue: Ultimately we should review the list of unprotected open space, the Watershed Action Plan and the Open Space Plan and put together our list. TDR's could be used in the village areas to allow for smaller lots and to address septic issues.

Do Westford's existing application, review and permitting procedures need better coordination? Are the standards applied by various town boards generally consistent or inconsistent? What problems (if any) in Westford's permitting systems?

Yes. Both developers and Town employees involved in the permitting process expressed dissatisfaction with coordination aspects of the process. Consistency of the process and information are concerns. Unfortunately, the standards applied by various Town Boards often are inconsistent.

Problems with the permit process include the lack of consistent, enforceable standards, lack of design guidelines, limited coordination among permitting boards and authorities and a lack of consistent and current information to all boards and agencies involved in the process. Westford should consider having more concurrent meetings including the BOH as appropriate and especially on the large projects. The applicant doesn't know who to listen to. Westford should revitalize the Land Use Coordinator position. We need to make sure that our bylaws and regulations are consistent and explicit in their requirements. Electronic submission of documents including Plans and Specifications and the maintenance of a continually updated information repository web site would allow decision makers and other interested parties to avail themselves of the most current information in a coordinated fashion as decisions are made.

Overall, does the Flexible Development Bylaw seem to be working as Westford intended when the by-law was adopted in 1999? In your opinion, what are some "good" examples of FD projects?

Yes but with limited use. Some examples are:

- ◆ OSRD: Jarvis Way-Griffin Road has open space and trail easements. Lakeside Meadows has a large contiguous area of open space and watershed values.
- ◆ Flexible Development: Elderberry has a mix of town homes and single residences.
- ◆ Commercial: Primrose has mixed use with hotels, restaurants and businesses.
- ◆ Rte 110: Minot to Chelmsford line represents partial build-out of a development plan.
- ◆ Townhouses: Blanchard and Hildreth are examples of a clustering approach with open space and trails.
- ◆ Limited Use: Grey Fox Lane is an example of clustering to provide more open space. Hard to do the configuration with smaller lots.

Is the MCOB bylaw working as Westford originally intended? Should the Town take steps to make historic mill reuse more conducive to mixed use development?

Yes, with limited success. Brookside has been redeveloped in an acceptable manner, but we are having some problems with developing Abbot Mill. There have not been any proposals for Sargent Mill.

The town should do more to encourage mixed use not only of the mills but also of the villages since most Mill sites exist in or are near the villages. Parking space is a challenge at most mill sites; however, parking space “sharing” with residential use at night and commercial use during the day might be possible.

Does Westford have any sites that should be considered for “expedited permitting” i.e., a streamlined permitting process in order to encourage a particular type of development? If so, what types of usage should be considered?

Yes if specific uses and potential developers can be identified. A prime site would be the industrial zoned property near Rte 3 and Rte 40. Westford should actively recruit desirable industries for eligible sites. See economic development suggestions.

What kind of businesses does the Town want on Route 110, and is the Commercial Highway District working to secure the type of business development that Westford wants?

The Town would like more small local businesses as opposed to large chain businesses. The Commercial Highway District is not working to ensure the presence of small local businesses. Instead, we find more and more chain businesses that make Westford look like any other small town in greater Boston and the USA. There is no identifiable Westford character along 110 and the proximity to 495 off-ramps is helping turn this district into just another highway rest stop.

We need to establish zoning and use other tools such as tax breaks and economic districts to encourage small, independent businesses with design standards to encourage a New England (Westford) traditional look.

We need non-franchised restaurants and retail businesses on Rt. 110 to protect the small-town character that Westford has enjoyed for so long. Some examples of current businesses that support & enhance Westford’s small-town character are Paul’s Diner, DiNali Pizzeria, Kimball Farm, Floral Arts/Java Mama (Rt. 110), Toy Shop of Westford, Belle’s Bistro and the Karma restaurant. Most town residents would only be able to name about five non-franchised retail/restaurant businesses on 110.

Do Westford’s gateways provide the best possible image of the Town? Do any gateway areas seem to need some attention more than others?

Some do. Most of the gateways can only be identified by the Westford sign with the types of development and buildings similar to those in adjacent communities; e.g. Rte 225 from Groton and from Carlisle and Rte 110 with Littleton.

The most significant “gateway” to Westford is the I-495 on/off ramp area at Exit 32. This is where most people who are unfamiliar with the town will first encounter our community. A colonial-style sign with some

nice landscaping would make a great first impression as well as support community pride. The generally disheveled nature of the existing Rte 110 development does not reflect well on Westford south of 495.

Those needing attention would be Rte 110 with Chelmsford with the car junk yard, Rte 40 also with Chelmsford and exit 32 from 495.

Should Westford institute a formal design process, or are existing zoning requirements sufficient?

Westford should institute a formal design process because the existing zoning requirements have allowed for the construction of some very plain and overused building styles that lack community character. There are no consistent architectural, layout standards thus leaving the planning board to decide on each project. A formal design process coupled with design guidelines would not only help standardize and expedite the process; but it would also result in a more consistent and appealing appearance of new facilities.

Note: Developers routinely insist that they would happily follow such standards if they existed. The Town has hired a consultant to make recommendations regarding a formal design review process. The results are to be presented to the Planning Board in 8 Months.

Does Westford still need the existing Growth Management Bylaw? If so, why?

Some method for controlling the rate of growth and influencing the types of development needs to be retained. History has shown that when no such controls are in place, development will consume open space and limit the housing stock to market rate, single family detached residential units.

It is critical that Westford extend the current Growth management Bylaw for at least a year to allow the Town to develop a more comprehensive bylaw that, while controlling the rate of growth and limiting the impact on local resources, would provide exceptions for mixed-use and flexible developments. The new bylaw would allow Westford to control the rate of growth and at the same time encourage the development of more affordable housing.

What is the Town's responsibility (if any) for providing affordable housing? If the Legislature rescinded Chapter 40B, would Westford still be interested in zoning for affordable housing?

The Town has both legal and moral responsibilities to provide affordable housing. The legal requirements are contained in Chapter 40B. The moral responsibility is to provide an opportunity for affordable housing for our own citizens, especially those just starting out and our senior citizens.

Affordable housing is also a public policy issue for the Town. Providing affordable housing is critical to the economic health of Massachusetts. The lack of affordable housing is a well documented factor obstructing economic development in the state. This issue has a direct bearing on the economic well being of our citizens.

The CMPC is in agreement that providing adequate affordable housing should be policy for Westford even if Chapter 40B were to be rescinded. Westford should take the initiative to develop affordable housing through zoning bylaws and permitting procedures. Options could include strengthening the Flexible

Development Bylaw and establishing a fund to buy down the cost of property with potential for affordable housing.

Note: This is a political issue. Those who favor low taxes may argue that the market should dictate where people are able to afford to live, with no assistance from the government except where absolutely necessary. Others feel that government should help in provide/fund housing for lower-income citizens, even if those citizens can afford to live elsewhere but are choosing to move to or stay in a more affluent town.

Westford could provide tax incentives to individuals who are willing to construct or otherwise provide affordable-rate housing whether it be new apartments or existing residences as they are sold.

Does Westford have adequate regulations and adequate local capacity to protect the character of the villages? If not, what weaknesses do you see?

No on both counts. Westford should tighten regulations by developing design guidelines that would maintain a consistent and unique design theme for the various areas of the Town, especially the villages. While we have some excellent tools to allow mixed use and flexible development, we have not been consistent in their application and have been unable to create any significant mixed use development in the villages. Lack of mixed use is a town-wide problem. Westford should institute a design review process that would ensure that the unique requirements of all areas, particularly the villages, are addressed during the permitting process.

Westford needs additional "light pollution" bylaws as well as design guidelines for businesses in the town village areas. It is unpleasant to drive by at night and see bright fluorescent lights illuminating large parking lots, such as the strip of stores on Main Street near Providence Road. Rt. 110 and Rt. 40 are more amenable to this style of business.

Are Westford's existing municipal uses located in areas that are appropriate for the functions they serve? If some uses are not in the best locations and/or the Town needs additional facilities that do not exist today, what areas make the most sense as priorities for new (or replacement) municipal uses?

No. Ideally, all the town departments would be housed together so that communication between the departments would be most efficient and residents could conduct their business with the town more efficiently. Because of the recent structural issue with the overstressed structure of Town Hall, the core town departments. (Health, Town Clerk, Tax Assessor) are all located in separate facilities. School administration and the recreation department are also located in separate facilities and should be considered for collocation with Town Administration. One option would be leasing or purchasing a modern office building on Rt. 110. This would reduce traffic on Main Street. and provide town employees with a more modern (structurally sound!) facility, more easily adapted for new technologies as they become available, with improved accessibility, more parking and still relatively central to the whole town. Current historic town buildings that house these depts. could be converted to other town uses such as affordable housing or activity centers for recreation & education programs.

The Highway, Water, and Police Departments are relatively new and in good locations to provide services to the Town. Other smaller departments were collocated with Town Administration in very crowded conditions in Town Hall. These departments and the School Administration should be located in the expanded/refurbished Town Hall along with Town Administration and an office for the Selectmen. Town hall

has worked well in the current location. Westford needs to complete the planned feasibility study for Town Hall replacement.

While the Central Fire Station is in a good location, there are serious questions on the locations of satellite stations and especially the lack of a fire station south of I495. Westford should review the long awaited fire study and determine the best alternatives for the location of stations and personnel to provide adequate fire coverage for the town.

The CMPC understands that the Town is in the process of determining the future location of the Town Hall and that the Town is considering which departments need to be located in the new Town Hall and where that should be. The CMPC recommends that the Town not act in haste and consider the long term and all options before committing to any permanent solution. The Town has missed opportunities in the past to relieve the overcrowding in Town Hall by upgrading and expanding the existing Town Hall before or in conjunction with other new facilities. We do not want to continue the piece meal approach to the development of Town facilities. The CMPC recommends that as a minimum the Town consider the following in their study:

- ◆ Which departments absolutely need to be located in Town Hall. This will require a detailed examination of how the various departments work and communicate on a daily basis internally and with the citizenry.
- ◆ What existing Town owned facilities not currently being used for Town business and in the proximity of Town Center could be remodeled and used for Town Hall or an annex to an upgraded Town Hall in Town Center.
- ◆ What non-core departments could take advantage of excess space in the Highway, Water and Police facilities without degrading the efficiency of Town Administration. Consider planned or potential re-organizations.
- ◆ Lease (temporary, long term) vs. construction (new or remodel and expand)
- ◆ Costs of the options listed above.

