

Town of West Brookfield COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

June 2004



Prepared by the
West Brookfield Community Development Committee

and the
Massachusetts Watershed Coalition

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Town of West Brookfield Community Development Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located beside the scenic Quaboag River valley, West Brookfield is a small town with a wealth of pastoral landscapes and protected open space. Residents want to retain their rural character, but increased building of new homes could alter West Brookfield's small-town qualities. Careful management of land uses and development opportunities can enable the Town to both preserve and enhance the forests, farms, habitats, scenic vistas, historic places and other unique assets that are cherished by community residents.

This report was prepared by the Community Development Planning Committee to guide the Town's future growth. Assistance was provided to the Committee under Executive Order 418, which supplies guidance and funding for the preparation of Community Development (CD) Plans. The four elements addressed by this CD Plan are open space and resource protection, housing, economic development, and transportation/community trails.

This Executive Summary presents some of the key findings of the CD Plan. The next four chapters discuss each of the core elements in the Plan, and the concluding chapter identifies the priorities for implementation of this Plan. The Vision Statement that is presented in the next section guided the analysis and recommendations prepared for these core elements.

Vision Statement

The Community Development Planning Committee conducted a survey in October 2003 to determine what citizens want for the future of West Brookfield. This survey asked residents about their views on open space and resource protection, housing, economic development, and transportation. The Committee developed the following Vision Statement based on the survey results, which provides the overall goal and objectives for this Community Development Plan.

Our recent community survey clearly shows that residents cherish the scenic, rural landscapes of West Brookfield and surrounding towns. To sustain this quality of life, we should carefully manage community growth to preserve our unique neighborhoods and to protect the Town's natural, historic and scenic amenities. We should foster land uses that maintain the health of our waters, forests, farms and wildlife, and which help to preserve open spaces and increase recreational opportunities in Town.

Proactive planning should become a key means to address community needs and enhance people's enjoyment of our special resources. We should set guidelines to help landowners and developers design projects that complement West Brookfield's rural character. Ongoing efforts should focus on protecting the Town's water supplies, historic features, scenic roads and other highly-valued community assets. Other important objectives are to preserve and enhance the Town Common, the Town center, Lake Wickaboag and the Quaboag River valley as visitor attractions that can spur greater tourism opportunities.

Our community planning should assist existing businesses and foster small-scale economic development, which can offer employment and provide more goods and services for Town residents. We should encourage the expansion of home businesses, farms, forestry activities, recreation and tourism services to help preserve the small-town qualities of West Brookfield.

We should develop a process to manage the tax rate and reduce the financial burden upon seniors and residents with limited income who wish to remain in our Town. These planning efforts should also carefully consider ways to increase the participation of diverse interests in Town affairs, and to strengthen our sense of community identity.

Our recent community survey has helped to identify the following shared goals and objectives to guide these planning activities.

Goal: Encourage diverse housing opportunities while preserving the rural character of the Town.

Objectives:

- Encourage housing development in areas served by Town water to help promote sustainable growth.
- Encourage development of additional senior housing.
- Consider “cluster development” bylaw to preserve open space without increasing the number of houses that Town zoning currently allows.
- Encourage affordable housing.
- Encourage energy-efficient housing.
- Encourage siting of homes to maximize use of solar energy while improving air quality.

Goal: Improve transportation systems.

Objectives:

- Increase alternative transportation such as bus service or bikeway.
- Preserve rural scenic character of roads.
- Retain current unpaved surfaces for some roads.
- Encourage safer options for walking and bicycling throughout the Town (both on and off road).
- Improve dangerous or confusing intersections in Town.

Goal: Preserve West Brookfield’s rural character, open spaces and environmental quality.

Objectives:

- Protect the health of lakes and brooks in Town.
- Protect the Town’s water supplies.
- Preserve the Quaboag River Valley landscape between Route 9 and the River.
- Protect scenic views.
- Create greenway trails both within town and connecting with greenways in surrounding towns.

Goal: Foster economic development.

Objectives:

- Maintain and improve Town by-laws to ensure sound development practices.
- Encourage businesses that preserve rural character.
- Encourage businesses that make use of local resources (forestry, agriculture, recreation, home businesses).
- Promote tourism opportunities (hiking, biking, etc.).

Goal: Foster community participation in Town affairs.

Objectives:

- Encourage diverse interests to join in community activities, Town boards and Town meetings.
- Improve opportunities for community gatherings.

Open Space and Resource Protection

The first chapter of the Plan describes natural resources, open spaces, historic places and other important features in West Brookfield. Highly-valued community assets include the Rock House Reservation, Lucy Stone Home Site, West Brookfield Center Historic District, Salem Cross Inn, Brookhaven Lake, Lake Wickaboag and Wickaboag Valley, the Quaboag River, Coys Brook, rare wildlife habitats and the Town's wealth of scenic landscapes. Key community concerns include the protection of water resources, preservation of the Town's rural character, improvement of recreation facilities, and opportunities to foster tourism.

The first section of this chapter provides a summary of the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan that recommends actions to protect natural resources, enhance recreation opportunities, and manage community growth. The following sections provide additional information to help protect waterways, retain the scenic character of major roads in Town, and identify areas that are suitable for development.

Key findings:

- Many of the goals and objectives of the Open Space and Recreation Plan were affirmed by respondents to the October 2003 community survey. The survey responses showed near unanimous support for protecting water resources, historic features, farmlands, forests, wildlife habitats and scenic areas. Respondents also strongly favor land uses and economic opportunities that can preserve the Town's rural qualities.
- Nearly 2,500 acres of land in Town are protected for conservation, agricultural and recreation uses. In addition, many private landowners participate in voluntary Chapter 61 programs and manage over 3,700 acres of land in Town for agriculture, forestry and open space uses.
- Analysis of lands beside the Quaboag River, Mill Brook and Sucker Brook shows that these waterway corridors are largely preserved by permanently protected open space, as well as state and municipal regulations. There is ongoing need to increase public access and provide more opportunities for residents to enjoy these special community assets.
- Scenic landscapes along Route 9 and Route 67 are very important to the rural character of West Brookfield. Most of these roadside landscapes are preserved by permanently protected lands and by existing uses, although there are short stretches of these major roads that can be affected by future development.
- Community survey responses indicate strong support for zoning bylaws and other measures that can improve land uses, protect community resources, and foster tourism.

Land Use Suitability Map

The concluding section of the chapter describes areas in West Brookfield that are not suitable for development due to environmental constraints and other criteria. The analysis also identifies partial development constraints, such as stream corridors, lands subject to flooding and aquifer protection areas. The map provided in this section also identifies areas in Town that are suitable for future residential and business development.

Major Recommendations:

- Implement the Five-Year Action Plan provided in the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan, which can help protect community resources, improve recreation and preserve the Town's rural character.
- Conduct an assessment of the watershed lands that drain into Mill Brook, Sucker Brook and Lake Wickaboag to determine existing and potential concerns affecting these water resources. Develop a watershed management plan to identify specific measures to protect water quality and preserve community uses of the brooks and Lake Wickaboag.
- Encourage and assist Brookhaven Lake residents to assess watershed conditions and prepare a lake management plan, which also addresses existing or potential concerns affecting the surface and ground water sources that replenish Brookhaven Lake.
- Work with the MA Division of Fish and Game and the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation to expand existing conservation areas and access to the Quaboag River, Mill Brook and Sucker Brook.
- Coordinate with private owners to preserve scenic landscapes along sections of Route 9 and Route 67 through conservation restrictions and zoning bylaws.

Housing

Chapter 2 describes housing characteristics, examines housing needs, and recommends actions that can improve housing opportunities for low, moderate and middle-income residents. Some of the information provided by this housing assessment is summarized below.

Key Findings:

- The U.S. Census reports that the population in West Brookfield increased by 26 percent over two decades, growing from 3,026 residents in 1980 to 3,804 residents in 2000. Population projections by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research indicate the Town will continue to grow over the next ten years.
- Population growth has led to expansion of the housing stock during the past twenty years. The U.S. Census figures show the number of occupied housing units in West Brookfield increased by 24 percent between 1980 and 2000. The Town Assessors Office reported a total 53 building permits were issued for new homes in 2001, 2002 and 2003.

- There were 1,534 housing units identified by the 2000 U.S. Census: 78 percent are single-family residences, and 22 percent are duplexes, multiple-unit buildings and mobile homes. Rental units comprise about one-fifth of the housing stock.
- Housing in West Brookfield is affordable for most residents, but some lower income residents are cost-burdened by their housing expenditures. Increases in housing costs appear to be outpacing household income growth.
- The 2000 U.S. Census reports there were 307 rental units in West Brookfield. The 2000 Census shows 145 households (47%) paying more than 30 percent of their income for rent, with 59 (19%) of these renters paying more than half of their income for housing. Households that pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered to be cost-burdened.
- Almost 4 percent of the housing in West Brookfield is listed as affordable by the State Department of Housing and Community Development. To achieve the 10 percent goal established by the legislature under Chapter 40B, the Town needs roughly 100 additional units with guaranteed long-term affordability for low and moderate-income residents.
- Under Chapter 40B, a streamlined permit process can enable proposed affordable housing projects to override local zoning criteria in communities where less than 10 percent of the housing units have guaranteed long-term affordability.

Major Recommendations:

- Proposed actions that can help preserve the Town's rural qualities include: an Open Space Subdivision bylaw, a Major Residential Development Review bylaw, and Backlot Zoning provisions. A Phased Growth bylaw can help Town services and the creation of affordable housing to keep pace with new residential development. The Town can also consider increasing the minimum lot size in areas that lack infrastructure and have steep slopes, poorly drained soils and other environmental constraints. If combined with an open space subdivision bylaw, increased lot sizes can encourage home building in the most suitable locations and help to preserve the Town's rural character.
- 23 percent of Town residents rent housing. The Town should encourage creation of accessory apartments to assist lower income households including seniors on a fixed income. Multi-family dwellings can be encouraged in areas with existing infrastructure, in part through adaptive reuse of vacant buildings. Higher density housing can be more affordable and alleviate some pressure to develop housing in rural parts of Town.
- The Town should investigate grant programs to increase its supply of housing for lower income residents to meet the Chapter 40B guidelines. In addition to creating subsidized housing, there are housing rehabilitation grants that can improve the existing housing stock, especially when this assistance benefits low and moderate-income households.
- The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) should attend training sessions on how to deal with a Comprehensive Permit under Chapter 40B before one is proposed in the future.

It is important to note that while most community survey respondents favor diverse housing in Town, there is less support for more senior housing and little support for lower income housing,

multi-family units and apartment houses. Survey results also indicate that annual limits on new building permits, and increased lot sizes are the most preferred approaches to manage growth.

These survey findings suggest that residents may lack information about housing needs in Town. The Board of Selectmen can consider forming a Housing Committee to increase community support for housing initiatives. This Committee can also identify vacant buildings and land that are suitable for affordable housing, as well as investigate opportunities to create affordable housing and to improve the physical condition of the existing housing stock in Town.

Economic Development

Chapter 3 provides an assessment of the Town's economic base and labor force characteristics, along with projected employment trends for the region. Several findings from this review are listed below:

- West Brookfield's median household income was greater than most adjacent towns and only slightly less than Massachusetts in 1999. U.S. Census figures also show that a larger proportion of residents were below poverty income levels than most neighboring towns.
- In 2001, the labor force included 1,785 workers, and the Town unemployment rate of 3.3% was lower than the state unemployment rate of 3.7%.
- From 1990 to 2001, the number of businesses in Town increased from 70 establishments to 83 establishments, and the types of jobs available in West Brookfield have changed, including large increases in government workers and the services sector.
- West Brookfield levied more commercial taxes than most surrounding towns in 2002, which reflects the greater value of commercial properties in the Town. However, there were less industrial taxes levied than several of these neighboring communities.
- Respondents to the 2003 community survey indicate that medical services, professional offices, farming, arts and crafts, tourism, recreation and home occupations are the most preferred types of businesses for economic development.
- Projected job growth in the Southern Worcester area that includes West Brookfield will be lower than most regions of the state. The state 1998 – 2008 economic forecast predicts that the largest number of new jobs in the Southern Worcester region will be in the services sector that includes health care, business services and social services.

The second section of this chapter presents goals to guide economic activities, which incorporate diverse objectives. The four goals are to:

- Promote economic development;
- Attract and support businesses that complement town character;
- Expand employment opportunities in Town; and
- Increase goods and services available to West Brookfield residents and visitors.

The third section identifies locations of historic features, recreation areas and businesses that can attract visitors, as well as provide products and services for residents of West Brookfield and

neighboring towns. This section also examines barriers and recommends actions that can foster tourism and small business development.

The concluding section of Chapter 3 provides a map that depicts land use suitability criteria and identifies locations in West Brookfield that are suited for commercial and industrial uses. The section also notes that many types of home occupations, tourist services, agricultural businesses and other small enterprises are allowed by right or by special permit throughout the Town. The respondents to the community survey strongly favored these business types, and the development of recreation, tourist and home businesses can enhance the rural character that West Brookfield residents would like to preserve.

Transportation/Proposed Regional Bikeway

Chapter 4 describes a regional bikeway that can link the towns of West Brookfield, Warren and New Braintree. Development of this bikeway can allow for increased alternative transportation, recreation uses and tourism opportunities. Some key findings from bikeway research and field visits are highlighted below:

- Respondents to the 2003 community survey strongly favor safer options for walking and bicycling, as well as the creation of greenway trails. Nearly all respondents also want to preserve the rural, scenic character of roads in Town.
- Currently, there are no bikeways or greenway trails that connect West Brookfield with any neighboring towns, and there are very few locations that offer formal recreation trails for West Brookfield residents and visitors.
- The Federal Highway Administration defines three types of bikeways, including: separate paths for the exclusive use of bicycles; restricted bicycle lanes on roadways shared with motor vehicles; and bicycle routes that are designated by signage. A bicycle route is recommended for the regional bikeway, which can be incorporated into routine road maintenance and resurfacing projects. The proposed bikeway along low traffic volume roads can improve the current conditions and safety for bicycling in all three towns.
- The proposed bikeway generally follows the historic route of the Old Baypath, traveling along existing roads that are suitable for touring and road bicycles. This route would link with the proposed Old Baypath Indian Trail, the West Brookfield Center Historic District, the proposed Quaboag Plantation Trail, and the proposed Quaboag River Water Trail.

The first section of this chapter provides photographs, a map and detailed description of the proposed regional bikeway. The second section describes a variety of private, state and federal funding sources that can help to make the bikeway a reality.

CHAPTER 1

OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE PROTECTION ELEMENT

This chapter of the Community Development Plan includes the following sections:

1. A summary of the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan;
2. An analysis of needs and opportunities to protect the Town's waterways;
3. An analysis of the rural character of Route 9 and Route 67; and
4. An assessment of land suitable of future development.

Section 1: *Summary of Open Space and Recreation Plan*

The West Brookfield Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed in 2002 and has a wealth of information that can help preserve the quality of life, protect the environment and enhance recreation opportunities for Town residents. This section of the Community Development Plan provides a summary of the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Introduction

The Town of West Brookfield retains the many charming characteristics of a rural New England town. It is centered around the town common, the main street historic district and a scenic lake, with acres of farmland and forests on the surrounding countryside. West Brookfield is an attractive haven of country living for its residents, offering retreat from nearby and regional employment centers.

West Brookfield is relatively protected from major growth. The potential does exist because of the town's proximity to Worcester, for West Brookfield's farmland and many scenic resources to be affected by growth. Residents and Town Officials of West Brookfield recognize that their Town will realize long-term benefits from planning. This Open Space and Recreation Plan is one element that will help to preserve the character and quality of life in Town.

West Brookfield's Open Space and Recreation Plan responds to the needs and desires of residents as expressed during meetings and workshops. Central to the development of the Plan is maintaining the Town's character, protecting its natural resources, and providing recreational opportunities for everyone. This will be accomplished through implementation of the Five-Year Action Plan, which details specific suggestions for accomplishing the goals and objectives of the community. The Plan describes:

- Strategies to care for and improve local waters as sources of drinking water and recreational resources.
- Methods to keep agricultural and other lands in their natural state and to encourage greater use of these areas for farming and conservation purposes.
- Specifics on developing new facilities and programs to meet increasing cultural, educational, and recreational needs.
- Recommendations related to better management and upkeep of recreational areas and

facilities.

- Suggestions that work toward linking open space and recreation areas within Town and regionally across Town borders.
- Techniques to educate the public and make them more aware about the location and potential uses of open space and recreation areas.
- Regulatory tools that can be used to preserve community character and natural resources.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan can help residents of West Brookfield to plan for the future and guide decisions on open space preservation and recreation opportunities. In doing so, the Plan identifies and analyzes factors such as physical and cultural assets, land use, and socioeconomic trends that are relevant to the protection of important resources. It inventories the town's present supply of open space and recreation lands and determines future conservation and recreation needs by outlining a series of recommendations for safeguarding and expanding resources. The recommendations are prioritized in a five-year action plan to be implemented by the Town over this period.

The development of the Open Space and Recreation Plan is part of a continuing effort by West Brookfield to plan for and protect its unique community characteristics. West Brookfield has benefited from past efforts to protect open space, and has managed to provide for a variety of passive recreation opportunities. The Town and Commonwealth of Massachusetts have managed to protect over one thousand acres of land. Most of these areas allow for leisurely recreational pursuits such as hiking, fishing, nature study, and picnicking. Through the creation of local historic districts, the Town has preserved the atmosphere of the village center and the rural character of the area around Lake Wickaboag.

Community Setting

This section is omitted from this summary. The information provided in this section describes the regional context; history; population characteristics; growth and development of the Town.

Environmental Inventory and Analysis

This section of the Plan is also omitted from this summary. The environmental inventory and analysis provides descriptions and maps of the Town's geology and soils, water resources, vegetation, fish and wildlife, scenic resources, and environmental challenges.

Conservation and Recreation Lands Inventory

This section identifies protected land and unprotected land of interest for conservation or recreation use. The inventory was developed by reviewing the files of lands held by the Town and lands with special tax-exempt or tax-reduced status. Each parcel was then identified on a map categorized by the level of protection afforded the parcel.

Table 1.1 summarizes the amount of open space and recreation lands that are presently protected in West Brookfield, and Table 1.2 is a preliminary summary of the key unique and natural areas that West Brookfield has identified for potential protection or acquisition. The inventory categorizes the conservation, recreation and significant vacant lands in Town and identifies the

name, location, lot area, owner, and level of protection and also includes available details about parcels such as public access. Parcels that are publicly owned or that are protected under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B are included in this chapter. It is important to recognize that parcels subject to Chapter 61 restrictions are not necessarily protected in perpetuity, they are vulnerable to development and the protection offered to the community is minimal. Figure 1.1 indicates the location of state owned and Chapter 61 lands in West Brookfield.

Land Protected From Development

Protected land owned by the Town and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in West Brookfield totals approximately 1,419 acres, and although it is entirely possible for governmental agencies to remove land from public ownership, this scenario is unlikely and would require considerable public scrutiny if proposed. In addition to publicly held parcels, privately owned land may also be protected from development. Examples of private non-profit conservation entities include The Trustees of Reservations, who own and manage the Rock House Reservation and recently acquired the Lucy Stone Home Site.

Beyond privately held land, less than fee interests in land can keep land in an open state in perpetuity. For example, a property owner might be willing to sell or donate a conservation easement or restriction, which would prevent future development on the land. As is true in most places, this land is preserved but not available for public access. The use of these easements and restrictions is helpful in maintaining community character.

Town Owned Land: Permanently protected Town lands include Conservation Commission holdings (approximately 114 acres) and total approximately 201 acres. The West Brookfield Water Department maintains 19.1 acres on Leland and Ware Point Roads to protect the Town's Watershed. These holdings are meant to protect the current and future water supply and are protected from future development. The Board of Health owns 45 acres of land for the Town Landfill. Since the landfill is closed, the potential exists for future use of the site. The Cemetery Commission owns the 16-acre Town Cemetery, which has public access. The Recreation Committee owns the 6.8-acre Town Beach, which is open to the public as a bathing beach.

State Owned Land: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns 1,218 acres of land in Town, including 269 acres that are managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and 949 acres that are managed by the Division of Fish and Game. The West Brookfield State Forest is comprised of 140 acres and provides hiking and nature study opportunities.

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions: The State Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program is a way for farmland to be protected from future development. The APR program pays farmers the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction, which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. There are presently 5 Agricultural Preservation Restrictions in the Town of West Brookfield, totaling 832 acres.

Conservation Restrictions: Conservation Restrictions (CR) can be placed on a parcel of land for a specified number of years or in perpetuity. The conservation restriction (or easement) is a

restriction to particular specified uses or from development. The restriction runs with the land and is recorded in a deed instrument. This tool functions to retain the property in its natural state or in agricultural, farming, or forest use; to permit public recreation; or to restrict development activities. There are two parcels in West Brookfield that contain conservation restrictions, each totaling approximately 70 acres. One CR is from Walter Fullam to The Trustees of Reservations and another from Peter Magnante to The Trustees of Reservations and the Town.

Table 1.1 summarizes the acreage by owner and/or protection type for protected open space parcels in West Brookfield.

Table 1.1: Summary of Protected Land in Municipal, State, and Private Ownership			
	<i>Category</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Percent*</i>
	Town Owned	201	1.4
	County/State Owned	1218	8.7
	Private, Restricted (APR, CR)	1052	7.6
	TOTAL:	2471	17.7

* Based on 13,900 total town acres

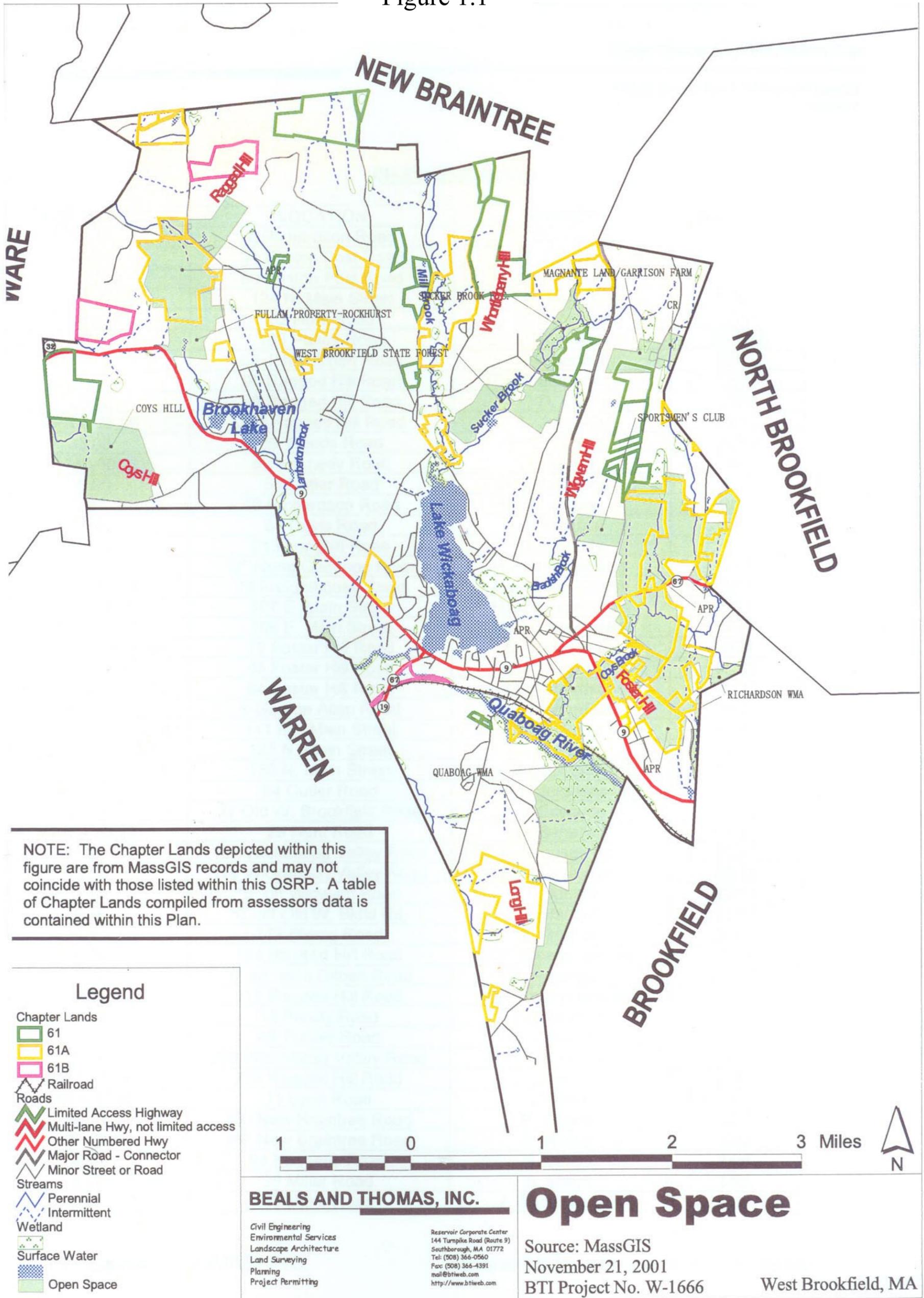
Land Not Protected from Development

Private open lands can be offered various levels of protection. The designation of private parcels as Forest lands (Chapter 61), Farm lands (Chapter 61A), or Private Recreation lands (Chapter 61B) restricts the use of land in exchange for significant reduction in taxes. Land that is currently taxed under the exemptions allowed by M.G.L. Chapters 61, 61A, or 61B has very little protection. Currently, there are nearly 3,732 acres of land in West Brookfield that are classified as temporarily protected under this tax abatement program.

Property under these designations allows the Town a right of first refusal to purchase the land should the property owner intend to take the land out of the restricted status. Land may be taken out of Chapter 61, 61A or 61B classification by notifying the Town and paying a withdrawal penalty tax. However, such land may not be sold for, or converted to, residential, commercial or industrial use while taxed under the classification without written notification of the municipality in which it is located. The Town has 120 days to exercise its right of first refusal option to purchase the land. Should this time period pass and/or the town states in writing that it will not act on its option, the land may be developed for alternative use(s), removing it from its "open" status as forest, farm or recreation land. Figure 1.1 shows the location of these lands.

Chapter 61 Forest Land: Forest Lands require a minimum of ten contiguous acres under a minimum 10 year management plan certified by the State Forester. Once the application has been received and approved, the classification statement functions as a lien upon the land for taxes levied under the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 61. The landowner must refile every ten years or the land shall be removed from classification by the Town Assessor. A tax is payable on stumpage income for the two years prior to management and a much reduced property tax is payable once per year during the management period. Approximately 1307 acres in West Brookfield are classified as Chapter 61 Forest Lands.

Figure 1.1



Chapter 61A Farm Land: Farm land requires a minimum of five contiguous acres "actively devoted" to agricultural or horticultural use. These classifications include animals, fruits, vegetables, and forest products. To qualify as "actively devoted" a minimum of 500 dollars in gross sales income during the prior two years is required. One must apply to the Town Board of Assessors for consideration, and the status must be renewed every year. A reduced property tax is applied if approved. There are approximately 2277 acres of land classified under Chapter 61A Farm Lands in West Brookfield.

Chapter 61 B Recreation Land: Private Recreation land must have a minimum of five acres that is left wild and/or maintained for wildlife habitat or used for recreational purposes by the public or a private non-profit group. One must apply to the Town Board of Assessors for consideration and the status must be renewed every year. A reduced property tax results if approved. There are 148 acres of lands in West Brookfield that are classified as Chapter 61 B Recreation Lands.

Private Tax Exempt Land: While publicly owned property is the most highly protected from future development, private tax-exempt land does offer some protection. Types of private tax-exempt lands include those lands owned by not-for-profit corporations, such as housing authorities, religious institutions and charitable organizations. Although these uses are tax exempt, the land is privately owned, and the owners have the right to sell or develop this property for other uses. Land of this type is located throughout West Brookfield and owned by a variety of churches, schools and non-profit organizations, including The Trustees of Reservations and totals 212 acres.

Opportunity Areas

Opportunities certainly exist in West Brookfield to expand its inventory of publicly available open space and recreation land. The following table describes some of the unique or natural lands in West Brookfield that are not presently protected and should be considered for protection. This expansion should be consistent with the Town's policies towards open space acquisition and community needs. The next sections discuss the Town's open space and recreation goals, and summarize the needs of the community. The final section identifies the Five-Year Action Plan for implementation of response to community and regional needs.

Table 1.2: Unique or Natural Lands in West Brookfield

Name	Address/Zoning	Protect Status	Potential Use and Condition
Ragged Hill	Northwest corner of Town	N	Nature trails, vistas, hiking, horseback riding are but a few of the potential future uses of the area.
Mill Brook Valley Floodplain	Headwaters are located in the Town of New Braintree in a marsh off the Ware River.	N	The floodplain potential for passive and active recreation are the following: playgrounds, field sports, nature study, fishing, hiking, outdoor laboratory study areas, wildlife, and trails for horses and bicycles.
Sucker Brook Drainage Area	Originating in New Braintree, the brook flows south ending at Mill Brook.	N	Potential exists for its remaining in a natural state as a wildlife protection area. Hiking trails and nature study would be a feasible contribution to enjoy the natural beauty.
Lucy Stone Property	Northwest corner of Town, on Rotite 9 and Coys Hill Road	N	The Lucy Stone homestead could provide the town with a historic and natural resource that is open to the public for hiking and nature trails.
Quaboag River	The south bank of the Quaboag River	N	The south bank will provide opportunities for water resource protection. -
Land, within the right of way, at the intersection of rural roadways	Ragged Hill and Wickaboag Valley Road The 4 corners of Long Hill Road	N	The land at the intersections of these roads will provide natural open areas.
Route 9	Route 9 corridor from Coys Hill Road to the Ware Town line.	N	This stretch of Route 9 is a very scenic roadway.

Community Goals

Description of Process

The Town of West Brookfield appointed a Steering Committee in November of 2001 to guide and oversee the development of this Open Space and Recreation Plan. The participation process culminated in a Public Forum on April 3, 2002 to solicit feedback on draft goals and objectives that were developed from preliminary discussions with Town Boards, local conservation groups and interested persons. The forum was designed to encourage discussion on a myriad of open space and recreation issues and was important in the development and prioritization of action items included with the finalized goals and objectives.

The public meetings brought numerous diverse parties together to discuss local and regional open space and recreation issues and needs. The public forum was comprised of a PowerPoint presentation by Beals and Thomas, Inc., highlighting particular areas of the Plan that would need to be addressed, breakout sessions in smaller groups where participants could comment on issues of concern, and a reporting of the results of these smaller groups to the audience as a whole. Approximately 60 residents of West Brookfield participated in the public workshop, including members of the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Selectmen, Board of Health, Board of Assessors, Historical Commission and the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association. State Representative Anne Gobi and The Trustees of Reservations also participated in the forum. The general goals described below in this section, as well as the more refined "Goals and Objectives", and the "Five Year Action Plan", are all the result of individual and collective efforts of members of the above listed groups.

Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

Maintaining the town's rural character and ensuring that it is a scenic and green place to live, however, can work to increase growth pressures. The residents of West Brookfield clearly expressed their opinions as to what they want with regard to open space and recreation in the future, and what policies community leaders should implement to achieve that vision. The goals listed below would work toward creating an "ideal" open space system in Town and protecting those things that are important to its residents. These goals include:

- *Preserve West Brookfield's rural, small-town character by identifying, preserving and protecting important historic, cultural and natural resources.*
- *Enhance West Brookfield's natural environment by taking advantage of local and regional linkage of open space in the creation of greenways.*
- *Increase environmental awareness and understanding amongst West Brookfield's entire community.*
- *Protect and enhance the quality of the West Brookfield's surface and groundwater as a source of drinking water and for wildlife and recreational use.*
- *Preserve, protect and manage fields and forests.*
- *Provide adequate recreational opportunities for all residents of West Brookfield.*
- *Manage West Brookfield's impacts of development through the refinement and enhancement of local regulations and bylaws.*

Analysis of Needs

Summary of Resource Protection Needs

West Brookfield has many valuable land and water resources that should be carefully managed to ensure their long-term protection. The abundant acreage of forests, wetlands, waters and open space succinctly define the community and give it unique characteristics that set it apart from other places.