If you had to identify Westford's top five "at risk" properties, what would they be? What risks do you see?

(i) The top five "at risk" properties (not in priority order) are:

- ◆ MIT/ Wing Road Property
- ◆ Tzikopoulos Property (40/ Tyngsboro Rd).
- ◆ Emmet Property on Concord Road
- ◆ Stepinski

- ◆ Graniteville Woods/ Sportsman Club
- ◆ Golf Courses (Butter Brook, Nabnasset Lake)
- ◆ Kimball Farm
- ◆ Laughtons
- ◆ Nashoba Ski Area
- ◆ East Boston Camps

(ii) All of the above are at risk for development into 40B housing which could have an adverse effect on schools, services and taxes. Some of the listed properties are currently protected under Chapter 61a but could quickly become eligible for development when and if the protection under Chapter 61a expires. East Boston Camps is included because of the potential for excessive and improper use by campers, hikers and off-road vehicles.

Westford should develop a long range strategy for addressing these risks. Such a strategy would include an up-to-date status of each property, current value of each (developed/undeveloped) and a proposed action plan for protecting the property or guiding appropriate development should the status change. The Town should be in continual dialogue with land owners to stay abreast with events and ensure that the Town has some influence on the future of the properties.

What steps should the Town take, if any, to promote more types of housing choices? Or do you think that on balance, Westford offers an adequate range of housing types?

While Westford does offer a wide range of housing types there is room for improvement. Westford should encourage the building of townhouses, garden apartments and small multi-family housing and at the same time retain some control over the rate of growth of single family residences.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Should Westford's affordable housing effort be guided primarily by a desire to reach the 10% minimum under Chapter 40B, or by a desire to address the town's affordable housing needs?

There can be no denial that the general sentiment of the public at large is very much against Chapter 40B developments. Time and time again at the general public meetings, the neighborhood meetings and the public survey it was made very clear that the public wants its town government to take whatever measures necessary to reach one of the goals of Chapter 40B that allows Westford to have control over such developments. The 10% goal is the main target, but many Westfordians have noted that the Town has made much headway towards the 1.5% land area goal of 40B and this should also be pursued actively. Some believe that a few large (100+ units) 40B rental projects should be pursued to reach the 10% goal and other affordable housing needs ignored.

Not only the public at large (which often has misunderstandings of Chapter 40B laws) but also several members of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and even the Affordable Housing Committee seek to reach one of the goals of 40B. Many reasons for wanting to reach this goal are obvious but more subtle reasons include the realization that if Westford has final say on 40B developments, whether through temporary moratoriums or reaching one of the 40B goals, then developers can be leveraged into creating higher percentages of affordables in their projects. Meeting one of the 40B requirements will create the ultimate leverage for the town to create even more affordable housing, which is especially important when pursuing a “moving target” goal as 10% of total units.

At the same time, there were many public officials and staff that feel that affordable housing needs should be the primary focus rather than simply getting control of 40Bs and that in conjunction with this goal, the goals of 40B will also be eventually reached with smart planning and town efforts at creating affordable housing on town land. Proponents of affordable housing as the primary goal feel that there are incredible needs for affordable housing (as described in the Affordable Housing Action Plan) in Westford, particularly with the young (18-28yrs) and older (55+/retired) citizens of the Town.

The Housing Subcommittee feels that there should be a strong push by town government to reach one of the goals of Chapter 40B because of the protective value to the town and because of the increased leverage the town will have over developers to create better and more affordable units per development.

At the same time, the extensive affordable housing needs outlined in the Affordable Housing Action Plan can not be ignored. The action plan and this housing paper make very clear that the youth and seniors of Westford are being pushed out due to lack of affordable housing. This is a sad state of affairs, especially when one considers the expensive and huge efforts the Town goes through to educate its children, drawing new families to town in part due to the schools’ excellent performance and reputation.

So the short answer is that Housing Subcommittee recommends that Chapter 40B goals be the primary focus but that all affordable housing needs also be addressed effectively. The two goals are not exclusive of each other and any instances of conflict will be rare.

If the primary goal is to reach the 10% minimum, how can the town accomplish this in light of the significant opposition to large multi-family developments expressed by the master plan survey respondents?

Reaching one of the 40B goals will indeed meet with opposition. But the public has become painfully more aware of 40B developments and their effects on traffic, school populations and property taxes with the current deluge of such projects. Resistance to town-sponsored affordable housing has thus weakened somewhat with the reality of developers controlling Westford’s housing rather than the town with its zoning. This has produced new allies and new political alignments that can be tapped to promote reaching affordable housing goals. Indeed, at a recent town meeting, an article was overwhelming passed that requests that all town departments pursue affordable housing to their best efforts to meet one of the Chapter 40B goals.

The public at large is more likely to be accepting so long as there appears to be some effort by the town to address the 40B issue in a meaningful way and towards reaching one of the 40B goals. The Affordable Housing Comm. is actively pursuing creating affordable units on town owned land for three parcels. This

effort should continue and abutter concerns will be addressed along with the new more concrete political support.

Additionally, more public education may reduce some resistance.

Local initiative projects, partnering with willing developers and nonprofits (like Habitat for Humanity) and bylaw changes that allow more affordable housing to be created under Westford's regular zoning are all ways to create more affordable housing that are currently being and should be pursued.

What could be done to make 40B developments more responsive to the housing needs outlined in Westford's housing plan?

It is difficult to get 40B developers to be more responsive to the affordable housing needs of Westford as outlined in the Affordable Housing Action Plan. Without reaching one of the goals of 40B, the town has no leverage and most developers will just go for whatever gives them the most profit regardless of what Westford needs or wants. This is why it is imperative to reach one of the 40B goals.

However, Westford can encourage developers to meet with the town early into the process to discuss project scope prior to finalizing plans. In those meetings the town can then put forward its needs with perhaps some success. Such meetings should be transparent and consistent with the public interest and with open disclosure.

Finally, if Westford can get enough yearly increases in affordable housing to get consistent yearly moratoriums from 40B, this would provide the needed leverage.

Has Westford ever invited local developers to critique the zoning bylaw's affordable housing regs. And suggest ways to make them more effective, transparent or fair? Have developers ever complained about the affordable housing regs, and if so, do you think their complaints have validity? Could the regulations be improved, or are they working as the town intended them to work?

It should be noted that several developers were given copies of the housing report and asked to comment on the housing tech paper but did not participate.

Usually, the Planning Brd. circulates proposed zoning bylaw changes to the developer community. Town staff has commented that some developers have complained that the town comprehensive permit regulations (e.g. - 40B standards, peer reviews etc) go above and beyond the plan submission requirements called for in the MGL 40B. The town should maintain these regulations for they have allowed the ZBA to review as much information as is required to make an informed decision on fairly large developments. Town staff has commented that some developers have praised the town's peer review process and the comprehensive permit design guidelines for adding value to their projects and giving advance warning to the developer as to the town's expectations.

What steps should the Town take (if any) to address Affordable Housing Action Plan recommendations that have not been initiated, such as allowing duplexes in residential districts or multi-family housing (or mixed use developments) in the commercial highway district?

These are highly charged political issues and it is uncertain if such measures can be attempted in the near future or even should be. However, if the political will ever exists, the planning board should prioritize the zoning changes required to bring these issues into being. The town was, for instance, pursuing the JPI site Chapter 40B development on Rt. 110 as a 40R Smart Growth District and there seemed strong public support. DHCD, however, has rejected this 40R application. This might have been of help with the “mixed use” concept mentioned in the action plan. From the town-wide survey and talks with citizens at various public meetings, it should be noted that there seems more support for mixed use in commercial districts than for duplexes in residential areas.

Again, public education may help to achieve a better understanding of the issues involved and encourage the public to come to an informed political decision.

For future lotteries of homeownership or rental units, should Westford consider reducing the percentage of “local preference” units and focusing more on outreach to minority households? What steps could the town take to promote fair housing?

The general consensus (including the Director of the Westford Housing Authority) is that Westford should not reduce local preference since the very structure of the lotteries is adequate enough to promote fair housing and consideration for minorities. Additionally, providing for more local preference encourages more local support for affordable units in Westford.

Should Westford consider a different type of (or an additional) demolition delay bylaw that focuses on the preservation of older housing that does not qualify as historically significant?

Yes. Additionally, several members of the Historic Commission expressed that the duration of demolition delay of the bylaw should be expanded to one full year and to cover more types of structures and unique buildings. The Housing Subcomm. agrees, especially with the goal of preserving the character of the older villages in town like Forge Village, Nabnasset and Graniteville.

Should the growth management bylaw exempt market-rate units in a development that provides more than the minimum required percentage of affordable units?

There was much confusion about this question. Assuming this question relates to allow developers exemptions (more units) under the GMB for more affordable units in flexible development bylaw projects, the answer is yes, there should be some credit given to developers who are willing to produce more affordable units than required by Westford’s zoning since this will better help address Westford’s housing needs. Perhaps this concept also could be applied to normal subdivisions that some affordable units.

Does Westford still need the present growth management bylaw?

There is much dispute about the GMB. Many people think it is a good tool to get a handle on Westford’s rapidly expanding housing growth. Some feel that the GMB has not been of any good effect and has been detrimental because it has induced developers to pursue 40Bs instead of normal zoning. Some dispute that the GMB promotes 40Bs by noting that almost all the recent 40Bs built or applied for are for parcels that would be difficult if not impossible to build on but for 40B. Others feel that the GMB is the only way to make the 10% 40B goal since it slows regular housing and thus allows the percentage of affordable units to climb without dilution by more market rate units.

Interestingly enough, some affordable housing advocates are in favor of the GMB because they agree that the GMB promotes 40Bs (and since almost all affordable housing in Westford has come from 40Bs) thus creating more affordable housing than would occur if the GMB was not in effect.

The GMB cannot last indefinitely. Thus, Westford needs to review all the growth management tools available including all zoning bylaws. The review should not only limit the number of building permits issued in a year, coupled with a development schedule as Section 6.3 does. Westford should also bring in the subdivision regulations, wetland regulations, and even consider moratorium (including MGL 40B related moratorium) in some sections of the town (such as Route 40) into the realm of growth control.