Conservation Land: Outside of West Brookfield's center, most remaining land is undeveloped. Although Town, State and local conservation groups own over one thousand acres of permanently protected land in Town, even more remains threatened by impending development. There are thousands more acres of unprotected woodlands and natural areas that are an important part of the rural landscape.

Contributing to these undeveloped areas are more than 3700 acres of land that is considered "temporarily protected", in the State's Chapter 61, 61A and 61B Program. Approximately half of this land is used for agriculture in some form (field crops, orchards, productive woodlands, pastures and wetlands) while the other half remains in long-term forestry management. There exists an opportunity for West Brookfield to expand and link its open space inventory by acquiring rights to these lands when they are removed from the Chapter 61, 61 A and 61 B Programs. Acquisition of these lands if they are removed from the program will also provide an opportunity to secure lands within the aquifer, along sensitive wetlands and waterways and to preserve scenic views. This would go a long way toward maintaining community character by preserving the general rural character of the Town.

The Rock House Reservation is presently one of the land holdings of The Trustees of Reservations that is open to the public. The Rock House reservation is a naturally created rock shelter that was used by Native Americans. The Trustees increased their holdings to include the Lucy Stone property and is working with the Town and State Division of Fish and Game to determine an ownership and management structure that ensures public access.

Recreation Land: Lake Wickaboag provides much of West Brookfield's recreation opportunities. The Town Beach is West Brookfield's primary recreation site; the Recreation Committee conducts swimming lessons during the summer. There is also a public launching area on the Lake. There is also a small town-owned beach on the West side of Lake Wickaboag. Other recreational facilities are located at the West Brookfield elementary school and the Quaboag Regional Middle-High School in Warren is available to West Brookfield residents. The recreation department uses the facilities at both schools for their summer programs. While these appear to be adequate facilities given the size of West Brookfield, additional recreational facilities may be needed to accommodate additional residents or to better meet the age demographics of the Town. The water quality of the lake and its beaches is also of concern given past pollution problems. If these pollution problems persist, West Brookfield will have to limit the available use of its primary recreation destination.

Water Resources

West Brookfield has water bodies and waterways that serve as natural and recreational resources. The Quaboag River, Lake Wickaboag, Brookhaven Lake and the Town's two water supply wells are the major water resources that need to be protected in the future. The protection of these waters will ensure a high and healthy quality of life in West Brookfield for years to come.

Water Supply: The two major wells in West Brookfield are located in proximity to Route 9. Well 1, which provides the majority of West Brookfield's water is located approximately 400 feet from Route 9. Protection of the land on both sides of the Quaboag River from the State Fish and Game land to the Warren boundary will help to protect the town's well field(s).

Recreational Waters: Surface water quality is the issue of most concern that has somewhat limited recreational activity on waterways and water bodies in West Brookfield. In particular, primarily non-point source pollution and eutrophication (noxious plant growth) have affected Lake Wickaboag, the Town's most popular water resource. Protection of the Quaboag River, which is presently designated as a Class B waterway, suitable for fishing and swimming, is also paramount. If left unchecked, opportunities for water-based activities will decrease.

Monitoring and maintaining valuable recreational water resources will ensure the adequate provision of water-based activities for years to come in West Brookfield. In order to address the Quaboag River, West Brookfield must work with upstream communities. Awareness of the effect of adjacent land uses on waterways should help to mitigate non-point source pollution and restore both larger and smaller waterways. Protecting land along the Quaboag could help to protect the River's scenic nature into the future.

The shores of Lake Wickaboag are the Town's most densely settled area. The Lake, itself, is the focus of water-based recreation in both the summer and winter. The Lake needs protection both from sediments and pollutants from the Mill Brook and Sucker Brook watersheds, and from pollution by residential sewage systems.

Summary of Community Needs

While there are no specific needs identified in terms of recreation or facilities (ie.: there is no pressing need for a new school building, etc.) it was expressed that the creation of more recreation opportunities for younger people was desired. Some additional suggestions that resulted from the public forum were additional ballfields, a public swimming pool, additional hiking trails, and a trail map for recreation purposes.

Summary of Management Needs

Management Issues: Consider a change in ownership of the Town-owned lands along Route 9 to the Conservation Commission. Consider creation of a Cluster Subdivision Bylaw as a means of creating contiguous open space in conjunction with new residential development.

Threatened Areas: The Sucker Brook was home to the first mill in town. The Brook originates in New Braintree and flows south, into Mill Brook. It abuts the State Forest and two small ponds. The Sucker Brook Drainage Area was indicated in the 1986 plan as a Unique or Natural Area. Additionally, the area beyond the Quaboag Wildlife Management Area along the Quaboag River should be focused upon as a way to maintain a contiguous corridor or buffer along this unique and ecologically significant Town resource.

Areas along the Mill Brook, despite being within the Historic District are subject to development potential due to the lack of permanently protected land adjacent to the Brook. This undeveloped area helps to maintain the groundwater aquifer

Special Opportunities: The town should consider how the Community Preservation Act could help them to achieve the Open Space and Recreation goals. Opportunities exist for the acquisition of open space through tax title takings.

Goals and Objectives

The following general goals are those identified in "Community Goals", and are followed by objectives that determine specific recommendations in the "Five-Year Action Plan". These goals and objectives were composed on the basis of the "Analysis of Needs" and broad public input received from local residents, Town boards and local conservation groups during the meetings of the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee and the public forum.

Goals	Objectives
1. Promote the preservation of West Brookfield's important water resources.	a) Promote the preservation of ground water resources. b) Improve and maintain surface water quality.
2. Promote the preservation of the important land resources in West Brookfield.	a) Preserve lands that support agricultural uses. b) Protect lands of scenic value c) Preserve land for historical and natural purposes d) Preserve lands to maintain aquifer and surface water health.
3. Provide recreational opportunities for all West Brookfield residents.	a) Update facilities to meet ADA requirements. b) Explore special opportunities for recreational facilities c) Provide recreation opportunities for younger residents.
4. Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas of West Brookfield.	a) Implement strategies that will facilitate the care of recreation and conservation areas. b) Work with the state and other private land conservation agencies to develop a plan for the maintenance and management of open space and recreation areas in West Brookfield.
5. Promote opportunities for the linkage of West Brookfield's open space.	a) Work to link local open space and recreation areas to each other. b) Work with neighboring towns to link adjacent open space and recreation areas. c) Create larger areas of contiguous open space in ecologically sensitive areas.

Goals	Objectives
6. Increase educational awareness regarding resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Educate the public about available recreational, cultural and natural resources. b) Instruct the public on non-pollutive land and water practices.
7. Use regulations to balance development with the preservation of open space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Modify or create bylaws to further open space preservation and prevent environmental degradation. b) Lessen environmental impact of development through stricter wetlands and erosion control by-laws and certification of vernal pools.
8. Promote preservation of West Brookfield's community character.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protect the Town Common. b) Preserve large tracts of land. c) Work with state and local officials to establish funds for land purchases. d) Work to acquire lands of scenic values. e) Implement strategies to maintain the rural character of Rte. 9 and Rte. 67.
9. Promote the protection of agricultural lands within West Brookfield.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protect active agricultural operations in Town and undeveloped land suitable for farming. b) Work with appropriate authorities and stakeholders to endure the viability of existing farming operations.

Five Year Action Plan

This action plan builds on the "Goals and Objectives" by developing specific strategies to be completed by responsible parties, and assigning each a time frame in which to be completed. The actions listed below are steps to accomplish the outlined objectives, developed through input received from public outreach efforts by the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee. Figure 1-2 provides a map showing some of the "Five Year Action Plan" elements.

Objectives	Actions	Year
Goal – Promote the preservation of West Brookfield’s important water resources		
1.) Promote the preservation of ground water resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Monitor septic systems failures, especially near well sites and within known aquifer areas. b) Sign official Memoranda of Understanding (MOU's) with neighboring towns fostering communication on projects affecting West Brookfield's water resources. c) Develop and distribute a brochure detailing pollution-safe practices for watershed residents, e.g., natural vegetated buffer, use of fertilizers and herbicides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,2,3,4,5 1,2 1
2.) Improve and maintain surface water quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work regionally to improve water quality of the Quaboag River. b) Provide incentives for farmers to keep natural vegetated buffer along rivers and streams. c) Work with Chicopee Watershed Association to protect waterways. d) Monitor septic system failures in homes upgradient of Brookhaven Lake, Lake Wickaboag and tributaries to these water bodies. e) Establish a workgroup to investigate bacteria and algae problems evident in Lake Wickaboag and provide viable solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,2,3,4,5 1,2,3,4,5 1,2,3,4,5 1,2,3,4,5 1
Goal – Promote the preservation of the important land resources in West Brookfield		
3.) Preserve lands that support agricultural uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Support key applications of Chapter lands. b) Attempt to purchase lands that are withdrawn from Chapter 61A through the process of right of first refusal, then place a permanent restriction on them to maintain their existing use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,2,3,4,5 2,3,4,5
4.) Protect lands of scenic value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Propose amendment of the zoning bylaw to promote the preservation of open space in residential development (Cluster Subdivisions) b) Prioritize areas of scenic value and cross reference with undeveloped lands. Attempt to purchase these lands or restrict use of these lands to maintain their scenic qualities. c) Propose an amendment to the scenic road bylaw to encompass scenic vistas and other outlooks to prevent loss of these resources. d) Encourage the use of Chapter 61 and the APR program to maintain lands of scenic value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 2,3,4,5 2,3 1,2,3,4,5

5) Preserve land for historic and natural purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work with The Trustees of Reservations to acquire the Lucy Stone property b) Develop a prioritized list of specific parcels to target for acquisition. c) Continue to negotiate for rights to open space during all approval processes. d) Continue to work with private land trusts on land purchases. e) Encourage and support key applications under Chapter 61, 61A & 61B. 	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3,4,5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3,4,5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3,4,5</p>
6.) Preserve lands to maintain aquifer and surface water health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Encourage use of Chapter 61, APR and Conservation Restriction programs to protect lands along Mill Brook, Sucker Brook, and near existing town wells. b) Continue to utilize and strengthen water protection district bylaw to prevent degradation from development. c) Protect open lands adjacent to surface water bodies to maintain a buffer and prevent erosion from nearby development. d) Address the rate and type of development surrounding Lake Wickaboag. 	<p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3,4,5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3,4,5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3,4,5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2</p>

Goal – Promote the preservation of the important land resources in West Brookfield		
7.) Update facilities to meet ADA requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Incorporate Section 504 recommendations into capital improvements for Town and school associated facilities. b) Improve parking lot access at the Town Beach on Lake Wickaboag to meet ADA requirements and be handicapped van accessible. 	<p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3,4,5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2</p>
8.) Explore special opportunities for recreational facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work to expand hiking trails in Town, particularly focusing on areas that will provide exceptional views or more challenging climbs. b) Explore alternate swimming facilities to those provided by Lake Wickaboag (perhaps a regional swimming pool facility). c) Prepare a trail map of hiking trails accessible to the public. d) Inventory existing trails on properties to assist CMPRC with trail planning efforts in region. 	<p style="text-align: center;">3,4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2,3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1,2</p>
9.) Provide recreation opportunities for younger residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work with adjacent towns to establish a location and raise funds for the creation of a regional skateboard park for youths. b) Work with public and private landowners to create more mountain biking opportunities on selected trails throughout town or state owned lands. 	<p style="text-align: center;">1,2,3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3,4</p>

Goal – Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas of West Brookfield.		
10.) Implement strategies that will facilitate the care of recreation and conservation areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Encourage oversight of public lands to ensure proper use by residents and appropriate maintenance. b) Create a guide to be distributed at major conservation areas encouraging proper use of trails and facilities, including proper disposal of waste, remaining on marked trails and using trails only of their intended purposes. 	<p>1,2,3,4,5</p> <p>3</p>
11.) Work with the state and other private land conservation agencies to develop a plan for the maintenance and management of open space and recreation areas in West Brookfield.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work with conservation area officials (both state and local) to educate residents of proper facilities use (perhaps through a series of informational signs posted at area entrances). b) Work to create a Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and the State about the use of ATV's on public lands. c) Identify areas of State owned land with potential for expanded hiking trails, and attempt to link these trails with those on Town owned lands to create a larger network of trails . 	<p>2,3</p> <p>1</p> <p>1,2,3</p>
12) Work to link local open space and recreation areas to each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify and map areas that would help to develop the Town's greenway system. b) Identify private trails that could be used as linkages to open space & gain permission for their use. 	<p>1,2</p> <p>1,2,3,4,5</p>

Goal – Promote opportunities for the linkage of West Brookfield's open space		
13) Work to link local open space and recreation areas to each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify and map areas of potential land linkages. b) Attempt to purchase lands that further this regional open space goal and prioritize the list of potentially available lands for purchase. 	<p>1,2</p> <p>1,2,3,4,5</p>
14.) Create larger areas of contiguous open space in ecologically sensitive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify and map lands along the Quaboag River, Lake Wickaboag, Brookhaven Lake and tributaries to these water bodies that are under Chapter 61 or are currently undeveloped. b) Work to permanently restrict those areas of Town-owned land greater than 20 acres. 	<p>1,2</p> <p>1,2,3,4,5</p>

Goal – Increase educational awareness regarding resources		
15) Educate the public about available recreational, cultural and natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Contact a local land trust, non-profit group or interested group of residents to create a trail guide with maps for public access lands. b) Create a map summarizing local conservation lands, allowed uses etc. for distribution or posting at Town Hall. 	<p>2,3</p> <p>3,4</p>
16) Instruct the public as to non-pollutive land and water practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work to create an informative flyer/brochure to be sent to each household addressing the problems of water pollution and responsible disposal of household hazardous waste. 	<p>2</p>

	b) Continue to work with Lake associations to resolve water pollution issues related to septic systems and development on lands upgradient of local surface waters.	1,2,3,4,5
	c) Encourage the use of non-pollutive fertilizers on area lawns.	1,2,3,4,5

Goal – Use regulations to balance development with the preservation of open space

17.) Modify or create bylaws to further open space preservation and prevent environmental degradation.	a) Continue to use Site Plan Review, the Watershed Protection District and other bylaws to limit the Coverage of lots through development.	1,2,3,4,5
	b) Investigate the benefits of creating a Cluster Subdivision Bylaw for residential lands or a cluster bylaw for industrial/commercial development.	1,2
	c) Encourage developers to establish conservation restrictions on open lands within proposed subdivisions.	1,2,3,4,5
18.) Lessen environmental impact of development through stricter wetlands and erosion control by-laws and certification of vernal pools.	a) Work with local boards and Selectmen to investigate the viability of strengthening local erosion control by-laws in association with development in sensitive areas.	1,2,3
	b) Work with the Conservation Commission to encourage certification of vernal pools in town.	2,3
	c) Work with state wetlands organizations, Conservation Commission, and landowners to create a comprehensive wetland bylaw that goes beyond the scope of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.	1,2