The Housing Subcomm. recommends that the GMB be continued for as long as legally possible exactly because it provides more controlled growth or at least potentially creates more affordable housing.

If the town could establish a legally defensible way of imposing development impact fees, would impact fee revenue do more to address Westford's long-term growth management needs than an annual cap on building permits?

No. While impact fees might temporarily mitigate the effects of new development, they are a one time payment that will not cover the perpetual costs incurred by overly rapid growth such as costs to the school system. Despite this, it is worth noting that, where possible, impact fees should be sought from developers.

Have Westford's CPA allocations for affordable housing been adequate and fair, given other competing needs that the CPA has to meet by law and local policy?

While there has been an attempt to be fair by the CPA Committee, the CPA expenditures for affordable housing have definitely not been adequate. Open space is by far the largest expenditure of CPA funds. Affordable housing actually comes in third in total CPA expenditures behind recreation projects involving playing fields. A recent example is that this year, the Affordable Housing Comm. asked for \$1 million to fund the affordable housing trust fund but was given only \$200,000. Instead, more than \$1 million went to artificial turf for playing fields.

Should the town consider other ways to encourage affordable housing, such as special legislation to reduce or "forgive" property taxes for multi-family building owners who agree to rent exclusively to lower-income tenants? Or for single family homeowners who agree to rent an accessory apartment to a low or moderate income tenant, even if DHCD will not count the unit on Westford's subsidized housing inventory?

Yes, this needs to be looked into to see if it is truly feasible and enforceable.

Should the Town consider allowing developers to pay a fee in lieu of affordable units – perhaps not for all of the units required under zoning, but for some percentage of the units?

The resounding answer from all respondents is no. It far more difficult and expensive for the town to pursue affordable housing than to have developers build their required amount of affordable units.

Should the town consider allowing developers to provide some of the required affordable units in off-site locations, e.g., acquiring an older house, renovating it and placing a deed restriction on it, as an alternative to placing all of the affordable units in the development?

Yes, so long as developers contribute to the long term direct and indirect management, inspection and administrative costs of the off-site unit. This is especially good for historic houses that face demolition. The Historic Commission feels that even with the demolition delay bylaw, there is little they can do to prevent “tear downs” of historic properties. They agree with affordable housing advocates that this could be a good joint partnership tactic.

A very large amount of the town is in a single residential district (RA), but Westford’s landscape is not homogeneous. Should the town consider a more “nuanced” approach to residential zoning, such as designating some areas for larger lot sizes and also increasing the amount of land zoned for smaller lot sizes?

While this makes some practical sense, it is a general consensus that this is a politically impossible measure in Westford—some residents interpreted re-zoning as segregating the larger, more expensive homes & lots from the smaller, less expensive homes, an “inequality”.

What does Westford need to do to improve the walkability of its neighborhoods? Many residents seem frustrated by the absence of sidewalks or the lack of continuous sidewalks, but others say it will be very expensive for the town to carry out a sustained program of sidewalk improvements. This seems like a very important issue for the town to address. Do you see realistic opportunities for sidewalks in established neighborhoods?

At public forums and the town-wide survey, there was very strong support for sidewalks but also a desire to retain stone walls and trees. There was also concern about the economic feasibility of sidewalks.

The only realistic manner to create sidewalks/walkability that is economically feasible and does not destroy the scenic nature of many neighborhoods is to focus on requiring new developments to provide for sidewalks and trails. The costs of and resistance to eminent domain make sidewalks unfeasible in established neighborhoods. Trails might be a better option in that case.

During the precinct meeting for this plan, some residents mentioned that Westford does not have adequate systems in place for tree maintenance, tree protection and tree replacement. Aside from the obvious environmental benefits, vegetation is a crucial component of neighborhood design and livability. What should the town do (if anything) to address this concern?

Possible options are to fund a tree warden position with expanded duties than the current warden. This warden could be paid by mitigation from developers. Also initiate a tree preservation and maintenance revolving account into which developers can deposit funds, especially when they seek waivers from the PB not to plant trees in the subdivision approval.

The scenic road bylaw should be strictly enforced to preserve trees in the town’s right of ways. In particular, there should be more enforcement “teeth” added to the bylaw such as fines for violations.

Additionally bylaws that require replacement of trees lost to development (whether on-site or off-site of the development) or a fee per tree taken down could be passed. Many communities in other states have such bylaws.

Finally, all bylaws should be made consistent in requiring that only certain amount of trees may be removed and how many must be replaced. Currently there are different standards for such things in various bylaws.

Economic Development

Should the goal established in the 1995 Westford Master Plan to shift the tax burden from homeowners to the business community through increased commercial and industrial investments in the community be supported?

Educating residents on what is meant by shifting the tax burden within the context of the Comprehensive Master Plan needs to be a priority. The 1995 Master Plan intended to encourage commercial/industrial (C/I) growth as a balance to steep residential growth. On the other hand, residents have in many cases, interpreted a shift in tax burden as an actual increase in property taxes on C/I development to alleviate tax burdens on residential properties as allowed by law. A single tax rate is important for most businesses. Increasing the tax rate for businesses may have the undesired effect of driving businesses out of town, which is the opposite of what was intended in the 1995 Master Plan. Improved language describing a balance between tax revenue generated from C/I property versus residential property needs to be crafted.

The goal set in the 1995 Master Plan is based on early 1990's realities, such as the dot-com boom and do not apply today. Therefore, this goal needs to be updated. Since 1995, there has been a significant increase in the housing supply, which reduced the tax burden ratio away from the 1995 Master Plan target. The use of a numeric or percentage goal for C/I development should be discouraged because there are multiple ways to achieve the goal. For example, a tax revenue goal of 20% from C/I property and 80% residential property could lead to commercial overdevelopment due to the cyclical nature of C/I valuation. The tax burden of the commercial community can only be increased if the "density" of the businesses grows or new businesses are attracted to town, which is in contrast to community's desire to reduce development and its impact on traffic and the environment. Emphasis should be placed on attracting and retaining quality C/I development, which may be more likely to withstand economic downturns or increase in value over time at a rate similar to residential rates.

Given local zoning, if build out were to occur, could a 20 to 25% ratio of C/I to residential tax revenue be achieved? A mathematical model could be built to answer this question. What type of C/I development maintains its value? A partnership should be established between the Assessor and the Planning Department to ensure goals are achievable.

Recognizing that the economic cycle is largely out of the control of local government, emphasis needs to be placed on regional economic development. Partnerships with surrounding towns should be promoted and nurtured to eliminate some competition for economic development. Active partnerships could coordinate planning and zoning to promote community character and create a seamless New England landscape.

How can the Implementation Committee ensure that the idea of a public/private partnership for the community is realized?

A lot has been said in our surveys and business meetings about the Town's lack of communication with the business community.

The Implementation Committee could be directed to engage the business community to be the driving force in developing the partnership. Agreement on the "right" balance of C/I to residential development may never reach consensus among residents. However, the business community has much to gain from the partnership. Businesses will, in general, be willing to help the Town and vice-versa and, businesses want to be good neighbors. Residential development adds to the tax burden, mostly in demand on the schools and other services, and many residents see C/I development as a nuisance from traffic and visual impacts.

The Implementation Committee could address the following:

- a. Create a liaison for the business community in Town hall to guide businesses through the various town-related processes such as permitting. This could be done at low cost by making the liaison a volunteer agency/committee made up of retired business executives with the assistance of a designated staff member.
- b. Define a permitting process that is clear, easy to follow and binding for both the Town departments/committees and the developers/businesses.
- c. Develop an outreach program to encourage new, desirable businesses to move to Westford.
- d. Conduct an on-going dialog with existing businesses to ensure long-term satisfaction and business stability. Communications such as e-mails, letters, joint meetings and telephone calls could be set up. In other words, create a climate whereby the businesses feel wanted and appreciated.

What resources are the community willing to expend in order to improve communications among the Town, business community and residents regarding the balance between economic growth and quality of life?

Given the Town's current fiscal situation, it is unlikely the community will approve an expansion in its governmental structure to provide an additional function for interacting with the business community. However, the Town should designate a person to act as the focal point for all businesses in town, providing them with guidance and following them through the process of permitting and licensing. The Town, with assistance of its various committees, should prepare a booklet that defines the process for permitting, the appropriate bylaws and points of contact for inquiries. Furthermore, the Town could promote and support business forums as a means of communication with the business community.

What types of industries are acceptable to the Town and where should these industries be encouraged to locate?

Since Westford has grown into a bedroom community, industries such as light-to-moderate commercial/retail, business services, light industrial, telecommunications and high technology which are compatible with the existing infrastructure and the residential nature of the town would be the most acceptable. Industries that have a minimal impact on infrastructure and are environmentally sensitive and "green" should be encouraged. High-tech industries that provide additional community services such as medical care facilities and a supermarket (on Route 40) along the Routes 110 and 40 business corridors would be very beneficial.

Should Westford participate in the state's Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) and other federal and state grant programs in order to encourage private investment?

[See Appendix A below for more information from NMCOG on EDIP.]

The Town, through its various departments and committees (Town administration, BoS, Planning Board, etc.), should investigate the available regional and state organizations and programs to look for funding and/or business incentives to keep Westford thriving economically in the region.

The principal benefit of participating in the EDIP program is that it places the community on equal economic footing with other communities. Surrounding communities, such as Chelmsford, Lowell, Billerica, Littleton, Dracut, Ayer, Groton, Shirley and Boxborough, have established Economic Target Areas (ETAs) and have been fairly active in the program. Companies like Shire in Lexington and iRobot in Bedford have used the program as a means to establish partnerships with the local communities and to help finance extensive job creation and private investment in these communities. The Town of Westford could utilize this program as a means to reutilize abandoned properties and to encourage private investment by the types of industry it wishes to attract. With the decision by IBM to invest in Littleton and Westford, there will be related firms looking to relocate in order to be closer to IBM. Outreach to these firms would be more successful if the EDIP benefits were in place. Earlier this year, Motorola reviewed different site opportunities in Lowell, Westford and several other communities. The company's decision to relocate in Lowell at Cross Point Towers was done in part due to the economic incentives available under the EDIP program. The Town of Billerica has utilized this program very effectively to attract firms from the Greater Boston area, such as Nuvera Fuel Cells, as well as to encourage the expansion of Billerica firms such as Cabot Corporation.