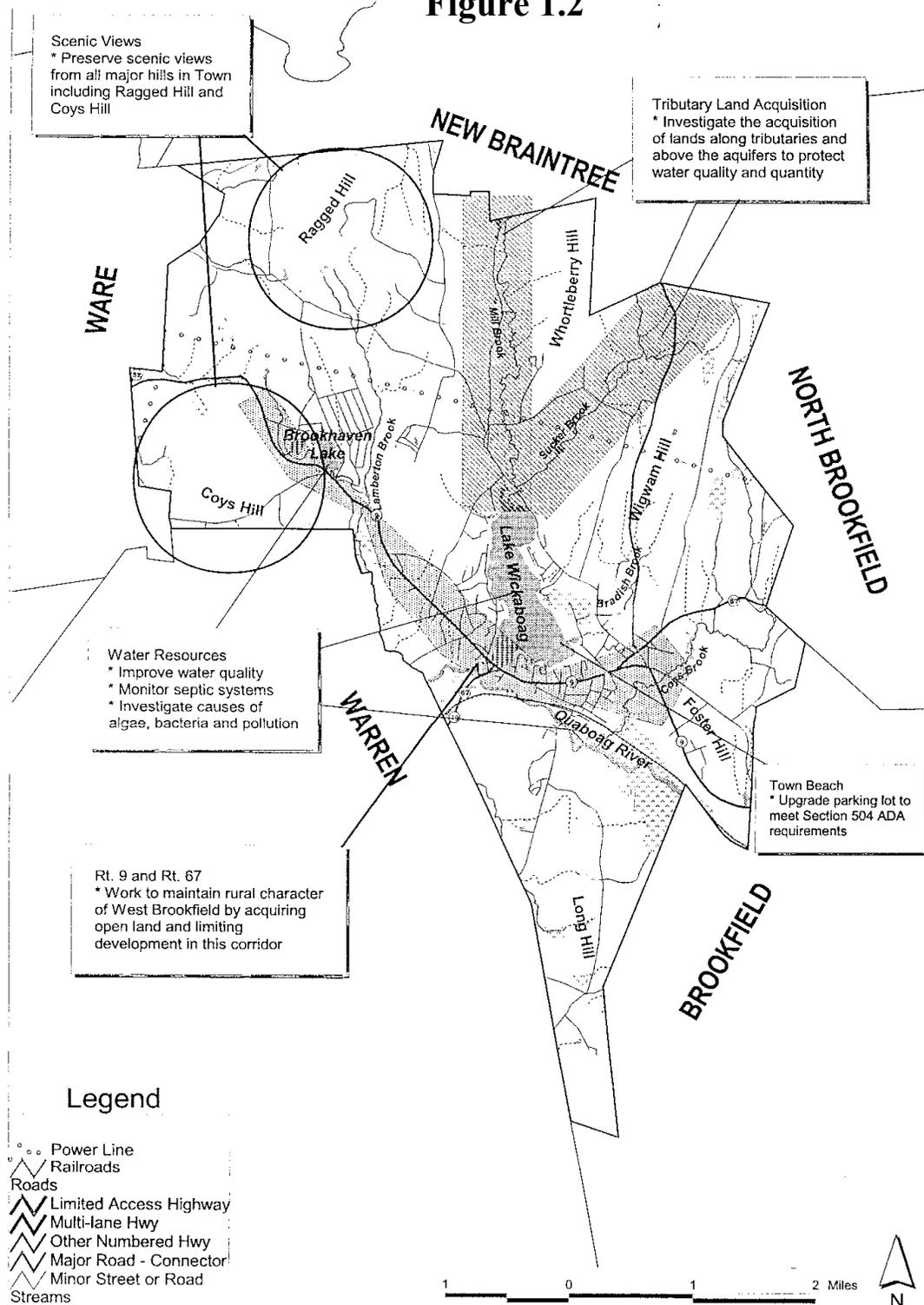
Goal – Promote preservation of West Brookfield’s community character

19.) Protect the Town Common.	a) Continue oversight of development in the vicinity of the Town Common through the Town Common Overlay District.	1,2,3,4,5
	b) Establish an association of local businesses, area landowners and homeowners in the vicinity of the Common to provide input on development in the and to create a vision for its continued reservation.	2,3
20.) Preserve large tracts of land.	a) Work with Town officials, local land trusts and the State to establish a fund for purchases of larger tracts of land.	1,2
	b) Identify and prioritize those lands in town that are most critical to maintaining West Brookfield's community character.	1,2,3
21.) Work with state and local officials to establish funds for land purchases.	a) Identify and prioritize lands in Chapter 61, including the expiration date of their enrollment in the program, to potentially purchase under first right of refusal.	1,2
	b) Investigate funding options through grants, state matching funds or other programs to be utilized in purchasing lands.	2,3

	c) Educate the local community on the necessity and opportunities provided through purchasing additional open space lands.	1,2,3,4,5
22.) Work to acquire lands of scenic values.	a) Identify lands in the vicinity of the major hills in town that are undeveloped or in Chapter programs to secure scenic vistas for acquisition. b) Encourage the use of APR's by landowners for the remaining open fields and meadows in Town. c) Work with local landowners and town officials to prioritize lands of scenic value for acquisition.	1,2 1,2,3,4,5 1,2
23.) Implement strategies to maintain the rural character of Rte. 9 and Rte. 67.	a) Use existing bylaws to oversee development within the General Zoning District along Rte. 9 to ensure compatibility with existing structures. b) Improve lands use regulations that apply to development along Rt. 9 and Rt. 67 to address visual character, screening of new development and maintenance of existing views.	1,2,3,4,5 1,2,3,4,5

Goal – Promote the protection of agricultural lands within West Brookfield		
24.) Protect active agricultural operations in Town and undeveloped land suitable for farming.	a) Work with local farm owners to educate them about State and Federally funded aid programs. b) Inventory currently active farm operations and those areas that have a recent history of farming. c) Include agricultural lands on priority lands for acquisition by the Town or land trusts.	1,2,3,4,5 2,3 1,2,3,4,5
25.) Work with appropriate authorities and stakeholders to ensure the viability of existing farming operations	a) Initiate information gathering and sharing sessions between farmers and local officials to address concerns. b) Set goals of how viable farming operations can coexist with growth.	1,2 1,2,3

Figure 1.2



Scenic Views
 * Preserve scenic views from all major hills in Town including Ragged Hill and Coys Hill

Tributary Land Acquisition
 * Investigate the acquisition of lands along tributaries and above the aquifers to protect water quality and quantity

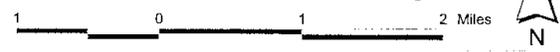
Water Resources
 * Improve water quality
 * Monitor septic systems
 * Investigate causes of algae, bacteria and pollution

Rt. 9 and Rt. 67
 * Work to maintain rural character of West Brookfield by acquiring open land and limiting development in this corridor

Town Beach
 * Upgrade parking lot to meet Section 504 ADA requirements

Legend

- Power Line
- Railroads
- Roads
 - Limited Access Highway
 - Multi-lane Hwy
 - Other Numbered Hwy
 - Major Road - Connector
 - Minor Street or Road
- Streams
 - Perennial
 - Intermittent
- Wetlands
- Surface Water



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Action Map

Source: MassGIS
 May 1, 2002
 BTI Project No. 1666

Figure 9-1
 West Brookfield, MA

Section 2: *Riparian Corridors*

The preceding section summarized the West Brookfield Open Space and Recreation Plan, which identified actions to address key resource protection needs. A community survey in 2003 found that respondents feel it is very important to protect local ponds, streams and water supplies for clean drinking water, wildlife and recreational use. Two of the water protection actions presented in the Open Space Plan are to “develop and distribute a brochure detailing pollution-safe practices for watershed residents” and to “provide incentives for farmers to keep natural vegetated buffers along rivers and streams”. This section supplies information that can help the Town to protect buffers for the Mill Brook, Sucker Brook and the Quaboag River.

The lands beside waterways, also known as riparian corridors, are especially important to sustain the ecologic functions and overall health of local brooks and rivers. The riparian corridor links wetlands, rare habitats, ponds and other natural resources, as well as preventing impacts from nearby land uses. Following is an assessment of some issues relating to riparian corridors:

Water Supplies:

- Surface water supplies - waterways are sources of all existing/potential supplies;
- Groundwater - aquifers connect with waterways, and highest yield sources tend to be located in riparian corridors (upland recharge areas also need protection).

Biodiversity:

- Aquatic species depend on productivity, integrity and health of riparian ecosystems;
- Riparian areas including associated wetlands provide richest habitats for wildlife & birds, as well as migration routes that connect with large conservation areas;
- Most rare/endangered species habitats are closely linked with riparian corridors.

Recreation and Tourism:

- Waterways offer fishing, boating and swimming;
- Adjacent riverfront areas provide river access and opportunities for walking, hiking, bird watching and other popular activities;
- Access to water is central to wide array of tourist attractions.

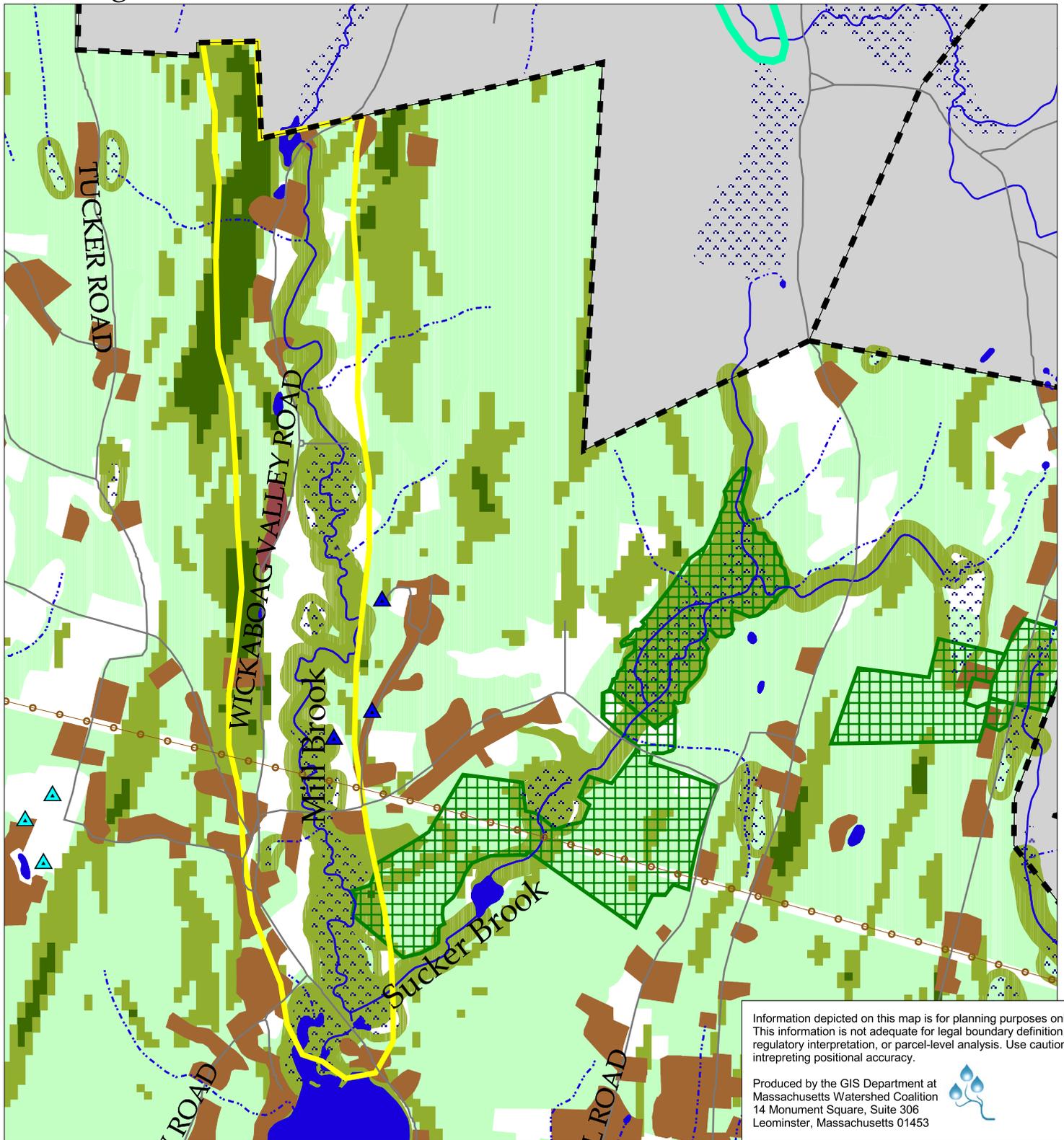
Community Development:

- Regulations such as the Wetlands/Rivers Act, and Title V tend to make riverfront development difficult;
- Local concerns relative to flooding, water supplies, pollution, etc. favor placement of housing, businesses and roads away from riparian areas.

Local waterways and adjacent lands are among the natural resources that people value most in a community. As a result, cities and towns across the nation have taken positive steps to preserve riverfront areas for recreation opportunities and tourism attractions.

This section identifies existing protected and unprotected lands beside the Mill Brook, Sucker Brook and the Quaboag River. The methodology used to map these riparian corridors is described, and an analysis of each waterway is presented. The concluding part of this section discusses recommendations for actions to protect and enhance public access to the Town’s waterways.

Figure 1.3: Mill Brook & Sucker Brook Corridor, West Brookfield



Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Produced by the GIS Department at Massachusetts Watershed Coalition
 14 Monument Square, Suite 306
 Leominster, Massachusetts 01453



Map Sources
 GIS data sources include the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition and MassGIS.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town boundaries West Brookfield Surrounding towns Roads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local roads Interstate State & U.S. Federal roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest Unforested Land Water Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stream Intermittent stream River, stream Lake, pond Wetland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolute Development Constraints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste Disposal Developed Land Greater than 25% Slope Transmission lines Public water supplies Ground Water Transient Non-Community Protected Open Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial Development Constraints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 Year Floodplain Riparian & Wetland buffer 15-25% Slope Zone ii State Register of Historic Places State Register Historic Places Priority habitats
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Riparian Corridor Maps

Riparian areas that are important to protect water quality and aquatic life can vary in width depending upon adjacent topography, vegetation, habitats, land uses and other factors. The geographic information used to estimate riparian corridors in Town included wetlands, floodplains and topographic contours. For mapping purposes, a 200-foot wide corridor was defined for each waterway and adjusted to include wetlands, 100-year floodplains, and important wildlife habitats. Permanently protected lands were located from GIS datalayers and a parcel map based on Town assessor information. The land uses surrounding the riparian corridor are also shown, using this 1999 GIS information. Composite maps showing the riparian corridors for the Mill Brook, Sucker Brook and the Quaboag River were produced with this method. Each map is discussed below, followed by recommendations for proposed community actions.

- 1) Mill Brook runs from the north border of West Brookfield, flowing south through Town, into Lake Wickaboag, in the center of West Brookfield. Wickaboag Valley Road also runs north-south, paralleling the course of the Brook. The Mill Brook map, Figure 1.3, shows nearly all of the Brook's corridor is undeveloped. The majority of the land bordering Mill Brook is currently in agricultural use, with associated wetlands and grazed or mowed meadows. Scenic views are found along much of the Brook, with pastoral areas prevalent. The length of the Brook is within the Town's floodplain zoning district, which requires more stringent review of all proposed development. In addition, there are extensive wetlands along the south half of the Brook that can be preserved by the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). Three interim wellhead protection areas (IWPA) are located near the middle of the brook, around three separate groundwater wells. Each IWPA is a primary protected recharge area for a groundwater source, with a 400-foot protected radius around each.

South of Tyler Road, a small sand and gravel operation and a logging/sawmill operation are active. Although these industries are located on the opposite side of Wickaboag Valley Road from the Brook, the road is within three feet of the Brook in some spots, with no wetland buffers. North of Shea Road, newly built houses and a trailer park on Madden Road are located on the east side and uphill from the Brook. At this location, there are steep slopes down to the brook and limited wetland areas along the shore of Mill Brook. Due to this configuration, care must be taken if development continues to occur here. Below Shea Road, the Brook briefly flows beside State owned forest land before it enters Lake Wickaboag. The Rivers Protection Act (RPA) can help to preserve a 200-foot wide buffer on each side of the Brook, but public access is not provided by the RPA. The RPA offers this same protection for the entire Brook. A core habitat area identified by the State BioMap runs the length of Mill Brook and permanent protection is needed for this important habitat area.

- 2) Sucker Brook flows from the northeast portion of West Brookfield, in a southwesterly direction, merging with Mill Brook, just before it empties into Lake Wickaboag. Figure 1.3 shows that riparian lands east and west of the southern end of the Brook are contained within the West Brookfield State Forest, owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. While only a small portion of the Brook lies within the Forest, large buffer areas surrounding Sucker Brook are permanently protected. The lower half of the brook corridor, between Shea Road and Wickaboag Valley Road, has several wetland complexes. Along the north half of

the Brook, the Sucker Brook Flood Control area owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation permanently protects additional riparian land. A wide floodplain area and wetland complex also exists in this vicinity. Both the State Forest and Flood Control areas are open to the public. Additionally, the core habitat identified by the State BioMap encompasses almost the entire length of Sucker Brook. There are short stretches of privately owned lands along Sucker Brook that can be partially protected by the Rivers Act.

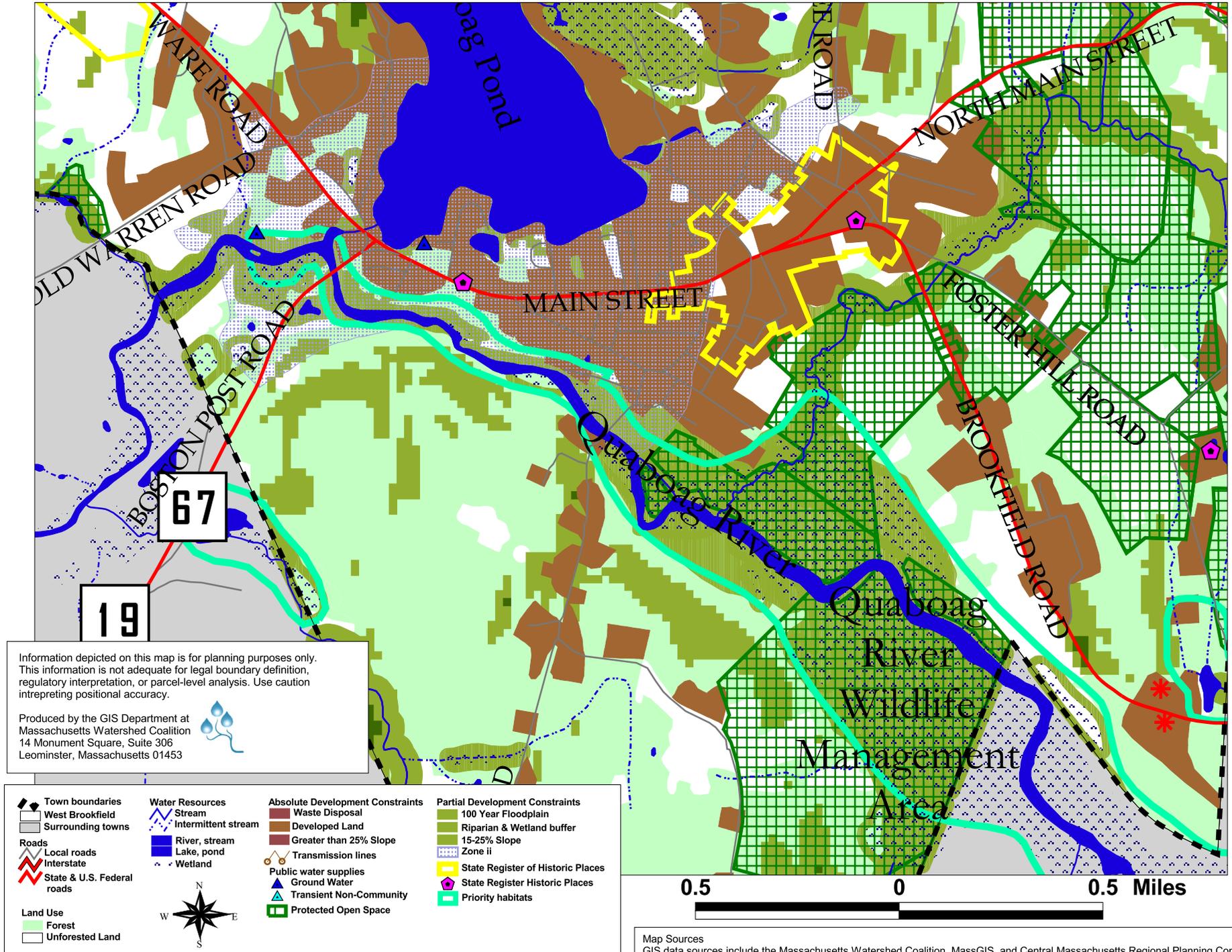
- 3) The Quaboag River flows through the southern part of West Brookfield, continuing on through the Towns of Brookfield and Warren, to the east and west, respectively. The Quaboag River map, Figure 1.4, shows the wide riparian area that includes extensive 100 year flood plains. The river, with many associated wetlands along its banks, is partially protected by the 200-foot buffer of the Rivers Protection Act (RPA) and the associated 100-foot wetlands buffer of the Wetlands Protection Act(WPA).

On the south side of the River at the border with the Town of Brookfield, a large area of the River and associated wetlands and uplands are protected by the Quaboag Wildlife Management Area (WMA) owned by the State Division of Fish and Game. Across from the WMA, the Quaboag meanders near an industrial area, where large wetlands abut the River. A short distance downstream from here, where the Quaboag is joined by Coys Brook, an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) protects a large portion of the riverbank. On the south side of the River across from the APR land, a floodplain area with some wetlands is part of a large developable parcel with frontage on Long Hill Road.

Downstream of Long Hill Road, access is limited due to the Conrail Railroad Tracks that parallel the river and large wetlands between the tracks and the riverbank. Near the center of Town and Lake Wickaboag, portions of the Quaboag River are partially protected by the Town's Zone II Aquifer Protection District and the Flood Plain District. The Wetlands Protection Act and Rivers Protection Act also affect the land uses allowed along the Quaboag River. These state and municipal regulations can help to preserve this riparian area, but do not provide for public access.

Near the border with the Town of Warren, the Quaboag flows near the southern end of Lake Wickaboag, where an unnamed brook, flows from the Pond into the River. At this point the River crosses under Route 67 and an access road leads from Route 67 to a large area of land adjacent to the River. This 46-acre parcel has a house with adjacent fields in agricultural use. This parcel is flat with good soil and has limited protection provided by the Wetlands Protection Act, the Rivers Protection Act and the Town's Zone II Aquifer Protection District. These regulations affect the land uses but do not enable public access to the riparian corridor.

Figure 1.4: Quaboag River Corridor, West Brookfield



Map Sources
GIS data sources include the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition, MassGIS, and Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Recommendations for Town Waterways

As recommended in the West Brookfield Open Space and Recreation Plan, retention of natural buffers beside rivers and streams will help protect the quality and health of the Town's water resources and water supplies. The analysis above finds that many of the lands along the major waterways in West Brookfield are largely preserved by permanently protected open spaces, as well as state and municipal laws.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan also recommends preserving the Town's natural resources and creating greenways for recreation uses. The many parcels of permanently protected land beside the Quaboag River, Sucker Brook and Mill Brook offer opportunities to create riparian greenways. The recommendations below are proposed to enhance waterway protection, to preserve the Town's rural and scenic qualities, and to afford opportunities for residents to enjoy these community assets.

- Prepare a watershed management plan for the lands that drain into Mill Brook and Sucker Brook, which are the source of water for Lake Wickaboag. In addition to the Lake Wickaboag watershed, a management plan should be prepared for the Brookhaven Lake watershed. Watershed management plans can help to minimize the impacts of existing and potential land uses in order to maintain the quality of surface and ground waters that flow into the Lake Wickaboag, Brookhaven Lake and the Town well fields.
- Continue to apply the Rivers Protection Act and the Wetlands Protection Act to preserve natural buffers along Town waterways and associated wetland areas.
- Carefully review proposed land uses within the Town Zone II Protection District and the Flood Plain District. Consider opportunities to provide public access along the Quaboag River to create a riverfront trail system.
- Continue working with the Division of Fish and Game, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and The Trustees of Reservations to acquire conservation areas that preserve important habitats, scenic values, and increase public access to riparian corridors in West Brookfield.

Section 3: *Road Corridors*

The preservation of West Brookfield’s rural, small-town character is a central goal of the Town’s Open Space and Recreation Plan. This Plan identifies open space protection and retaining the rural landscapes along Route 9 and Route 67 as two key objectives towards this goal. The 2003 community survey found that respondents expressed near unanimous support for preserving scenic views and the rural character of roads¹ in Town. One of the major recommendations shown on the Open Space and Recreation Plan Action Map is to maintain the visual character of Routes 9 and 67 by acquiring open lands and limiting development of these road corridors.

As described in the preceding section, the corridors along waterways link many of the most important natural resources in Town. This corridor concept can also be applied to major roads, which connect the most important cultural and historic resources in Town. Routes 9 and 67 also connect West Brookfield with neighboring communities, and are the travel corridors most often used by residents and visitors. The preservation of the scenic landscapes along these roads is essential to sustain the Town’s small-town qualities.

Conversely, the alteration of major roads by new land uses can greatly affect residents’ “sense of place” and their perception of the rural character of West Brookfield. For example, the presence of many strip malls and large residential subdivisions on well-traveled routes in other small towns can diminish the rural scenery that initially attracted people to live in those communities. Although the extent of more intensive land uses may cover only a very small part of a town, the high visibility of these alterations can have a much greater impact on community character.

This section supplies information that can help retain the rural nature of major roads in Town. The methodology used to examine major travel routes is explained, and the concluding recommendation for a Rural Landscape Conservation District can preserve the “small-town atmosphere” and scenic qualities that West Brookfield residents prefer.

Road Corridors Map

Route 9 is the most heavily-traveled road in Town, and is named Brookfield Road east of the Common and Ware Road west of the Common. Brookfield Road is the primary entrance from the east, which presents visitors and residents with dramatic views of the Quaboag River valley. Ware Road is the main gateway from the west, which connects to employment and shopping areas in the neighboring Town of Ware. While less-traveled, North Brookfield Road (Route 67) and Boston Post Road (also Route 67) are the two main connections with other towns to the north and south of West Brookfield.

The visual corridors associated with roads vary greatly depending on the topography, vegetation and land uses. Entering Town from the west, steep wooded areas greatly limit views from Route

¹ The Town has designated 15 “Scenic Roads” that provide greater protection of trees and stone walls during road maintenance and improvement activities. Scenic roads in West Brookfield include: Coy Hill Road, Devil’s Elbow Road, Holmes Road, Foster Hill Road, Tucker Road, Pierce Road, Lyons Road, Kennedy Road, Davis Road, Richardson Road, Wigwam Road, Ragged Hill Road, Beaman Road, New Braintree Road, John Gilbert Road.

9. In contrast, the east end of Route 9 has open fields and a scenic overlook that extends the view for miles.

Permanently protected areas and existing land uses along these routes were identified from GIS data and Town assessor information. Areas considered protected from development include public lands owned by state agencies and the Town, as well as privately held lands of The Trustees of Reservations and farmlands protected by Agricultural Preservation Restrictions or by conservation restrictions.

A field tour of major roads was conducted to verify the land use data, and to examine the potential impacts of future development along the main entrances to Town. Parcel maps based on assessor information and maps showing zoning, wetlands, streams and other potential constraints were considered in determining likely areas for future development. Detailed soils maps, prepared by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, were also reviewed to identify potential limitations for residential uses. The findings for each of the major road corridors are summarized below.

- 1) Ware Road is an attractive entrance to Town, first heading uphill past steeply sloping forests that are privately owned, and then between woodlands owned by The Trustees of Reservations and forested parcels owned by the Division of Fish and Game. After a sharp curve in the road, Route 9 heads downhill past several homes and offers scenic views of Brookhaven Lake, which is surrounded by former vacation homes in a compact settlement pattern. Heading east from Brookhaven Lake, Route 9 winds past several more appealing homes, then past the Salem Cross Inn that offers picturesque scenes of rolling fields and woods. There are other very scenic fields on the north side of Route 9 across from the Inn. Heading east, Route 9 travels between more densely settled neighborhoods, then past exceptionally scenic views of Lake Wickaboag and the Quaboag River, until reaching the stately historic homes and municipal buildings that line Route 9 through the center of Town.

Much of the road corridor between the center and the Ware town line is preserved by existing residential uses and permanently protected properties. Only a mile of road corridor seems especially vulnerable to future residential subdivisions, but this short stretch has scenic fields and a wooded stream corridor, which add greatly to the pleasing rural qualities of Route 9.

- 2) Coming from Brookfield, the traveler on Route 9 is presented with pastoral scenes of the rolling Quaboag River valley that is set against steep wooded hills. The road here is wide, well-maintained and relaxing to drive. Views vary greatly in depth along the gentle slope down to the charming historic buildings surrounding the Town Common.

Existing residential areas and lands with Agricultural Preservation Restrictions will retain most of the scenery at the east end of Route 9. There are industrial uses at the entrance to Town, which are less compatible with the rural character of Route 9. In addition, there is a half-mile of road with large fields and farm structures that add to the dramatic view of the Quaboag valley. There is the potential for large lot residential uses along this stretch of road, which can alter this appealing landscape.

- 3) Heading toward the Common from North Brookfield, Route 67 provides a pleasing scenic entrance between farm fields and wooded hills, then offers attractive views of athletic fields and the West Brookfield Elementary School, an important community asset. Beautiful street trees border North Brookfield Road as it passes beside historic neighborhoods across from the Town Common. The entire length of Route 67 from town line to Route 9 is well-maintained and offers a very enjoyable drive into the center of Town. Nearly all this road corridor is preserved by the existing residential uses, Town properties and permanently protected farm lands.
- 4) The main gateway into Town from the south is the short stretch of Boston Post Road (Route 67) from the Warren town-line to Route 9. A small Town-owned recreation area supplies parking and tranquil views of the Quaboag River floodplain. This rural roadside landscape is vulnerable to potential residential subdivisions along this half-mile stretch of Route 67.

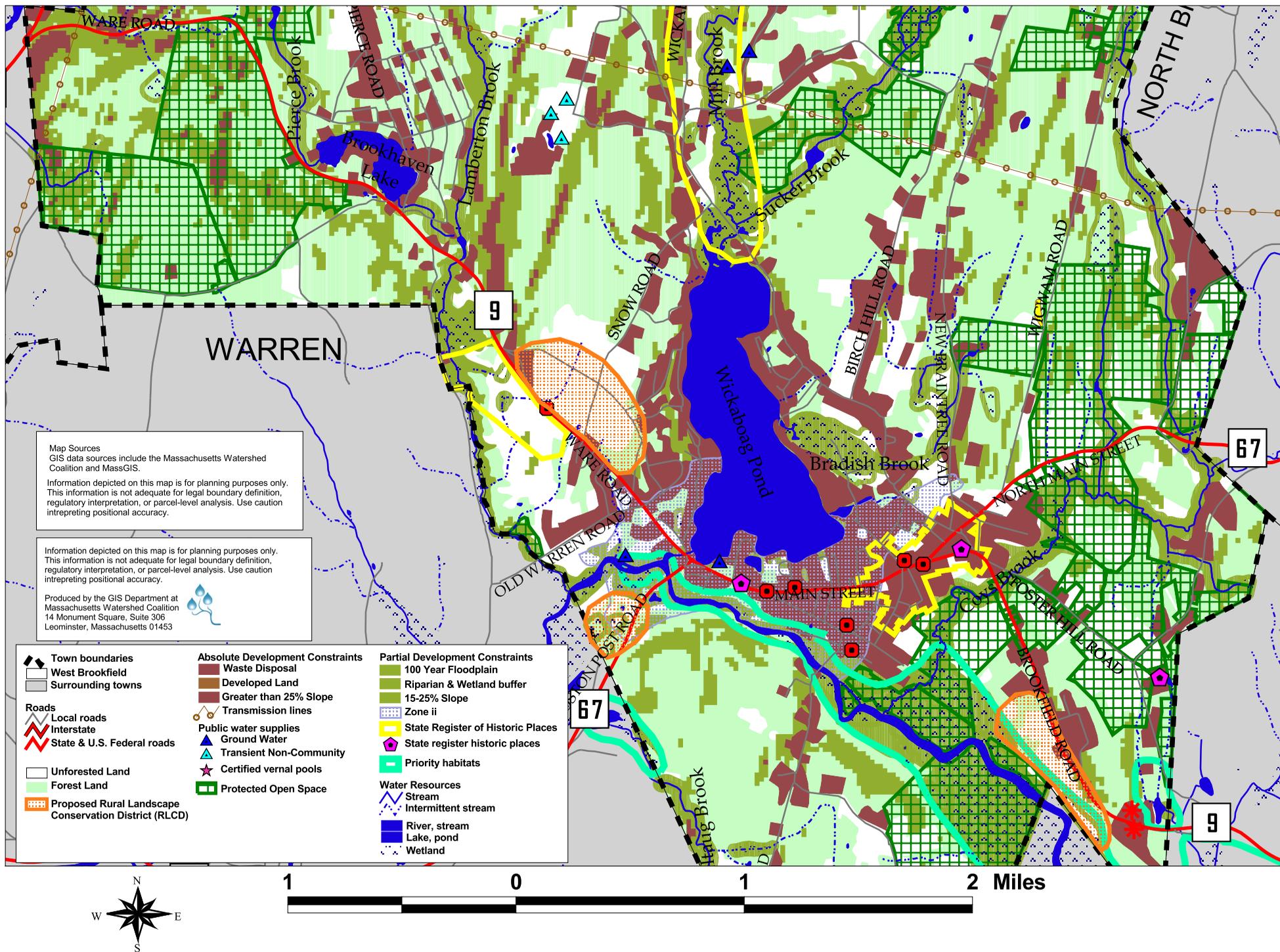
Recommendation for Road Corridors

The Town of Dudley zoning bylaw has established several small Conservation Districts to preserve important community resources. These special use regulations require land within the District to remain primarily undeveloped, and the permitted uses include: farming, conservation; historic feature; hunting preserve; park; parkway; playground; wood lot; reforestation area; wildlife reservation; watershed and water supply protection area; and nature center.