What niche should the Town target for itself within the Greater Lowell economy?

The Town has available and permitted commercial space to attract new businesses. While economic diversity is important to provide stability, Westford should focus on being a center for high-technology companies. "Green" companies (including their products and/or services), alternative energy businesses and biotechnology companies would be good choices as well. Partnering with local higher education institutions, such as the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and Middlesex Community College, the Town could encourage the development of regional incubators for emerging technologies.

Another area, one that is often overlooked, is family entertainment. The Town has private amenities such as Kimball Farms, Nashoba Valley Ski Area and Bobby's Ranch. The Town also operates an apple orchard. On any large municipally-owned property, environmental camps, a retreat facility or a ski touring center could be contracted out. There is potential in the area for a cultural center for the performing arts and a contemporary art center. With the proximity to major highways and a large visitor base, the Town should do more to create a market for entertainment.

Should it focus on biotechnology and high tech or "green" industries?

The focus should be more on "how" and less on "what type" – by nature, Westford is not going to bring large manufacturing into town. Therefore, the Town needs to focus on how to build the infrastructure needed for small-to-medium startups and businesses. For example, provide the facilities for collaboration, communication and, if possible, state support. (The major issue with state support is that it would compete with the state's efforts in Devens.)

Whatever industry or industries the Town chooses to focus on, the support services and infrastructure should be addressed first or in partnership with attracting that type of industry. It is important that the Town encourage a diversified range of C/I initiatives that are compatible with the existing infrastructure and residential nature of the town.

How does the Town work with the established business community to market itself as an ideal location for these industries?

There is no established mechanism between the Town and the business community to market itself to industry. However, one way to achieve this is to create a support system that would include a marketing package that shows all of the benefits of the town along with a Town business contact or liaison. The Town also could provide incentives to attract the desired types of businesses.

What should the Town do about the land-locked parcels of industrial land adjacent to Route 3 in the northeast section of town to make these parcels developable?

The first step is preparing a "Development Master Plan" for specific projects including the Rt. 40/ Rt. 3 area. A committee should start the process by evaluating the available resources and reviewing the zoning and bylaws. Once the Town knows how access can be obtained, businesses can be targeted that fit the desired profile of development or a future municipal use.

How can the Town encourage commercial investment in the mixed-use Mill Conversion Overlay Districts?

There is only one mill, Sargent's Mill in Graniteville, that is left to redevelop. However, its primary use is already designated as commercial/retail and therefore it currently could be used to bring small-to-midsize businesses into town. The town should let the local economy define the outcome.

How can commercial investment along Route 40 be encouraged that supports the character of the neighborhood?

Similar to the answer in question number 7, a Rt. 40/ Rt. 3 Development Master Plan Committee could be appointed. The committee could recommend friendly and practical guidelines consistent with the answer to question 2 for future development as well as target specific businesses and industries to attract.

Should the granite quarries be re-used for economic development purposes and what types of businesses should be located in these areas?

At the present time, there is still considerable interest in continuing quarrying operations. Reuse is not being considered, as the private demand for granite remains high. It may be more appropriate to reestablish a reputation for granite production than to consider reuse options. However, if a quarry is not resuming operation, its development should be reassessed on an individual basis and should take into consideration the current use of the surrounding areas. The potential for water contamination needs to be studied.

How can the Town improve the permitting process so that developers and private investors are reassured that decisions will be made in a timely manner?

There is a strong perception among the business community that the lengthy permitting process has been used as a tool to “stop development”. However, development will continue as long as there is space and economic incentive. The Town can streamline the permitting process by:

- a. Developing clear guidelines for the permitting process.
- b. Providing periodic training for review boards.
- c. Identifying and summarizing the relevant bylaws.
- d. Relying more on input from professional people (both staff and consultants) for recommendations on technical issues so that the Town boards and committees can focus on process and policies.
- e. Reviewing and updating the development regulations and permitting requirements to remove overly restrictive requirements.
- f. Requiring all committees to adopt a “streamlined process.”
- g. Providing “Joint Permitting Sessions” with all involved committees present for large, complex developments where there are overlaying issues that require their mutual approvals.
- h. Providing more specific design criteria for our C/I performance standards.

How does the Town compete for private investment and how does it work with its neighboring communities to ensure that the private investment is targeted for this region?

To the best of our knowledge, no such cooperative venture exists. The Town does not try to lure private investment in any way.

How can the Town build upon the recent decision by IBM to consolidate its Route 495 facilities in Westford and Littleton?

The Town should immediately reach out to all businesses, not just the largest or newest. Point-to-point contacts should be established to facilitate dialogue and communications between the Town and the business community. A guidance manual, either printed or in an electronic format, on how to conduct business within Town, whether it is a sign permit, tax abatement, environmental compliance reporting procedure or bidding on a local government service contract, should be provided.

What spin-off businesses can be encouraged to lease or rent available office space near the IBM facilities?

The Town could adopt an outreach program to attract businesses such as convenience stores, restaurants, fitness centers, drug stores, eyeglass shops, financial and tax planners, and other small support businesses. Make the outreach program a “One Stop Shop” for new businesses to be permitted to move into Westford. Work with the property management and the real-estate agents in a promotion of the availability and the willingness of the Town in helping during the process. For example, if the Town participates in an EDIP program, it could offer incentives for newcomers if they generate new opportunities and if they are willing to follow a “low-impact” plan (transportation, flex-hours, etc.).

What can the Town do to work more closely with the University of Massachusetts in Lowell and Middlesex Community College to ensure that the educational resources available can support economic growth, both in terms of business expansion and labor force skills development?

The academic resources are more of a regional issue than a local one. They are aimed at providing the educational requirements for a growing region both in preparing the work force as well as training services in education, health and housing.

Westford as a town can communicate the future needs for both services and business growth so these resources are developed as demand grows.

If the Town is interested in economic growth based on the graduates of these institutions, it will require an outreach program to provide the environment for “incubators” for fostering start-ups to grow and become a member of the Westford business community. Furthermore, the Town could establish intern positions that could be filled by the students and graduates.

What accomplishments will the Town be able to cite ten years from now that have encouraged economic growth while preserving the quality of life in the community?

In ten years from now, our goal is to realize the following accomplishments:

- a. Infrastructure that is adequate to handle the town’s growth.
- b. Reduction of the anti-business sentiment the Town has towards commercial and industrial development.
- c. A representative (person or group) for cultivating the commercial interests in Town exists as a liaison between the Town and commercial entities. This representative would be an ombudsman for businesses.
- d. A communication system for providing current and in-advance information for the Town, businesses and residents. There is a mechanism for notifying all residents of commercial and development activities, both those under progress and those coming up.
- e. There is a new, streamlined permitting process based on new and updated bylaws that, by design, provides for a consistent, fair and business-friendly permitting process which takes into account the other important aspects of development (preserving water quality, open space, the environment, maintaining town character, etc.).

- f. New commercial developments along Routes 110 and 40 are following a new set of guidelines for neighborhood character and have followed the new streamlined permitting process.
- g. A “Smart Business Growth” plan that will encourage new, “green” businesses to move into town will be considered a success. The town will benefit if we take the initiative and reach out to the desired types of businesses.
- h. A business-favorable tax structure, similar to the current structure, exists and residents understand why it is a good structure for the town.

Community Services and Facilities

In the interests of efficient service delivery, is there merit in exploring the following concepts:

- a) **A consolidated Department of Public Works, combining functions such as highway, water, engineering, buildings and grounds maintenance, fleet maintenance, cemeteries, solid waste and recycling under a single DPW director?**

Yes. While several departments currently share resources and personnel, there appear to be additional opportunities to gain from economies of scale and standardization in purchasing as well as in operations. Westford should review the operations of all departments that support the development and maintenance of infrastructure to evaluate potential savings in time and costs by combining functions under a Department of Public Works (DPW). Such a consolidation could be accomplished gradually and in increments to minimize disruption of town services. While the inclusion of the Water Department may be problematic since it is an Enterprise Funded operation under the supervision of the Water Commission, it should be included in any study aimed at the establishment of a DPW. The current Highway Department facility has enough room to house the administrative elements of a DPW.

- b) **Consolidating the Planning, Conservation and ZBA staff, along with support for the Historical Commission’s demolition delay bylaw, under a single Director of Planning and Development?**

Not at this time. In the current organization of the town government, the Assistant Town Manager performs this function; the position’s actual title is “Assistant Town Manager/Land Use Director.” Any decision to consider the consolidation of these functions and add another management layer should be delayed until the DPW has been established and some experience has been gained.

While the organizational consolidation of these functions is not recommended, it is important that the functions be collocated geographically so that town staff may work together efficiently and effectively and provide “one-stop shopping” for customers.

- c) **Reorganizing the town’s inspectional service functions by placing the Building Department and Environmental Services Department under an Inspectional Services Director?**

Westford should look at placing the Building and Environmental Services departments in the DPW if it decides to create such a department. Inspectional Services and permitting would remain with the Building Commissioner.

d) Combining the Police, Fire and Animal Control Departments under a single Public Safety Director?

No. The Police and Fire Departments perform different and distinct functions that need direct access to Town Management. Westford is not, and probably won't be for the foreseeable future, large enough in population to need a Public Safety Director. Under current conditions, such a consolidation would just add another layer of management with no obvious increases in expertise or efficiency or any savings.

However, there may be opportunities for regionalizing and perhaps even co-locating certain functions, such as Fire dispatch or Police dispatch, and these should be investigated.

Each town facility appears to have its own custodial staff or custodial service, overseen by the department with primary responsibility for the building. (i) Even if the town did not want to consider a consolidated public works department, should consideration be given to a building maintenance department or division with responsibility for maintenance of municipal buildings? (ii) What about municipal and school buildings?

Yes, consideration should be given to a building maintenance department or division with the responsibility for the maintenance of general municipal buildings. The school department, with oversight of 9 buildings, has a Facilities Maintenance Department consisting of a licensed plumber, electrician and carpenter and two general maintenance workers. There is no general maintenance department for municipal facilities, with nearly 20 primary facilities, where building maintenance happens almost by default. However, there exists an informal arrangement between the schools and municipal facilities where basic plumbing, electrical and carpentry services are shared whenever possible.