This zoning model can be applied to help preserve the scenic resources of major roads in West Brookfield. The analysis presented above finds that character of major roads in Town is largely preserved by protected open spaces and existing land uses. However, there are short stretches of Routes 9 and 67 that could be affected by future residential development on large lots. Alteration of roadside landscapes can affect the scenic resources that are important to Town residents and visitors. The recommendation below is proposed to help retain attractive entrances to the Town and preserve the rural character of West Brookfield.

- Consider establishing a Rural Landscape Conservation District to preserve the scenic resources on sections of major routes in Town (see Figure 1.5). This RLC District can integrate open-space subdivision criteria to cluster future residential uses in patterns that minimize the visual impact on views from the road (see Housing element of the Community Development Plan for additional information). Another option is to allow voluntary transfer of development rights, coupled with incentive for increased density, to relocate housing to other areas of Town.

Figure 1.5: Route 9 Corridor, West Brookfield



Section 4: *Land Use Suitability Criteria*

The following land use suitability criteria identify the lands that are suitable for development, the lands that are not suitable for development, and the lands that are suitable for development with certain constraints. These areas are shown by Figure 1.6, the Land Use Suitability Map.

1. Identify areas with absolute environmental or open space constraints.

These lands are not suitable for future residential, commercial or industrial uses:

- ◆ Wetlands
- ◆ Land with Slopes Greater than 25%
- ◆ Rivers, Lakes, and other Water Bodies
- ◆ Permanently Protected Open Space
- ◆ Public Water Supplies and Zone I Recharge Areas
- ◆ Certified Vernal Pools

2. Identify areas with potential or partial environmental constraints.

These lands are not absolutely constrained from development, but may be undesirable for future development due to potential environmental constraints:

- ◆ 100 Year Floodplain
- ◆ 100 Foot Buffer Area around Wetlands
- ◆ 200 Foot Resource Protection Area Surrounding Rivers and all Perennial Streams
- ◆ Land with Slopes between 15 to 25%
- ◆ Aquifer Protection District (Zone II)
- ◆ Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program Priority Habitat and Estimated Habitat areas

3. Identify areas with built or developed land uses.

These lands currently have residential buildings, commercial buildings, landfills and developed land uses. Some of these land uses are absolute constraints, others are partial constraints.

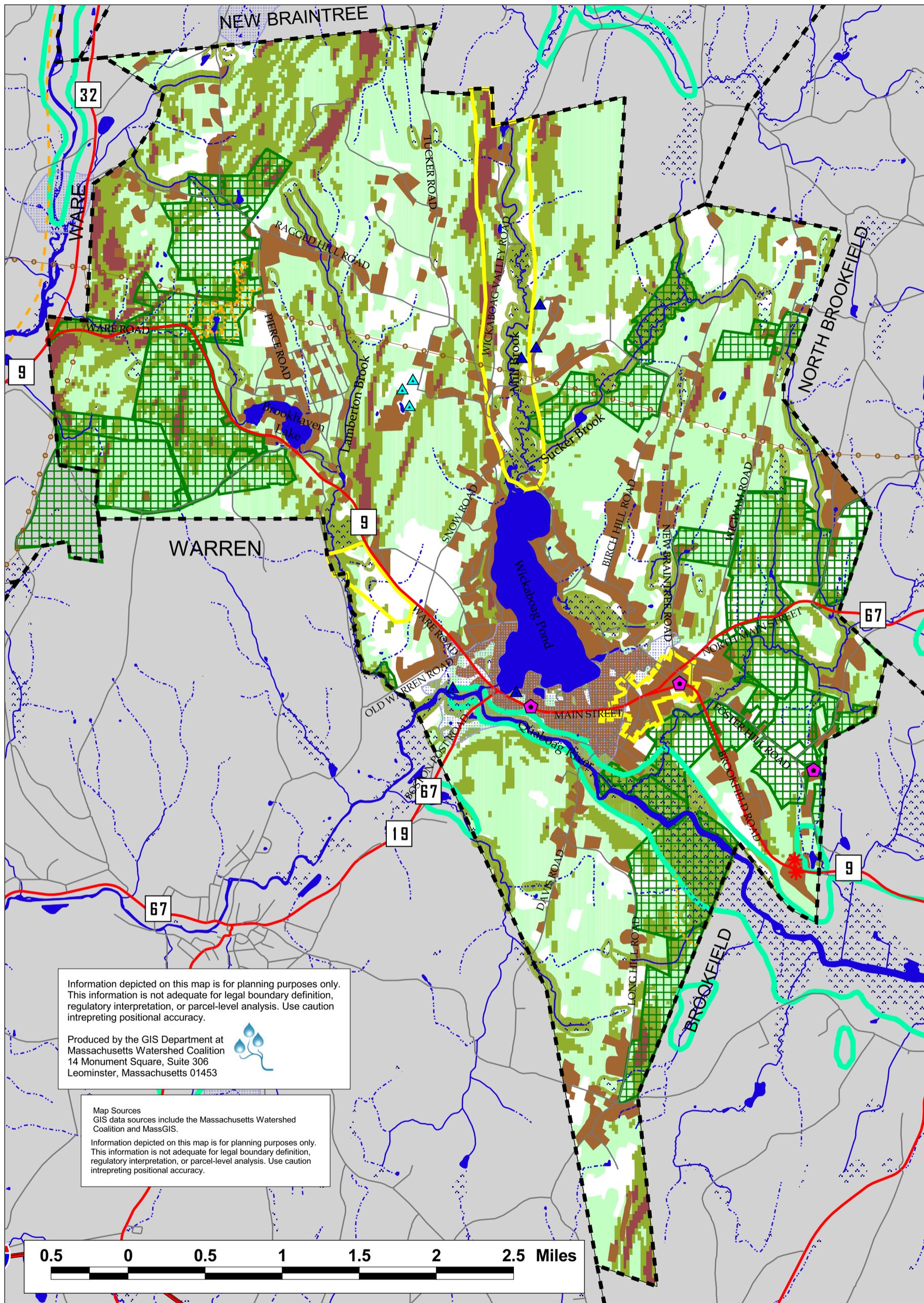
Absolute constraints:

- ◆ Transmission lines
- ◆ Developed Land (except mining)
- ◆ Solid Waste Areas (landfills)

Potential constraints:

- ◆ Mining Lands
- ◆ Brownfield Sites

Figure 1.6: Land Use Suitability, West Brookfield



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Produced by the GIS Department at
 Massachusetts Watershed Coalition
 14 Monument Square, Suite 306
 Leominster, Massachusetts 01453

Map Sources
 GIS data sources include the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition and MassGIS.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --- Town boundaries ▭ West Brookfield ▭ Surrounding towns --- Roads ▭ Local roads ▭ Interstate ▭ State & U.S. Federal roads ▭ Land Use ▭ Forest ▭ Unforested Land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Resources ▭ Stream ▭ Intermittent stream ▭ River, stream ▭ Lake, pond ▭ Wetland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolute Development Constraints ▭ Waste Disposal ▭ Developed Land ▭ Greater than 25% Slope ▭ Transmission lines Public water supplies ▭ Ground Water ▭ Transient Non-Community ▭ Protected Open Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial Development Constraints ▭ 100 Year Floodplain ▭ Riparian & Wetland buffer ▭ 15-25% Slope ▭ Zone II ▭ State Register of Historic Places ▭ State Register Historic Places ▭ Priority habitats ▭ BWP - Major
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CHAPTER 2

HOUSING ELEMENT

Preparation of this Community Development Plan is funded by the State’s Executive Order 418. The purpose of Executive Order 418 is to increase housing opportunities for a broad range of income levels by helping communities to plan for housing, economic development, open space protection, and transportation improvement.

Diverse, affordable housing is important for all communities. After paying housing costs, residents need adequate remaining income to cover other basic expenditures, including food, health care, utilities, and transportation. Housing is generally considered to be affordable when households spend no more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing costs. Under this definition, housing in West Brookfield is currently affordable for most residents.

Executive Order 418 also defines affordability based on spending no more than 30 percent of income on housing and EO418 created a new affordable housing certification process, using this definition. To obtain housing certification, communities must demonstrate that they are taking steps to increase their supply of housing that is affordable to individuals and families across a broad range of incomes. Housing certification is obtained on a year-to-year basis.

Although housing in West Brookfield is presently affordable for most residents, some have housing costs that are unaffordable or have other unmet housing needs. This Community Development Plan will help the Town respond to housing needs, and examine options for residential growth that will be compatible with its residents’ concerns for maintaining community character.

This Housing Assessment first provides information about the EO418 and Chapter 40B housing programs. The next section describes housing trends including population, housing unit growth, average household size, age of housing stock, housing occupancy, and type of households. A housing demand and needs analysis then examines demand for housing in West Brookfield, the housing needs of local residents and what is available and affordable for housing opportunities.

A statement of West Brookfield’s housing goal and objectives is presented in the third section. Section 4 presents recommendations that address the Town’s goal and objectives over the next 10 years, based on the findings of the housing assessment. The final section of this chapter discusses housing production and land use suitability for each zoning district in West Brookfield.

Section 1: *State Programs to Encourage Affordable Housing*

Executive Order 418 (EO418)

Issued in 2000, Executive Order 418 continues the Commonwealth’s long commitment to encourage the creation of affordable housing. EO418, entitled “Assisting Communities in Addressing the Housing Shortage,” provides new incentives and resources for communities to

promote affordable housing development. First, EO418 offers municipalities funding to create Community Development (CD) Plans, such as this one, to help communities consider the ways they would like to grow in the future, and to help them establish options and strategies for addressing future development. Each CD Plan typically contains the following four elements: housing, economic development, open space and resource protection, and transportation.

As mentioned earlier, EO418 establishes a housing certification process. Municipalities must obtain housing certification to be eligible to receive funds through certain discretionary rolling grant programs, and to receive bonus rating points for other grant programs. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), the Department of Economic Development (DED), and the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC) administer the affected programs. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 (which ends June 30, 2004), the rolling application grant programs requiring housing certification provide a total of \$91 million in funding to communities statewide, and the competitive grant programs, which give a rating bonus for housing certification, provide \$487 million. To receive housing certification, communities must demonstrate that they are working to increase their supply of housing that is affordable to individuals and families across a broad range of incomes.

Chapter 40B

In 1969, the Massachusetts Legislature passed the Comprehensive Permit Law (M.G.L., Chapter 40B, Sections 20-23), to promote the creation of affordable housing statewide. This legislation streamlined the development permit process for affordable housing projects, and established the goal of increasing the amount of affordable housing in each community to 10 percent of its total housing stock. Under Chapter 40B (and Executive Order 215 that accompanied it), communities in which less than 10 percent of the housing units have guaranteed long-term affordability may face new housing development that overrides local zoning restrictions, such as density and setback requirements. In these communities, a developer can submit a comprehensive permit application, known as a Chapter 40B application, for an affordable housing development that does not adhere to local zoning. The local Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) acts upon this application. If the ZBA turns down the permit, the developer may be able to appeal the decision to the State Housing Appeals Committee, which can overrule the local ZBA decision and allow the housing project to proceed. To reach the 10 percent affordable housing goal under Chapter 40B, West Brookfield needs roughly 100 more affordable units.

The Chapter 40B definition of “affordable housing” is more restrictive than the general definition based on housing costs not exceeding 30 percent of household income. In determining a town’s total number of affordable housing units for Chapter 40B, the State has historically only included State or Federally subsidized units with a guaranteed long-term affordability for low and moderate-income households. Rents or sales prices in these housing units must be restricted to affordable levels for at least 30 years after construction. All unsubsidized units have been excluded from Chapter 40B status, even if their monthly costs are less than 30 percent of the median household income. This restriction has been a disadvantage to rural communities where subsidized housing is less likely to be developed, but where housing costs relative to income may be lower than in more urban places.

The State has recently begun to expand Chapter 40B’s definition of “affordable housing” to count additional units towards the 10 percent goal, as long as they are serving low and moderate-income residents and have guaranteed long-term affordability. Among the units that can now count as affordable are locally subsidized housing units, long-term housing for the mentally ill or mentally retarded, and housing created through the Community Preservation Act (M.G.L. Chapter 44B). The expanded definition could help to increase West Brookfield’s affordable housing percentage under Chapter 40B. It is also anticipated that there will be further reforms and revisions to Chapter 40B, and additional expansions of its “affordable housing” definition over the next few years. These changes may further increase the Town’s percentage of affordable housing under Chapter 40B, and will provide the Town with more flexibility in reaching the 10 percent affordable housing level.

The State has begun to revise Chapter 40B to provide communities more flexibility and local control in expanding their affordable housing supply. As a result of these changes, when a community has not yet reached the 10 percent affordable housing level, but has demonstrated a commitment to increasing its affordable housing supply, the local Zoning Board of Appeals has the ability to deny a Chapter 40B development permit. This commitment can be shown by a local housing plan that has been certified by DCHD, and by increasing the number of Chapter 40B units for low and moderate-income households by at least 0.75% of the town’s total units every calendar year. In addition, local ZBAs can now refuse to issue permits for large-scale housing projects that are inappropriately sized for their community. Further revisions to Chapter 40B are now under consideration.

Section 2: *Housing Assessment and Analysis*

Population Trends

The 2000 Census counted 3,804 residents in West Brookfield, an increase of 272 persons from the 1990 Census count of 3,532 residents. With a total land area of 20.5 square miles, the Town has a population density of roughly 186 people per square mile. The table below presents the Town’s growth in population over sixty years, as well as projected population for the year 2010.

**Table 2.1
West Brookfield Population Growth**

Year	# of People	Numerical Change	% Change
1940	1,387	---	---
1950	1,674	287	20.7%
1960	2,053	379	22.6%
1970	2,653	600	29.2%
1980	3,026	373	14.1%
1990	3,532	506	16.7%
2000	3,804	272	7.7%
2010 Projection*	3,935	131	3.4%

Sources: US Census Bureau;

* Middle-level forecast for 2010 provided by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) at UMass Amherst.

Table 2.1 shows that West Brookfield has been experiencing a steady increase in population since 1940. According to the Massachusetts Institute for Social & Economic Research (the State’s premier statistical forecaster), West Brookfield’s population growth will continue over the next ten years.

Table 2.2 indicates that surrounding communities in Central Massachusetts are also experiencing growth, with neighboring Brookfield having the greatest increase between 1990 and 2000. This is partly due to persons migrating from the eastern part of the state, where housing costs are significantly higher, in search of more affordable housing.

**Table 2.2
Population Growth in West Brookfield and Surrounding Towns**

Year	West Brookfield	Brookfield	Hardwick	North Brookfield	Warren	Ware
1980	3,026	2,397	2,272	4,150	3,777	8,953
1990	3,532 (16.7%)	2,968 (23.8%)	2,385 (5.0%)	4708 (13.4%)	4,437 (17.5%)	9,808 (9.5%)
2000	3,804 (7.7%)	3,051 (2.8%)	2,622 (9.9%)	4683 (-0.5%)	4,776 (7.6%)	9,707 (-1.0%)
2010*	3,935 (3.4%)	3,364 (10.2%)	2,736 (4.3%)	5,724 (22%)	5,136 (7.5%)	9,799 (0.9%)

Sources: US Census Bureau;

* Middle-level forecast for 2010 provided by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER)

Housing Unit Growth

The US Census indicates that West Brookfield had a total of 1,362 housing units in the year 2000, an increase of 134 units since the year 1990. Table 2.3 shows how the housing stock has grown over the years and allows for a comparison against the growth in population. However, please note that Table 2.3 refers only to year-round occupied housing units.

**Table 2.3
Housing Unit Growth in West Brookfield and Surrounding Towns**

Year	West Brookfield	Brookfield	Hardwick	North Brookfield	Warren	Ware
1980	1,095	914	831	1,500	1,506	3,575
1990	1,228	1,124	913	1,733	1,694	3,836
2000	1,362	1,204	997	1,811	1,889	4,027
% change 1990-2000	10.9%	7.1%	9.2%	4.5%	11.5%	5.0%

Source: US Census.

Table 2.3 indicates that West Brookfield’s housing unit growth increased nearly 11 percent from 1990 to the year 2000, at an average rate of slightly more than one percent per year. Taken together, Tables 2.2 and 2.3 indicate that the housing stock of West Brookfield and surrounding communities expanded at a faster rate than their populations did between 1990 and 2000. The period between 1980 and 2000 saw a high increase in the number of housing units throughout the Central Massachusetts region and this trend is expected to continue over the next decade. The Assessors Office reports a total of twenty-five building permits for new construction were issued

in the year 2002 in West Brookfield (see Table 2.4) verifying that the town continues to grow along with the region. In 2002, MISER estimates that four permits were issued in Brookfield, seventeen in North Brookfield, and six permits were approved in Hardwick.

Table 2.4
Annual Number of Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits: 1998-2002

Year	West Brookfield	Brookfield	Hardwick	North Brookfield	Warren	Ware
1998	11	17	9	12	6	21
1999	12	9	9	17	-	31
2000	11	8	9	16	-	24
2001	14	5	5	14	25	26
2002	25	4	6	17	-	-

Source: West Brookfield Assessors Office. Estimated number of building permits for other towns provided by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER)

According to the Build-Out Analysis prepared by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission in 2001, there are 8,069 developable acres remaining in West Brookfield. Given existing zoning bylaw minimum lot size requirements and environmental constraints, vacant residentially zoned land could yield 2,224 new residential lots. According to this analysis, if all of these lots were developed it would mean 5,604 additional residents in town, and 981 more school-age children. Table 2.5 provides a summary of residential build-out related data. Based on the population projections contained in Table 2.1, there is an ample supply of developable land for the next decade.

Table 2.5
West Brookfield Residential Build-Out Statistics

Developable Acres	8,069
Additional Residential Lots	2,224
Additional New Residents	5,604
Additional Residential Water Use (gallons per day)	420,279
New Students	981
New Road Miles	57

Source: Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

Notes:

1. "Residential Water Use" is based on 75 gallons per day per person.
2. The number of "Residents" at buildout is based on the persons per household figure derived 1990 US Census.
3. The number of "School-Age Children" is based on a student per household ratio from 1990 US Census.
4. "New Road Miles" are based on the assumption that 60% of new lots will have required frontage on new roads.

Average Household Size

A comparison of previous tables indicates that West Brookfield's housing stock is growing at a faster rate than its population. These changes reflect the national trend towards smaller household sizes. Couples are having fewer children today and there are more households with a single parent. West Brookfield's US Census data confirms this trend. In 1990, the typical West Brookfield household contained 2.73 people. By 2000, the average household size had declined to 2.53 persons.

Another factor contributing to smaller household sizes is the expansion of senior populations across the nation. The Census data clearly demonstrates that this national trend is taking place in West Brookfield. In 1990, the median age of West Brookfield’s population was 37.1 years of age. By 2000, the median age had increased to 42.6 years of age.

Table 2.6 displays change in age of the town’s population from 1990 to 2000. The number of young children (under 5 years) declined by 25 percent during the decade, while children between 5 and 19 years of age increased by nearly 9 percent. This increase in school-age children should be accompanied by growth in the Town’s school enrollment numbers. However, as a result of the smaller number of children under 5 in 2000, the Town’s school population may decline, unless there is rapid housing growth or a turnover in the existing housing stock to families with school-aged children.

The data also shows that a population increase occurred among those aged 35-54; an increase of 205 persons or approximately 21 percent, which suggests that buyers of homes may be waiting to enter their high wage-earning years before being able to afford a home. Conversely, it is more difficult for young adults (20-34 years) to afford escalating housing prices and there may be insufficient rental units since that age group in Town has declined by nearly one-third.

**Table 2.6
Population by Age Group**

Year	Under 5	5 – 19	20 – 34	35 – 54	55 – 64	65 – 74	75 +
1990	258	705	686	997	293	278	315
2000	193	766	462	1,202	386	274	521
Change	-65	61	-224	205	93	-4	206
% Change	-25.2%	8.7%	-32.7%	20.6%	31.7%	-1.4%	65.4%

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

Older citizens (55 and over) also witnessed population changes. Residents between the ages of 55-64 increased almost one-third, while those 65-74 decreased slightly. The latter segment represents Depression Era births, when the birth rate was low due to severe economic factors. As these seniors age over the next decade, the 75 and over population is likely to remain stable. However, those persons 75 and older experienced an increase of 65 percent from 1990 to 2000. This may be partly explained by advances in health care, as residents are now living longer lives, as well as the availability of senior housing in Town.

Housing Unit Inventory

The following Tables 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9 report all housing units in West Brookfield, including vacant houses and seasonal houses. Table 2.7 indicates that 77 percent of West Brookfield’s housing stock is single-family homes and about 19 percent is multi-family dwellings. Brookfield has about the same percentage of two or more housing units, and other surrounding towns have nearly twice the percentage of multi-family units. Generally, the majority of multi-family units are rental properties. The Town’s housing mix has been fairly stable, although MISER estimates that all recent building permits have been for single-family homes.

**Table 2.7
Number and Type of Housing Units, 2000**

Type of Unit	Number of Units	Percentage of Total
One Unit (detached)	1,192	77.7%
One Unit (attached)	13	0.8%
Two Units	93	6.1%
Three or Four Units	96	6.3%
Five or More Units	95	6.2%
Mobile Homes	45	2.9%
TOTAL	1,534	100%

Source: 2000 US Census.

**Table 2.8
Type of Housing Units in Surrounding Communities, 2000**

Town	One Unit	% Total Units	Two Units	3-4 Units	5+ Units	Mobile Homes	Total Units
Brookfield	812	62.4%	110	74	34	272	1,302
Hardwick	693	63.8%	137	164	85	7	1,086
N. Brookfield	1,230	64.7%	256	282	121	13	1,902
Warren	1,110	55.1%	335	249	168	152	2,014
Ware	2,553	58.9%	581	683	289	231	4,337

Source: 2000 US Census.

Age of Housing Stock

Table 2.9 below indicates that nearly one-third of West Brookfield's housing stock was built before World War II. With 31 percent of West Brookfield's housing stock being over 60 years old and nearly half being over 40 years old, it is likely that some of West Brookfield's residential dwellings are not up-to-date with current building codes.

**Table 2.9
Age of West Brookfield Housing Units**

Year Structure Built	Number of Units	% Of Housing Stock
1990 - March 2000	248	16.2%
1980 - 1989	213	13.9%
1970 - 1979	196	12.8%
1960 - 1969	148	9.6%
1940 - 1959	253	16.5%
1939 or earlier	476	31.0%
TOTAL	1,534	100%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Housing Occupancy

In 1990, there were a total of 970 owner-occupied housing units and that number increased to 1,053 in the year 2000. During the same time span, rental units increased from 258 units to 309. Table 2.10 indicates that more than 77 percent of West Brookfield's housing stock is currently owner-occupied. In terms of the percent of occupied housing units versus the percentage of vacant units over the last decade, the 1990 Census indicated a 1.4 percent homeowner vacancy rate and a 9.5 percent vacancy rate for rental property. The 2000 Census reported that the homeowner vacancy rate remained at 1.4 percent, but the rental vacancy rate decreased to 6.1 percent indicating a more competitive rental housing market.

Table 2.10
Type of Occupancy in West Brookfield and Surrounding Towns, 2000

Type of Unit	West Brookfield	Brookfield	Hardwick	North Brookfield	Warren	Ware
Owner-occupied	1,053	972	681	1,246	1,272	2,642
Renter-occupied	309	232	316	565	617	1,385
Occupied Units	1,362	1,204	997	1,811	1,889	4,027
<i>% owner</i>	<i>77.3%</i>	<i>80.7%</i>	<i>68.3%</i>	<i>68.8%</i>	<i>67.3%</i>	<i>65.6%</i>
<i>% renter</i>	<i>22.7%</i>	<i>19.3%</i>	<i>31.7%</i>	<i>31.2%</i>	<i>32.7%</i>	<i>34.4%</i>
Vacant units	172*	98	89	91	125	309
Total Units	1,534	1,302	1,086	1,902	2,014	4,336
<i>% Vacant</i>	<i>11.2%</i>	<i>7.5%</i>	<i>8.2%</i>	<i>4.8%</i>	<i>6.2%</i>	<i>7.1%</i>

Source: 2000 US Census.

* Includes 98 units with seasonal, recreational or occasional use; not year-round

As shown in Table 2.10, almost 23% of West Brookfield's housing stock is comprised of rental units. Table 2.10 also indicates that most surrounding towns, except Brookfield, have a higher percentage of rental units. While rural communities tend to have less rental units than suburban and urban areas, this Census data shows that both West Brookfield and Brookfield supply fewer rental units when compared to neighboring communities in the region.

Type of Households

The table below indicates that almost 71 percent of West Brookfield's households consist of families². This represents a decrease since the 1990 Census when family households accounted for 78 percent of all West Brookfield households. In addition to the data shown in Table 2.11, there has been an increase in the number of family households headed by females. The 1990 Census counted 92 families with female householders, while the 2000 Census counted 118 such households, a 28 percent increase.

² Family households are related persons living in a housing unit. A single person living alone or two unrelated persons living in a dwelling are defined as a non-family household.

**Table 2.11
Households by Type West Brookfield and Surrounding Towns, 2000**

	West Brookfield	Brookfield	Hardwick	North Brookfield	Warren	Ware
Family Households	965 (70.9%)	857 (71.2%)	690 (69.2%)	1,236 (68.2%)	1,287 (68.1%)	2,598 (64.5%)
Non-Family Households	397 (29.1%)	347 (28.8%)	307 (30.8%)	575 (31.8%)	602 (31.9%)	1,429 (35.5%)
Total	1,362	1,204	997	1,811	1,889	4,027

Source: 2000 US Census

Since the majority of rural communities are usually largely made up of single-family homes, they tend to have a higher percentage of family households. Non-family households tend to rent. Table 2.11 reveals that West Brookfield has an average amount of family households compared with surrounding communities, while the Town of Ware has a slightly smaller percentage of family households.

Housing Demand Assessment & Needs Analysis

The following analysis will document the demand for housing in West Brookfield, the housing needs of local residents and what is actually available (and affordable) for housing opportunities. Before going any further, it is important to outline the assumptions used in this analysis.

- The analysis makes use of year 2000 statistics so that they may be cross-referenced to the 2000 US Census data.
- The median family income for the Worcester Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), as determined by the federal Department Housing & Urban Development (HUD) HOME Program income limits for the year 2000 is \$54,400.
- The State Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) Year 2000 Housing Certification Program lists the median family affordable purchase price for a new home in the Worcester PMSA at \$246,000.
- West Brookfield’s poverty-level income figure was obtained from the 2000 US Census.
- Housing demand and need was calculated for poverty-level households, low-income households (poverty-level to 50% of the area median income), low-to-moderate income households (50-65% of the area median income), moderate-to-middle income households (65-80% of the area median income), middle-income households (80-150% of the area median income) and upper income households (above 150% of area median income).
- It was assumed that households making up to 65% of the area median income would not be in the market for buying a home but instead would most likely rent their housing.
- It was assumed that households making more than 50% of the area median income would most likely be in the market for buying a home.
- For renters, it was assumed that 30% of their annual income would go towards rent.
- For homebuyers, it was assumed that 28% of their monthly income would go towards a house mortgage principal and interest. It was further assumed that homebuyers would make a down payment of at least 10% and have a 30-year mortgage at 7%.
- The number of rental units and their price ranges were estimated from the 2000 Census.

Renter Occupied Housing Units

Table 2.12 provides an affordability analysis for West Brookfield rental units. The table shows two renter income categories of special concern (poverty level and low-income), the estimated number of households in each income category, and the estimated number of existing rental units that are affordable at each income level. The Table indicates the potential gap between low-income housing needs and affordable housing units in Town.

**Table 2.12
Rental Unit Need/Demand Analysis, West Brookfield, 2000**

Income Group	Range of Incomes	Range of Affordable Rent	# Of Households	# Of Actual Units	Deficit/Surplus
Poverty level or below	\$13,290 or less	\$332 or less	46	46	-
Poverty-to-Low Income	\$13,290-27,200	\$332 - \$680	133	180	47

Table 2.12 indicates that West Brookfield has a supply of rental units that are affordable. While there are an adequate number of units for the poverty level and low-income level, some of these households do not have affordable rental costs. The 2000 Census reported 145 households paying more than 30% of their monthly income towards rent, with 59 of these 145 renters paying more than 50% of their income for housing. Households paying more than 30% of their monthly income for housing are considered to be cost-burdened.

However, in terms of affordable rentals, West Brookfield ranks fairly well relative to the median income level for the region. The Year 2000 DHCD Housing Certification Program lists an affordable monthly rent figure of \$1,360, which is 30% of area median family income for the Worcester PMSA. (The median family income for West Brookfield in 1999 was \$58,750). The 2000 Census reported 307 rental units in Town, which all had a monthly rent less than \$899. Thus, West Brookfield's rental units are affordable when considered within the regional context.

Owner-Occupied Housing Units

West Brookfield also fares well relative to homeownership opportunities. The U.S. Census Bureau gathers data on housing values by asking owners what they believe their homes, including land, to be worth in the current real-estate market. Table 2.13 presents data on housing values reported for the 2000 Census. According to this information, the median value of owner-occupied homes in West Brookfield was \$142,700 in 2000.

Table 2.13
Housing Values for Owner-Occupied Homes in West Brookfield, 2000

Housing Value	# of Homes	% of Homes
\$50,000 to \$99,999	162	19.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	300	36.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	310	37.3%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	53	6.4%
\$300,000 and Over	6	0.7%
Median Value = \$142,700		

**Housing values were estimated for 79% of owner-occupied homes in 2000.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing.*

As of 2000, over one-third (36%) of the Town’s owner-occupied houses were valued between \$100,000 and \$150,000. One-fifth (20%) of the homes were valued under \$100,000, and almost two-fifths (37%) were valued between \$150,000 and \$200,000. On the high end, 59 homes (7%) were valued above \$200,000. It is important to note that the 2000 U.S. Census results indicate what owners believe their homes were worth at the time, and may not reflect the value of housing in the current real-estate market, as indicated by the following table.

The Warren Group collects town-level residential sales data for much of New England on a monthly and annual basis. Its data combines local Assessors’ records with its own home sales records. Table 2.14 presents its data on single-family home sales for West Brookfield and four neighboring communities over the last five years

Table 2.14
Single-Family Home Sales in West Brookfield & Surrounding Towns

Year	West Brookfield Median Price (and # of sales)	Brookfield Median Price (and # of sales)	Hardwick Median Price (and # of sales)	N. Brookfield Median Price (and # of sales)	Warren Median Price (and # of sales)
1999	\$125,000 (55)	\$114,950 (32)	\$96,000 (12)	\$102,819 (54)	\$89,650 (52)
2000	127,000 (55)	117,500 (39)	120,000 (19)	120,000 (45)	99,000 (37)
2001	142,000 (33)	127,200 (34)	137,000 (27)	129,450 (64)	101,184 (44)
2002	162,500 (53)	153,000 (34)	133,800 (17)	140,000 (46)	118,250 (52)
2003	174,450 (48)	186,250 (30)	124,900 (15)	169,950 (42)	149,900 (40)

Source: The Warren Group, Town Statistics, 1999 - 2003.

The information in Table 2.14 suggests that the housing market in the West Brookfield area has experienced an increase in sales prices during the 1999 - 2003 period. Over the past two years, the median sales price has been higher than in the past, nearly reaching the \$175,000 median sales price in 2003 for West Brookfield.