The advantages of a building maintenance department include preventative maintenance, long-range capital and infrastructure planning and oversight, bulk purchasing, uniform procurement and service contracts and potential reductions in personnel requirements. The barriers to overcome would include clarifying job descriptions, consideration of existing union contracts, response time, building security (including those falling under the umbrella of the Homeland Security Act), task study and management (including inter-building travel costs), departmental budget control and oversight and general administration.

Note: The same advantages and disadvantages apply to shared custodial services.

What is the difference between a "service" and an "amenity"? What do you consider essential local government services vs. services that enhance Westford's quality of life but are not essential for the health, safety and welfare of the town? (iii) How do you think most Westford residents would answer this question?

Each community must define for itself what the difference is between services and amenities. In general, a "service" is an activity that is considered to be essential to the operation of the community. Some services are mandated by law; other services are not mandated but are considered essential or expected by the community, and therefore difficult to discontinue. An "amenity" is an activity that adds value to the communi-

ty and individual property, but one without which the community at large can continue to function. Some amenities are: sewers, health clinics, school co-curricular activities (e.g., sports, arts, clubs), non-mandated senior-citizen services, and recreation. The town should generate a comprehensive list of services (both mandated and non-mandated) and amenities for future planning purposes.

Essential local government services include core school curricula (which is mandated) and public safety (although fire and police departments are non-mandated), those associated with the permitting process and inspections, road maintenance (although not mandated), tax collection, and document archiving. The Town Manager and Town Clerk positions are essential as they are mandated by the Town Charter, along with other positions. Some non-essential services that enhance the quality of life are the library, town-wide trash service, and the town web site. The comprehensive list of town services and amenities will help with determining what is essential and what isn't.

The community would agree with the essential services (except, perhaps, tax collection) but would be split on non-essentials, based on their individual interests. For example, the majority of families with children would probably consider bus transportation, student sports and arts activities to be essential. Others consider the library to be essential. The majority of residents would call trash collection and street maintenance essential.

This master plan is an opportunity to educate the community on what are the mandated services, essential but non-mandated services, and amenities.

What would be the advantages and disadvantages of placing all of the town's fleet maintenance under the Highway Department?

Placing the fleet maintenance under the Highway Department would allow for a more efficient use of personnel and material maintenance resources. Over the long term, centralized maintenance would lead to the procurement of similar vehicles, commonality of maintenance parts and procedures, and consequent savings of money and time. The critical elements of the decision would be which vehicles and the level of maintenance the Highway Department could or should perform. Unique vehicles could be supported, but only for routine or recurring maintenance services. Fire and police vehicles would need some exceptions because of the special requirements for maintenance, use and availability. Having fleet maintenance under the Highway Department would also allow for the development of coordinated preventive maintenance and replacement programs that would provide management increased visibility into the condition of the fleet.

The disadvantages would be the perceived loss of control by the departments affected and the potentially adverse effect if the priorities of service do not reflect the urgency of repair/maintenance or need of the department affected.

The Town is already in the process of implementing a combined maintenance program.

Should the town consider extending the consolidations and centralization of the 1992 charter by converting the planning board and board of health from elected to appointed boards?

No, the Planning Board and the Board of Health should remain as elected boards, but their budget and staff should be brought under the management of the Town. Currently, the staff for the Planning Board does report to the Assistant Town Manager; however, the staff in the Health Department does not. We recommend the staffing decisions (such as budget, salary, structure, personnel reviews, etc.) for the Health Department be made by Town management. If this change requires the Town Charter or bylaws to be changed, then these changes should be considered and evaluated.

The currently accepted Westford Town Charter is somewhat of a hybrid, compared to other towns, and does not fully embrace the concept of Town Management, granting oversight authority for all personnel and budgets. The adoption of the Home Rule Charter Act by Town Meeting in 1989 consolidated and centralized services under a Town Manager/Board of Selectmen form of government, with independently elected Boards of Health and Planning. The 1992 amendments to the Town Charter reestablished Town Meeting's authority over nonunion personnel policies for Wage & Classification.

Should the town consider charging user fees for curbside trash pickup service and convert this operation to an enterprise fund?

No, not until all other avenues for efficient service delivery, enterprise fund potential, elimination of redundancies, non-essential service elimination and increased revenue from existing fees or ballot questions, have been exhausted. Any effort to shift the burden to the individual homeowner would be perceived to be, and would probably be in effect, an increase in the tax burden. The additional administration effort would reduce any potential savings, and could be more costly overall because of the administrative costs.

While the current system of embedding fees within general taxes discriminates against those who generate less trash, it is at least tax deductible. Plus, the current program has the flexibility to accommodate spikes in volume for individual households. Given current sentiment against user fees, it would be difficult to gain public support for this idea. Any program to charge individual households for trash pickup would be difficult to design since households would demand equitable rates based on volume. Trash dumping along roads and on un-monitored land could also increase, along with residents trying to use commercial dumpsters. The effect of going to a fee-based system on recycling efforts would also need to be evaluated.

Should Westford follow through on the 1994 recommendation to sell the Town Farm? (Town-Wide Facilities Study) If not, what should the town do to arrest the deterioration of this public building?

No, the Town should not sell the Town Farm Building as it is one of only a few "poor farm" facilities remaining in the country and is of significant historical value. The Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department has begun occupying the building and improving its condition somewhat. The building is handicapped accessible and this helps handicapped people get to the cemetery services. (The previous location for the Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department was not handicapped accessible.) Historically, there may be a pauper's field in the back that might need to be preserved.

Restoration will be required at some point, possibly with CPA funds. If needed for funding purposes, other town property could be sold to support any renovation. With a complete structural, electrical, plumbing and interior renovation, the building could be used for many years as a town facility. However, a cost-benefit analysis should be done to make sure any repairs and maintenance are worth the efforts, both functionally and historically. If department office space is no longer needed there, it could be used for meeting

rooms or affordable housing. Another idea is to give the Historic Commission care and custody of the building, and let them occupy the space jointly with the Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department.

Do the Parks and Recreation Department and the Roudenbush Community Center provide duplicate services, or are their clients/customers sufficiently different to warrant retaining both organizations? How are they similar and how are they different?

Although Roudenbush and the Recreation Department provide some overlapping services, most services are not duplicated. Both organizations obviously provide desired services, judging by the numbers of residents and non-residents that use their services. However, providing the services is one question, needing two organizations to do so is another one. The two organizations are not sufficiently different. (See Issue #6 in the associated "Additional Issues and Recommendations" document.) Roudenbush is revenue-neutral to the town except for the benefits paid for the Executive Director, who reports to a 15-person Board of Directors appointed by the Town Manager. The Executive Director is paid by the Town as a Department Head with the salary reimbursed by Roudenbush. Meanwhile, while Roudenbush receives some town support such as snow removal, field maintenance, and some utilities, Roudenbush pays for the maintenance and upkeep of the three facilities that they occupy: Frost, Nabnasset and the Roudenbush Community Center.

While the services differ in kind and the clients/customers also differ to a degree, both organizations provide a wide range of recreational and child development services. The recreation department concentrates on outdoor youth sports (e.g. baseball, soccer, football) and activities but also provides some after school activities at various schools. Roudenbush provides day care, before and after school activities at Abbot and Millennium Schools, adult education classes and indoor sports that can be accommodated in the gym, a classroom or a contractor's offsite facility.

What could be done – if anything – to streamline and simplify the process of booking space for public meetings and community use of municipal and school buildings?

A major road block to booking space for public meetings is knowing what spaces are available for use on what days of the week and their capacities so that one can make informed requests. Spaces that are available to the general public could be listed on the town's web site along with contact information for booking.

The IT director recommends using FirstClass as a centralized reservation system for town staff. All available meeting space could be catalogued with reservation requirements identified and approved reservations shown on a central calendar. A consolidated source for viewing room availability could improve scheduling efficiency. However, final booking approval should be given to the department in control of that space since they are aware of other considerations that could affect availability. If FirstClass is not used, then there are other software packages that allow multiple users to view resource availability while assigning booking privilege to specific individuals. Any system would need to allow for electronic requests to remove error due to paper requests being lost or misplaced and to ensure "first come, first serve."

Should Westford consider moving toward a "pay-as-you-throw" program for solid waste disposal?

No, but we should encourage recycling. We should consider incentives and education to increase recycling and reduce trash. Also, there already is “pay-as-you-throw” for bulk and special items such as electronics and hazardous waste.

The benefit to “pay-as-you-throw” is that it does encourage recycling, but it can take a year or more to educate the residents on how the system works. There is some debate as to whether or not “pay-as-you-throw” leads to illegal dumping on the roads, byways, and in dumpsters. However, as stated in question #6 above, the administrative costs may outweigh any financial benefits of having less trash disposed.

What opportunities do you see, if any, to increase regionalization of municipal services? Does the town do enough to identify and pursue regional initiatives?

The Police, Fire, Library and Water Departments already seek opportunities for sharing with other towns. The most cited opportunities by other respondents are sharing a purchasing agent and fire dispatchers, and trash/recycling services. Other ideas are: sharing GIS personnel and offer GIS services, the Veterans’ Agent, Health Department nurses or other functions that do not require full-time staff; an energy consortium for purchasing power, etc.; and regional transit. An interesting comment was that some states have county, rather than local, assessors, and that tends to produce more uniform evaluations. NMCOG is a valuable resource for coordinating regionalization of municipal services. Another resource is the Merrimack Valley Regional Housing Consortium.

Currently, the town does not have the manpower to pursue regional coordination of activities and services. It is also unclear if direct effort by the town is needed since it is a member of NMCOG, a regional planning entity. The town’s representative(s) to NMCOG can be conduits for passing ideas between the town and NMCOG.

Does the presence of many volunteer committees improve the performance and credibility of local government? Do committees make local government work more efficiently or more effectively? Both?

While the committee members we interviewed thought that the presence of volunteers is great for the town, we feel they are not being used effectively. While volunteer committees often provide credibility to local government, too often they focus on management practices and systems, which can undermine staff decisions, and they can overlook barriers to implementation, thereby reducing efficiency. Volunteers should be directed to concentrate more on policy development. With firm policy in place, the appearance of capricious and inconsistent decisions will be eliminated and reduce the tension within the community. Established policies will also enable more volunteers to step forward with confidence in their ability to serve.

There also should be a means to distinguish between an official Town committee and community based group. Term limits should be explored for appointed committee members.

It is an inefficient means of government, though, and does require staff resources and time to fulfill requests and provide support functions. With varying backgrounds, expertise, experience and opinion, consensus may be difficult and time consuming to achieve. Standing committees should have staff resources. Each Ad Hoc committee should have a liaison from its appointing authority with access to resources. No more committees than the capacity of staff resources should be appointed at one time to make committees more effective. The town’s reliance on volunteer committees should be reviewed with the following goals:

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- ◆ Consolidate or eliminate unnecessary committees and discharge those that have completed their tasks;
- ◆ Increase the pool of volunteers to reduce the need for active, concerned citizens to serve on multiple committees, and
- ◆ Increase awareness of recommendations, reports, and other committee outputs to increase their effectiveness and utility to the town.

Civic participation should not become a strain on the volunteer or local government, but a welcoming and fulfilling experience. Emphasis should be placed on reducing the burden of compliance with state statutes by facilitating or institutionalizing mandated obligations.

Are there ways that Westford could make better use of technology to operate more efficiently? To provide better communications with the public?

Yes to both questions. Westford has made great strides with its IT programs and implementations. Its town web site is vastly improved, but more can be done. The following suggestions are more implementation ideas than policy statements, and are a representative sampling of ideas expressed by all:

(i) To improve efficiency within and across town departments, the town could:

- ◆ Improve communications between departments and committees (especially with Town Hall occupants now geographically distributed due to Town Hall's structural defects).
- ◆ Develop a digital backbone for redundant fire systems (such as communications, operations, etc.) to ensure continuity of operations during emergencies.
- ◆ Improve reception for hand-held police radios, especially now that digital will be replacing all analog communications.
- ◆ Streamline payroll entry (and data entry in general) if, for example, all time sheets could be entered and approved directly on the computer. This would eliminate double entry and some annoying errors.
- ◆ Provide electronic access to records (building, water, structural, inspections, reports, etc.) and any associated images.
- ◆ Provide town-wide wireless Internet access. This would benefit residents as well.
- ◆ Improved scheduling and tracking of resources (rooms, equipment, etc.).

(ii) For better communications with the public, the town could:

- ◆ Improve the search capability on the Town web site.

- ◆ Convert phone messages to emails.
- ◆ Link meeting agendas with video feeds.
- ◆ Provide town email lists that update residents as to what decisions have been made and why, based on topic. Public online forums may be beneficial as well.
- ◆ Provide easier access to meeting minutes (a frequent request) and immediate feedback if the minutes are not available.
- ◆ Provide more GIS services.
- ◆ Connect related public and private entities more efficiently (example: Roudenbush)
- ◆ Provide Westford CAT video to all sources of video delivery and not just cable (example: Verizon FIOS).
- ◆ Allow online fee review and payment for typical service requests (licenses, permits, etc.).
- ◆ Provide electronic access to vital records, cemetery records, and grave locations.
- ◆ Improve “push” mechanisms to get information out to the residents more easily, faster and reliably.

As technology allows more access to town staff (through email and whatever other mechanisms become available), this will increase the workload on town staff and make them less efficient. Therefore, there will need to be a balance between how much accessibility is provided versus how much automation is added or enhanced to reduce the load on town staff. Content management tools can be powerful but expensive. And, with any technological solutions, the proper training will be needed to ensure that it has a chance of being adopted successfully.

With respect to compliance, more electronic and online methods of communication with the town can easily conflict with the outdated Open Meeting Laws and Campaign Finance Laws, there could be some legal issues that all towns will face as their use of technology increases.

Does the town have adequate systems in place to audit municipal and school facilities for energy use and reduce energy consumption? What about water use?

No. While some efforts are underway, particularly in the schools through assistance from consultants and the utility companies, more needs to be done. A coordinated program of energy audits, taking maximum advantage of services provided by the utility companies, should be initiated under the auspices of the DPW and town engineer. Particular attention needs to be paid to human factors (control of lighting, heat, electric use, etc.), employee training in the use and monitoring of energy control systems, and building age.

Yes, the water department has data on water usage. However, there seems to be a larger than expected amount of water lost through leakage or un-metered use which needs to be addressed.

Similarly, how would you define and measure “adequate” recreation facilities? What constitutes “enough” recreation land?

There will be adequate recreation facilities (including recreation department, school department and private) when: all demands by Town residents for recreation facilities have been met, the Recreation Department does not have to turn residents and their children away because of a lack of fields or facility space, and children under the age of 14 do not need to practice past 9:00PM on a school night.

What areas of Westford do you think should be prioritized for developing additional neighborhood recreation facilities?

If a “neighborhood recreation facility” is a playground with swings etc., then Westford has several: Skatepark on East Prescott, Roudenbush, elementary schools (Robinson, Crisafulli, Nabnasset, Miller, Abbot, and Day), Jack Walsh, Old Nab, Greystone, Graniteville, and Forge Village. While the town has these facilities, the playgrounds associated with the schools are not available to the public during school hours. A playground should be included in the plans for development of the Recreation land associated with EBC land. At this time the town has a good number of neighborhood recreation facilities spread throughout town. However, the eastern section of town south of 495, as well as the center of town, would benefit from having a more accessible (not school) playground. A bylaw should be explored that would have developers include neighborhood parks in any future medium to large sized developments. Mitigation funds could also be earmarked through a revolving fund for the upkeep of current recreational facilities.

What are your thoughts on a community center? Does Westford need one, as suggested in the last Open Space and Recreation Plan, and if so, where (approximately) do you think it should be located? What needs would it meet that are not already addressed at other community-wide recreation facilities? Would a combined senior center-community center make sense in Westford, or do you see these facilities as separate and distinct?

The Town thinks of Roudenbush Center as its Town Community Center but its legal status is unclear. As in the previous Master Plan Report and as evidenced through the current survey (2006), there is strong support for a recreation center. However, it is not clear how the town would prioritize building this center. Westford already has a wide range of recreation facilities on town/school property. There are also a number of private recreational areas in town including Kimballs, Nashoba Ski Area, Butter Brook and Nabnasset Golf Clubs, Westford Swim and Tennis I and II, and the Westford Regency Pool.

Westford does lack an indoor ice rink and a community pool. As the cost associated with building and maintaining either an indoor ice rink or a community pool is high and could not be financially supported by only Westford residents, we should encourage a private entity to bring a recreation center housing one or both to Westford. Also, as Westford grows, additional recreational facilities both indoor and outdoor will be needed. Currently, the times these facilities are available to the general public are very limited since private youth sports organizations use the facilities a great deal. If the number of recreational facilities increases, then some time could be reserved strictly for the general public.

Combining a Senior Center with a Recreation Center is a nice idea. However, the Senior Center has just been given voter approval to upgrade in place and there is not enough space at this location to expand further to include a Recreation Center. Also, many seniors are not comfortable with a combined Recreation and Senior Center. Still, perhaps the senior center can find even greater use by including activities of interest to a wider audience, e.g. evening activities for adults of all ages.

One idea that was expressed during a couple of meetings was that a centralized community center is not needed, since we have other venues. The idea was brought up that the town could expand what it has by coordinating activities and programming at different locations. The town would be a facilitator rather than providing physical locations for all recreational activities.

Additional Question asked by the CMPC Facilities, Amenities and Services (FAS) Subcommittee:

Should there be a town-wide sewer system? If so, where might it be located? Alternatively, should there be localized or regional sewer systems within the town?

A town-wide waste water treatment facility (WWTF) would be very expensive to build and also to maintain. For example, a forthcoming EPA regulation will mandate certain requirements such as cleaning the lines and inspecting them with cameras. Without a nearby stream adequate to take the discharge, any central plant would have to be designed for ground discharge. Because of Westford's topography, the presence of significant wetlands and the strict bylaws protecting them, and the requirement for extensive blasting of ledge for discharge piping, the best solution for Westford would be regional (within town) facilities targeted for areas that are having trouble with meeting Title V requirements or where the current systems may threaten the water supply, streams or ponds.

The town did not opt for a town-wide sewer after the 1995 Master Plan for several reasons: having sewers instead of septic systems increases the amount and types of land suitable for development; the huge infrastructure cost; the lack of control with a regional sewer system (they would have tied in to Lowell's system); and loss of water to recharge the groundwater and aquifers.

The revised Title V regulations took effect after this issue was reviewed for the 1995 Master Plan. The detrimental effect of non-performing or sub-standard septic systems has decreased as more systems get replaced under the stricter requirements. There are many innovative/alternative technologies available for such facilities (<http://mass.gov/dep/water/wastewater/iatechs.htm>). However, for areas that are having septic problems or are endangering the local environment, localized private treatment facilities could be considered. Treatment facilities can be designed so they integrate well with the neighborhood and are not recognizable as such. An example is the treatment facility for the Westford Regency Hotel, located in the gray wooden buildings next to Rt. 110.

Comment: Town staff noted that with the proliferation of private treatment facilities, there may need to be something in the town regulations to ensure that these facilities are functioning properly and in accordance with state and town standards.

Transportation and Circulation

What are the barriers to constructing new sidewalks in Westford? Where should sidewalks be prioritized? How can the Sidewalk Master Plan be implemented?

Barriers to constructing new sidewalks include trees, stonewalls, in some places easements need to be acquired possibly through eminent domain, and funding for design and construction. Sidewalks are desperately needed near schools and along commercial corridors for safety reasons as well as providing another means of accessibility. People without access to an automobile such as school aged children and some elderly may have no other means to get around. The sidewalk master plan needs to be updated by a new

WESTFORD COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

sidewalk master plan committee who will work towards a plan that can be implemented including gaining support from the Planning Board and the Selectmen to obtain funding.

If LRTA bus services were extended into Westford, what destinations in the Town should they connect? Should the Town require businesses along Route 110 to promote (subsidize) the use of bus services, if available, by their employees?

Bus service will be used by Westford, Lowell, and Chelmsford residents commuting to and from numerous local locations. The buses should make several stops along Route 110 possibly including the Tadmuck Senior Housing, Nashoba Technical High School, vicinity of Technology Park East, Westford Valley Market Place, the Westford Regency, Cameron Senior Center, and Tech Park West/99 Restaurant.

The town should require subsidies from local businesses to support the bus service because they are the primary beneficiaries of the service.

Should there be any efforts to add bus services/park-and-ride facilities in Westford? If so, where should a park-and-ride be located?

Although the survey suggests that very few people in town commute to Boston, there may be enough to support a park and ride facility as the Littleton Commuter Rail to Boston has too little parking. Also, people would likely use it that are carpooling to other locations. The best locations for such a facility would be near the exit/entrance ramp to I-495, and near Route 40 and Route 3. Mitigation by current and future commercial projects could be a source of funding for park and ride facilities.

Route 110 is the major (only) commercial corridor in Westford with the potential for more growth. What steps need to be taken to manage and, if possible concentrate growth of commercial activities along this corridor?

- ◆ Mandate the Route 110 master plans and require compliance.
- ◆ Require that traffic studies include full potential capacity of all existing and submitted developments and include all impacted intersections in the region.
- ◆ Ensure all transportation modes are included in the planning and mitigation process.
- ◆ Do not permit any projects until mitigations restoring congestion levels to acceptable conditions have been agreed to and funded.
- ◆ Require completion of mitigations before occupancy permits are issued.
- ◆ Encourage mixed use (residential, commercial) to help address both the traffic and housing needs of the Town.
- ◆ Encourage alternative forms of transportation and access to these developments.

- ◆ Require public safety involvement in the planning process and require that all public safety needs are funded before permitting and completed before occupancy (may include south of I-495 resources, such as a new fire station).

Should the Town require developers to monitor traffic impacts for some period of time following initial occupancy?

Yes, traffic studies are imperfect and many developments can only estimate their traffic impact. Ongoing monitoring and mitigation adjustments are an effective way to help address these initial uncertainties. However, these periods need to be long enough and rigorous enough to ensure that full-use impacts are truly captured and evaluated. This same analysis can also assist the Town in appropriately addressing the impacts of newer proposed projects. Conditions need to be defined whereby the developer shall have to do additional mitigation if they exceed some traffic threshold.

Should the Town have a specific development vision and focus for the Route 40 corridor? What should that vision include? Or should the creation of a commercial corridor (on a smaller scale) be part of that vision?

The town should develop a Route 40 Master Plan that reflects what the residents want to see in that area. The town should review how the land is currently zoned, talk to residents near Route 40 and beyond, and try to determine if there will be future conflicts with currently allowed uses. This will be addressed in the land use/zoning and economic development policy documents.

What policies/objectives should the Town use to guide transportation investments (roadway repair, maintenance, new roads)?

The town wide survey showed a high level of satisfaction with the general condition of roadways and snow removal; however:

- ◆ Pedestrian access along Westford's roadways is presently inadequate, especially around schools, and commercially zoned districts.
- ◆ We should not rely on the exclusive use of the automobile.
- ◆ We need to encourage alternate modes of transportation.
- ◆ The condition of bridges and retaining walls needs to be monitored frequently.

Pedestrian access particularly along Route 110, its connecting arteries, and around schools has incomplete connections, or in many essential locations is nonexistent. Respondents to the town wide survey were in favor of having bicycle lanes on major roadways. Also, secondary roads could have widened shoulders to accommodate bicycles. These shoulders would provide room for people walking or jogging where sidewalks will not be built.

What role should Westford play in shaping regional transportation policies?

Westford must aggressively participate in shaping the regional transportation policies. If we fail to take our seat at the table, traffic congestion, failing intersections and accident rates in Westford will only get worse as the town and the region continues to change and grow. We need to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is put in place as Westford and the region grows.

APPENDIX H: POPULATION PROFILE

Westford is an affluent, rapidly growing community in northern Middlesex County, bounded by the towns of Littleton, Groton, Tyngsborough, Chelmsford, Carlisle and Acton. It is located along the outer edge of the state's wealthiest region: a ring of Boston-area suburbs with prosperous, highly educated residents whose skills, disposable income, and expectations have had an indelible impact on the economy of the entire Boston metropolitan region. Westford's access to Interstate Route 495, U.S. Route 3, and three state highways bring its residents within easy reach of all of the major employment centers from Boston to Worcester and in southern New Hampshire. However, most of Westford's labor force works in Eastern Massachusetts, where the state's highest-wage jobs are concentrated.

Westford is also a beautiful town with qualities that make it similar to some of the surrounding communities and other characteristics that make it distinct. Its hills, valleys, forests, and ponds give shape to Westford's built environment and define its scenic appeal. None of Westford's boundaries corresponds to physical features such as waterways or ridgelines, for its size and shape are products of a larger regional history in which divisions and annexations determined the boundaries of Groton and Nashoba (Littleton) and eventually condensed the size of Chelmsford to make way for Westford, Carlisle, and Lowell. Long before I-495 imposed a divide across the lower half of Westford, the town was crossed by colonial routes that connected outlying villages and townships to each other and the coast – routes that would become focal points of the state highway system, such as Route 110 and Route 27. Westford also was crossed by water, notably the Stony Brook, and three railroad lines. The town's development pattern, economy, and quality of life have been shaped by all of these forces, from its farms and historic villages to the band of commerce that lines Littleton Road.

The construction of I-495 breached some of Westford's historic roadways, but the radial formation of local roads that converge in Westford Center is largely intact. These roads connect the northern and southern parts of town, and as Westford's suburban evolution began in earnest after 1950, they provided crucial access to the vast amounts of vacant land that Westford had to offer. Westford adopted zoning in 1955 and instituted a growth policy that favored one-acre lots for single-family home development. Today, Westford's population and household characteristics largely reflect decisions made many years ago to grow as a community of families.

Developing a community profile toward the end of a decade is challenging because the Bureau of the Census publishes detailed population statistics only in the decennial census. As a result, intercensal studies have to rely on information from a wide variety of sources, none as systematic as the federal census. However, the Census Bureau's new American Community Survey (ACS) will make it easier for Westford to trace growth and change in the future. The first ACS data for Westford should be released later this year (2008).

Population Growth

Westford's population has increased by 3.6 percent since Census 2000.¹ The Bureau of the Census estimates that Westford's current population is 21,507, for a population density of 703 people per sq. mi. Population density in throughout the region ranges from 195 people per sq. mi. in Dunstable to 7,493 per sq. mi. in Lowell, with Westford, Tyngsborough and Concord at the midpoint.

¹ Throughout this chapter and in other sections of the Comprehensive Plan, "region" refers to all communities in the Northern Middlesex Council of Government's (NMCOC) service area and other towns within Westford's housing market area.

(See Chapter 7, Table 7.1: Population Growth in Westford’s Region)

Population Characteristics

POPULATION AGE

Available data sources suggest that Westford is following the same population age pattern found throughout the nation, as people born during the “Baby Boom” era (1946-1964) progress toward retirement. From 1990-2000, children under 18 accounted for 45 percent of Westford’s total population growth, but since 2000 the under-18 population has stabilized and begun to decline. In contrast, the over-45 population is growing rapidly, with people in “empty nester” households making up an increasingly large share of the population. This trend can be seen in the change in Westford’s median population age from 36.9 years in 2000 to 37.8 years in 2007. Although Westford tends to attract families seeking good schools for their children, the aging of the nation’s population is happening here as well. As the last of the “Echo Boom” children move through the public schools, K-12 enrollments should decline somewhat and the age distribution of the total population will shift in favor of middle age and retiree householders. These conclusions are partially corroborated by space capacity projections from the Westford Public Schools, which show that over the next several years, the reserve capacity in most of Westford’s school buildings will increase as K-12 enrollments decrease.²

RACE, ETHNICITY, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Westford’s population is predominantly white, non-Hispanic or Latino. The town has become somewhat more diverse since 2000 due to population growth among Asians and people of mixed racial heritage.

POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: WESTFORD, 2000-2007

Category	Total Population		Hispanic or Latino	
	2000	2007	2000	2007
White	19,444	19,554	177	191
Black or African American	62	76	1	2
American Indian, Alaska Native	13	8	2	2
Asian	994	1,564	3	3
Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander	3	7	0	0
Another Race	62	68	33	40
Two or More Races	176	233	13	21
Total	20,754	21,510	229	259

Sources: Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 1, Table P7; Claritas, Inc., Demographic Snapshot Report: Westford, Massachusetts.

The white population in Westford is overwhelmingly composed of people of Irish, English, Italian, German, and French Canadian ancestry. In turn, Asian Indians and Chinese make up a majority of the town’s Asian population. Westford has experienced foreign-born population growth, though not to the extent found in some other communities in the region. Its foreign-born population is fairly representative of the global community, but most of Westford’s naturalized citizens and non-naturalized residents come from India, China, Columbia, Canada, Germany, and England.³

Since Westford has a relatively small number of foreign-born people, it is not surprising to find that 91 percent of the population includes native speakers of English. Among other languages spoken at home,

² Westford Public Schools, “School Capacity Report 2006-1016” [Electronic Version].

³ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Tables P19, P22, PCT10, PCT12, PCT 16, and PCT 19.

French, Chinese, Spanish, German, Greek, and Gujarathi seem to be the most prevalent. However, federal census data may not paint a complete picture of the cultural characteristics of Westford's current population. According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), 7.5 percent of Westford's K-12 students speak a language other than English at home, and two of the town's elementary schools have extraordinarily large percentages of non-native English speakers (Day, 20.3 percent; and Miller, 24.2 percent), both well above the state average of 15.1 percent.⁴ DOE collects and reports school district data every year, so the make-up of the school-age population today may be an indicator of diversity trends not evident in the last census.

EDUCATION

Westford has a well educated population. Sixty-five percent of its adult (over 25) population has completed college or beyond, and 25 percent hold a master's degree, doctorate or professional degree. These statistics make Westford similar to several nearby towns with a high wage-earning labor force and affluent households, though Westford trails communities such as Carlisle, Harvard, Concord, Acton and Boxborough for population percent with advanced degrees. Residential growth has clearly brought about a change in the make-up of Westford's population, for in 1990, less than 50 percent of its adult residents had completed a college degree and just 16 percent held a graduate or professional degree.⁵ Educational levels increased throughout the region between 1990 and 2000, but the increase in persons with advanced degrees is more pronounced in Westford than any neighboring town.

(See Chapter 7, Table 7.2: Educational Attainment of Population 25 Years and Over)

PER CAPITA INCOME

Statistics from the 1990 and 2000 federal census show that per capita income in Westford increased from \$21,878 in 1990 to \$37,979 in 2000, or 73.4 percent. In 1990, Westford had the highest per capita income in the NMCOG region, but lagged behind Carlisle (\$36,387), Concord (\$31,655) Acton (\$25,792), Boxborough (\$24,363) and Groton (\$22,832). In 2000, Westford still topped the NMCOG region and trailed Carlisle (\$ 59,559), Concord (\$ 51,477), Acton (\$ 41,901), Harvard (\$ 40,867) and Boxborough (\$ 40,794). Estimates for 2007 indicate that Westford has experienced an increase of 28.5 percent in per capita income since 2000. In Westford's region, the only community to qualify for funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) on the basis of per capita income is the City of Lowell, which had a Census 2000 per capita income of slightly more than 80% of the national per capita income.⁶

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) has developed population projections for the state, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and cities and towns. EOT's approach is a share-basis methodology that allocates the statewide population projection according to a series of growth and employment assumptions. As a result, the state and regional projections are probably more reliable than the projections for individual cities and towns. According to EOT, Westford is expected to grow by 19.5 percent between 2000 and 2010, 11.9 percent between 2010 and 2020, and 12.9 percent between 2020 and 2030. By 2030, Westford would rank behind Lowell, Billerica, Dracut, Chelmsford and Tewksbury for the largest

⁴ Massachusetts Department of Education, Westford Public Schools, School Profile Series, retrieved from <<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu>>.

⁵ University of Massachusetts Donohue Institute, "Educational Attainment for the State, Counties, Cities and Towns for the Population 25 Years and Older, 1990-2000," [Electronic Version], retrieved from MassBenchmarks, <<http://www.massbenchmarks.org/statedata/data.htm>>.

⁶ Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, citing Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P82; and Claritas, Inc.

population in the region. In contrast, Acton, which had a population count similar to Westford's in 2000, is expected to grow more slowly.

(See Chapter 7, Table 7.3: Population Projections for Westford's Region)

Population projections need to be used cautiously because several modeling methods are available and they do not produce consistent results. For example, the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER), now under the aegis of the UMass Donohue Institute, has published population forecasts for the state and each city and town through 2020. According to MISER's projections, Westford's population will be 22,984 in 2010 and 24,197 by 2020.⁷

Households and Families

Westford has approximately 7,200 *households*: one or more people occupying a residence as a single house-keeping unit. In census terminology, the number of households in a city or town is the same as its number of *occupied housing units*. An increase in households almost always relates to an increase in housing. However, decennial household growth will exceed housing growth if some of the increase in housing demand was absorbed by units that lay vacant at the beginning of a decade. In fact, this happened in Westford and all of the surrounding towns between 1990 and 2000, though Westford's 1990 housing vacancy rate was noticeably lower than that of Middlesex County or the state as a whole.⁸ The vast majority of household growth that occurred in Westford between 1990 and 2000 was attributable to new housing development.

Westford experienced significant household growth between 1990 and 2000. Regionally, Westford's household growth rate was surpassed only in Boxborough (37.5%), Dunstable (33.4%), and Tyngsborough (31.2%). Since 2000, the rate of household growth in Westford has exceeded the rate of population growth, which is consistent with regional, state, and national trends. Although people often cite population statistics as evidence of residential land use change, household statistics provide more important information about housing growth because households generate demand for housing units. In many ways, household characteristics act as a surrogate for the types, sizes, and prices of housing found in each community. This can be seen in Westford, where single-family dwellings account for 89 percent of all housing units and 86 percent of all households are *families*: households of two or more people related by blood, marriage or adoption. Moreover, Westford's recent growth has been attended by a higher rate of growth among families with children than households or families in general.

(See Chapter 7, Table 7.4: Households and Families)

Of the 128,000 housing units in Westford's region, just over 70 percent are owner-occupied and 76 percent are single-family homes. In nearly all cases, communities with large percentages of single-family homes also have large percentages of family households. The communities with more diverse housing also have a wider range of household types: families with and without children, non-family households, and single people living alone. Region-wide, Westford has the fourth largest percentage of single-family homes, the second largest percentage of family households, and the third largest percentage of owner-occupied housing.

⁷ University of Massachusetts Donohue Institute, "Total Population 1980-2020, MISER Projections," [Electronic Version], retrieved from MassBenchmarks, <<http://www.massbenchmarks.org/statedata/data.htm>>.

⁸ Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1, Table H03; Census 2000, Summary File 1, Table H3.

HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSING TYPES IN WESTFORD'S REGION (2007)

Community	Housing Units				Total Families	Percent	
	Total Units	Occupied Units	Owner Occupied	Single-Family Homes		Single-Family Homes	Families % Households
Acton	7,608	7,365	5,573	4,898	5,433	64.4%	73.8%
Ayer	3,230	2,999	1,663	1,405	1,777	43.5%	59.3%
Billerica	10,623	10,462	8,933	8,756	8,314	82.4%	79.5%
Boxborough	1,998	1,924	1,357	1,137	1,318	56.9%	68.5%
Carlisle	1,687	1,638	1,537	1,602	1,385	95.0%	84.6%
Chelmsford	9,759	9,548	8,172	7,426	7,132	76.1%	74.7%
Concord	6,289	6,012	4,832	4,720	4,475	75.1%	74.4%
Dracut	11,167	10,901	8,556	7,208	8,051	64.5%	73.9%
Dunstable	1,109	1,077	1,004	1,064	930	95.9%	86.4%
Groton	3,837	3,652	3,069	3,214	2,860	83.8%	78.3%
Harvard	1,953	1,860	1,683	1,833	1,531	93.9%	82.3%
Littleton	3,239	3,106	2,601	2,679	2,321	82.7%	74.7%
Lowell	39,197	37,136	15,784	11,922	23,402	30.4%	63.0%
Pepperell	4,139	4,037	3,245	3,012	3,155	72.8%	78.2%
Tewksbury	10,560	10,286	9,142	8,076	7,929	76.5%	77.1%
Tyngsborough	3,975	3,871	3,295	3,094	3,053	77.8%	78.9%
WESTFORD	7,327	7,139	6,598	6,545	6,087	89.3%	85.3%

Source: Claritas, Inc.

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

New growth has brought about noticeable changes in the economic position of Westford's households. Over time, the income gap between Westford, Harvard and Carlisle households has decreased.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN WESTFORD'S REGION: 1990-2007 (NOMINAL DOLLARS)

Community	Actual (Census)		Estimated
	1990	2000	2007
Acton	\$61,394	\$91,624	\$109,492
Ayer	\$29,326	\$46,619	\$58,813
Billerica	\$50,210	\$67,799	\$79,040
Boxborough	\$51,330	\$87,618	\$111,620
Carlisle	\$83,985	\$129,811	\$155,449
Chelmsford	\$53,971	\$70,207	\$83,998
Concord	\$69,917	\$95,897	\$108,983
Dracut	\$45,165	\$57,676	\$66,335
Dunstable	\$62,515	\$82,633	\$100,161
Groton	\$55,169	\$82,869	\$101,866
Harvard*	\$80,028	\$107,934	\$129,187
Littleton	\$51,425	\$71,384	\$86,086
Lowell	\$29,351	\$39,192	\$45,097
Pepperell	\$44,492	\$65,163	\$80,490
Tewksbury	\$52,572	\$68,800	\$80,767
Tyngsborough	\$48,842	\$69,818	\$85,785
WESTFORD	\$60,566	\$98,272	\$124,514

Sources: Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 3 Table P080A; Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P53; Claritas, Inc., Demographic Snapshot Reports.

*Note: The median household income reported for Harvard is based on Census Tract 7142, or the portion of Harvard that excludes Fort Devens.

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

POVERTY

Although Westford is not the most affluent town in the region, it has the lowest poverty rate (1.7 percent) of all 17 communities. Other communities with very low poverty rates include Dunstable (1.9 percent), Harvard (2.1 percent), Carlisle (2.4 percent), and Boxborough (2.7 percent). The only communities that approximate the statewide rate (9.3 percent) include Lowell (16.8 percent) and Ayer (10.8 percent). The poverty rate for families in Westford, 1.3 percent, is composed almost entirely of single-parent households, including a roughly equal distribution of male-headed and female-headed families. This is not the case in other towns nearby, where female-headed families tend to make up the vast majority of families in poverty.⁹

POVERTY RATES AND POVERTY STATISTICS FOR HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES, WESTFORD’S REGION (2000)

Community	Population		Households		Families	
	Total	Poverty Rate	Sample Size	Percent Poverty	Sample Size	Percent Poverty
Acton	20,197	2.9%	7,469	3.8%	5,535	1.7%
Ayer	7,071	10.8%	2,983	9.1%	1,797	6.1%
Billerica	37,675	3.8%	12,961	3.6%	10,306	2.8%
Boxborough	4,868	2.8%	1,867	2.7%	1,296	1.5%
Carlisle	4,709	2.4%	1,628	2.6%	1,406	1.5%
Chelmsford	33,332	2.8%	12,826	3.4%	9,361	2.0%
Concord	15,590	3.9%	5,957	4.3%	4,432	2.1%
Dracut	28,529	3.7%	10,450	4.7%	7,756	2.7%
Dunstable	2,821	1.9%	936	2.6%	804	2.1%
Groton	9,507	4.0%	3,268	3.2%	2,549	2.5%
Harvard	5,239	2.0%	1,817	0.7%	1,497	0.5%
Littleton	8,088	3.6%	2,960	5.1%	2,255	2.4%
Lowell	101,689	16.8%	37,992	15.7%	24,247	13.6%
Pepperell	11,125	3.7%	3,845	4.8%	3,018	2.0%
Tewksbury	28,459	3.8%	9,955	2.8%	7,764	1.9%
Tyngsborough	11,064	4.7%	3,741	4.6%	2,961	4.0%
WESTFORD	20,628	1.7%	6,836	1.6%	5,824	1.3%

Source: Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Tables P89, P90, P92.

⁹ Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Tables P89, P90.

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Maps

Map 3.1: Surficial Geology

Map 3.2: Soils

Map 3.3: Water Resources

Map 3.4: Wildlife Habitat

Map 3.5: Environmental Hazards

Map 3.6: Open Space

Map 5.1: Existing Land Uses

Map 5.2: Existing Zoning

Map 5.3: Overlay Districts

Map 5.4: Land Use Guidance Plan

Map 6.1: Age of Housing Stock

Map 8.1: Transportation Infrastructure