Table 2.15 provides an analysis of demand for homeownership in West Brookfield. The Table outlines the four lower to higher income categories, the range of affordable home prices of each category, and the estimated number of West Brookfield households in each category in 2000.

**Table 2.15
Homeownership Need/Demand Analysis, 2000**

Income Group	Range of Incomes	Range of Affordable Housing Prices	Number of Households
Low-to-Moderate	\$27,200 - \$35,360	\$106,000 - \$138,000	75
Moderate – to – Middle	\$35,360 - \$43,520	\$138,000 - \$169,000	105
Middle – to – Upper	\$43,520 - \$81,600	\$169,000 - \$318,000	388
Upper	\$81,600 and above	\$318,000 and above	301

Note: The Warren Group 2000 Median Sales Price for Single-Family Home = \$127,000

In 2000, Tables 2.14 and 2.15 show that homeownership in West Brookfield was affordable for each of the four income groups. As mentioned previously, the median family income in the Worcester PMSA was \$54,400 for the Year 2000, with an affordable home purchase price of \$246,000 for the median family income.

However, Table 2.14 indicates that housing prices are growing faster than family income. The Warren Group data suggests the price of a single-family home increased about 28 percent to \$162,500 during 2000-2002. During the same period, the median area income increased about 7 percent to \$58,400 in the year 2002. Coupled with lower interest rates, those households earning 65% of the median area income can still afford a single-family home in West Brookfield. Yet, those households earning 50% of the median area income might now find the prospect of homeownership even more difficult than previously.

Supply of Subsidized Housing

In 1969, the state passed M.G.L. Chapter 40B with the goal of increasing affordable housing in communities throughout the Commonwealth. As noted previously, this legislation contains two major components to assist developers who wish to build housing that meets affordable housing criteria. The first component is the Comprehensive Permit process, where several local permit applications are consolidated into a single application to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The ZBA is authorized to grant waivers from zoning and other local regulations to make a project economically viable. The second component gives developers the right to appeal ZBA decisions to the Massachusetts Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) in communities where the percentage of affordable housing units falls below 10% of the year-round housing units. In order to meet the criteria for affordable housing, 25% of the units in a proposed Chapter 40B project must be affordable to households who earn no more than 80% of the area median income.

Table 2.16 depicts housing in West Brookfield and neighboring towns that is considered to be affordable under Chapter 40B. In West Brookfield, almost 4 percent of the year-round housing stock is listed as affordable by DHCD, about the same as the Town of Warren. West Brookfield has a greater percentage than Brookfield (less than 1%) and a smaller percentage than Hardwick (6%), North Brookfield (7%) and Ware (7%) of housing listed as affordable under Chapter 40B.

**Table 2.16
Residential Units that Count as Affordable under Chapter 40B**

Town	Year-Round Housing Units	Ch 40B Affordable Housing Units	Percent of Units that are Affordable, Ch. 40B Definition
West Brookfield	1,436	54	3.76%
Brookfield	1,259	12	0.95%
Hardwick	1,054	65	6.17%
North Brookfield	1,889	134	7.09%
Warren	2,004	81	4.04%
Ware	4,285	308	7.19%

Source: MA Department of Housing and Community Development, April 2002.

The State has begun to revise Chapter 40B and to expand its definition of “affordable housing” to count additional types of units towards the 10 percent affordable housing goal. Among the units that count as affordable are locally subsidized housing units, long-term housing for the mentally ill or mentally retarded, housing created through the Community Preservation Act (M.G.L. Chapter 44B). These types of housing also count as affordable if serving low and moderate-income residents, and this expanded definition of “affordable housing” may allow additional units in West Brookfield to qualify. To reach the 10 percent affordable housing under Chapter 40B, West Brookfield needs roughly 100 more affordable units.

Section 3: *Housing Goal and Objectives Statement*

The following housing goal and objectives were identified by the Community Development Planning Committee, based upon the findings of the October 2003 community survey.

Goal:

Encourage diverse housing opportunities while preserving the rural character of the Town.

Objectives:

- Encourage housing development in areas served by Town water to help promote sustainable growth.
- Encourage additional development of senior housing.
- Consider “cluster development” bylaw to preserve open space without increasing the number of houses that Town zoning currently allows.
- Encourage affordable housing.
- Encourage energy-efficient housing.
- Encourage siting of homes to maximize use of solar energy while improving air quality.

Section 4: *Housing Recommendations*

This section presents recommendations that address needs identified in the Housing Assessment and Analysis. These proposed actions can help to: preserve the Town’s rural character, assist lower income and senior residents, increase the supply of subsidized housing, improve the housing stock, and promote homeownership.

Community Land Use Patterns

The Housing Assessment finds that West Brookfield’s population and housing unit production have expanded at a moderate pace over the last ten years. This trend is expected to continue. It is not possible or desirable to protect the remaining undeveloped land in West Brookfield. There is too much undeveloped land (see Table 2.5 in Housing Assessment section), and there is likely to be ample developable land for several decades. To sustain its rural character, the Town should proactively manage growth rather than expecting to halt community development.

Communities experience the negative impacts of growth long before final build-out is reached. This pattern in West Brookfield has, to some degree, affected tax rates, scenic quality and traffic even though extensive land and road frontage remain undeveloped. Town growth management strategies can focus on encouraging land use patterns that minimize environmental, fiscal, scenic, and transportation impacts to avoid undesirable consequences of the expected long-term build-out of land in West Brookfield. The following recommendations propose actions that can help preserve the Town’s rural character and improve land use control.

1. **Open Space Subdivision:** The 2003 community survey found very strong support to preserve the rural character of West Brookfield. Most respondents (85%) also prefer single-family homes on two acre or larger lots to other types of residential development. While there are some benefits associated with the current minimum lot size of 90,000 square feet for the Rural Residential zoning district, the Town should consider an Open Space Subdivision bylaw in anticipation of new subdivisions.

Density controls have both positive and negative effects on land use patterns. Large lot zoning can accelerate the loss of community rural character by encouraging residential uses on large amounts of land. An Open Space Subdivision bylaw is a mechanism that has the potential to preserve open spaces, reduce the need for new water and sewer services, and foster the fiscal well being of the Town.

An Open Space Subdivision allows for building houses closer together than otherwise allowed under the existing zoning requirements, while preserving the remaining land as open space. This zoning change can help to preserve rural character *if* the local bylaw gives the Planning Board the flexibility to determine what areas of the property are to remain as undeveloped. Open space housing provisions offer economic benefits for a municipality, such as lower costs for transportation of school children and infrastructure maintenance. If municipal services are required, it can be less costly to extend utilities to an open space subdivision than a conventional residential development.

Open space housing is consistent with West Brookfield's rural character and open space preservation goals. An Open Space Subdivision can help preserve publicly accessible land for trail systems, as well as other recreation uses. It will be important to discuss the objectives and benefits of an Open Space Subdivision bylaw with Town residents and land owners, since the community survey found that more than one-third of respondents do not favor cluster zoning.

To be effective, the bylaw must be written to encourage developers to utilize the Open Space Subdivision concept instead of the standard subdivision process³. Allowing Open Space Subdivisions "by-right" can foster this type of development. Factors to consider when designing an Open Space Subdivision bylaw include: density bonuses, minimum lot sizes, quantity and quality of required open space, locating home sites on the most suitable soils, drainage systems, water supply services, waste disposal, length and width of interior roads, as well as public health and safety.

2. **Major Residential Development Review:** Respondents to the 2003 community survey strongly favored careful review of larger residential developments, including lots created along an existing Town road. Under the Approval Not Required (ANR) process, if a developer has sufficient frontage to create new lots along an existing Town road, the Planning Board has limited review authority. Limited municipal review also occurs after the lots are created, when the developer applies for driveway permits from the Highway Department or building permits from the Building Inspector.

³ The Town has adopted subdivision regulations under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, which provide criteria for the dimensions and layout of roadways, utilities, walkways and other design considerations.

A Major Residential Development Review provision in the Zoning Bylaw can address site planning issues such as drainage, erosion control, environmental protection and neighborhood impact. West Brookfield should determine what constitutes a “major” residential development: some communities require the review process for four or more lots, while other thresholds begin at ten or more lots.

3. **Adaptive Reuse:** The reuse of vacant and underutilized property can help the Town to reduce development pressure on land in more rural areas that lack infrastructure. Adaptive reuse in existing developed areas also offers opportunities to preserve or restore historic buildings that are important to community residents, and for using state and federal assistance to create rental and owner units that qualify as affordable housing under Chapter 40B (see additional information under next heading).

A housing committee should be appointed by the Board of Selectmen to help identify vacant or underutilized parcels and buildings with residential reuse potential. In addition to Town properties, it is possible to improve private properties through tax taking, donation, negotiation, bank foreclosure and brownfield remediation.

4. **Back-lot Zoning:** Back-lot zoning allows frontage lots along Town roads to be relocated elsewhere on the parcel. The road frontage is permanently protected by a conservation agreement, and such back-lots can have easements over the abutting property for a shared driveway to serve multiple lots. These provisions address concerns over “Approval Not Required” (ANR) development, in which the entire frontage along existing public ways is developed lot by lot, in a piecemeal fashion. By encouraging houses to be built further from the road, new housing can be less visible on scenic roads, less likely to disturb historic stone walls or tree corridors, and reduce the number of curb cuts on Town roads.
5. **Phased Growth and/or Building Permit Caps:** These tools manage the rate of growth, thereby allowing Town services and the creation of affordable housing units to keep pace with new residential development. Building permit caps limit the number of permits approved in a specified period (often two years). The limit can be based on the number of permits issued in the last decade, and adjusted to address community growth issues. The subdivision of land is not restricted by permit limits, only the rate of home building.

Phased growth provisions also affect the rate of residential development and allow the gradual build out of approved subdivisions, especially projects that will construct a large number of houses. These provisions should provide criteria to determine the rate of subdivision build out: “points” can be added for affordable housing units and open space, or “points” can be subtracted for building on scenic roads or farmland.

Affordable Rental Housing

The U.S. Census reported that 145 West Brookfield households were identified as paying more than 30% of their monthly income towards rent. This data indicates there is a shortage of rental units affordable to poverty-level, low and moderate-income residents.

West Brookfield's population is also growing older. Many senior residents are on a fixed income, which often makes it difficult to maintain their home throughout their retirement years. The Town's 75 and over population has grown from 315 to 521 persons between the years 1990 and 2000, representing a 65 percent increase. West Brookfield's next generation of senior citizens (55-64 population) has grown by 32 percent since 1990; and the 35-54 age group has increased by a fifth over the last decade. The West Brookfield Housing Authority manages one senior housing development (Old Village Place), which has a two-year waiting list that includes several Town residents. Coupled with health care advances, West Brookfield could experience a shortage of affordable senior housing and be dealing with this issue for some time to come.

The following propose actions the Town should consider to expand and improve its supply of affordable housing for lower income residents and seniors.

1. **Accessory Apartments.** An accessory apartment is a second dwelling unit located within a single-family home, or the unit can be located above a garage or within an accessory structure. Another term for accessory apartments is "in-law apartments", for use by a related family member. Accessory apartments can allow senior citizens to live in close proximity to their family, as well as young people who cannot afford their own home at the time. Some families will welcome housing elderly parents in a separate living space, where they can live independently at a low cost. Accessory apartments can also allow homeowners to receive rent and increase their income.

West Brookfield's zoning provides a special permit for the conversion of a single family home to two dwelling units, which addresses parking, size limitations and other factors as part of the review process. Encouraging accessory apartments can offer another housing choice for senior residents and young people who cannot yet afford to buy a home. It is less likely that school age children would reside in this type of housing, thereby reducing impacts on municipal finances.

2. **Multi-Family Dwellings.** Multi-family housing tends to be more affordable than single-family homes on large lots, due to smaller land costs per unit and lower construction costs. West Brookfield Center has infrastructure to accommodate higher density housing. Creation of multi-family units can help bridge the gap in affordable rental units, and greater numbers of people will increase the demand for shopping, services and food establishments in the Center. Allowing a higher population density in areas with Town water can reduce pressure to develop housing in the more rural areas of Town. One way the Town should encourage multi-family dwellings is through Adaptive Reuse (see above).

Subsidized Housing

Chapter 40B of Massachusetts General Laws outlines a municipality's responsibilities regarding the provision of low and moderate-income housing. The law defines low and moderate-income housing as "...any housing subsidized by the federal or state government under any program...", which is different from "affordable housing" that is generally defined as housing that costs no

more than 30 percent of a household's total income. The average home sale price and average contract rent in West Brookfield indicate the Town does provide affordable housing, especially when compared to other communities that have higher housing costs. However, poverty and low-income people cannot afford to buy a house in West Brookfield and many renters pay more than 30 percent of their income for rent. The Housing Analysis finds that housing prices have outpaced household incomes over the last two years making homeownership more difficult.

Currently, very few municipalities have met the State's 10% affordable housing requirement (only Southbridge and Worcester in the CMRPC region). As of 2002, only 3.76% of West Brookfield's housing stock met the Chapter 40B definition; and the West Brookfield Housing Authority is managing these units. In towns that do not meet this 40B threshold, a developer can propose low and moderate-income housing in any zoning district, regardless of suitability, which is exempted from local zoning and subdivision requirements. Many communities have been impacted by the local zoning override enabled under comprehensive permit applications.

Following are several actions the Town should take to increase its supply of subsidized housing and meet the Chapter 40 B guidelines. Non-regulatory options include:

1. **Grant Programs:** The Town should take a closer look at the State's Affordable Housing Trust Fund and housing grant programs offered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD - see next heading for more detail about grant programs). The Board of Selectmen may opt to form a *Housing Needs Committee* to assist in this effort.
2. **Inventory of Privately Owned Property:** A *Housing Committee* could inventory vacant, underutilized and deteriorated land or buildings with potential for supplying subsidized housing and work with the property owner to help secure state funds.
3. **Publicly Owned Property:** A *Housing Committee* should also conduct an inventory of any publicly owned land/buildings that might be suitable for subsidized housing. There are a variety of state and federal funding options that can be used to develop or rehabilitate publicly owned properties that have the potential to be used for subsidized housing.
4. **ZBA Chapter 40B Training:** The Zoning Board of Appeals should obtain training about Chapter 40B guidelines to establish review criteria for comprehensive permit proposals. The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) at the University of Massachusetts offers classes on this subject and can provide customized training sessions for a local ZBA. DHCD has also prepared a procedural "how to" booklet for local communities. The Massachusetts Housing Appeals Committee website has guidelines and examples of model by-laws.

In addition to non-regulatory actions the Town should consider provisions for Inclusionary Zoning and Incentive-Based Zoning. The general purpose of both inclusionary zoning and incentive-based zoning is to increase a community's affordable housing stock. Inclusionary zoning can be seen as the "stick" approach, while incentive-based zoning is the "carrot"

approach. A strong real estate market with high housing costs is usually required for these zoning approaches to work well, so these may not yet be practical. However, housing costs will continue to escalate and the Town may want to utilize these tools in the future.

1. **Inclusionary Zoning:** An inclusionary zoning provision requires new subdivisions to set aside a certain percentage of new housing units as below-market units (i.e., units that can be counted towards the town's affordable housing unit inventory under Chapter 40B). Typical inclusionary bylaws require that 10 - 25 percent of new housing units consist of below-market units. While the Massachusetts Zoning Act does not explicitly authorize inclusionary zoning, many communities have this type of bylaw and some have made the case that such bylaws are valid under the State's "Home Rule" authority. Chapter 40B is an example of an inclusionary requirement. Massachusetts' courts have approved local use of inclusionary zoning, but have frowned on assessing fees in lieu of providing actual affordable housing units. Given the relatively slow pace of residential development in West Brookfield today, a low percentage would be appropriate if the Town did opt for an inclusionary approach.
2. **Incentive-based zoning:** This tool can offer incentives to developers to create affordable below-market units as part of their developments. Such incentives can include higher densities, reduced frontage, reduced setback requirements, a reduction in the required roadway width, reduced infrastructure connection fees, and other incentives that can make affordable housing beneficial to the developer and to the Town. Incentive-based zoning is explicitly authorized within the Massachusetts Zoning Act. Incentives are an effective tool if a strong housing market exists that can encourage developers to build more units for higher profits.

These two types of zoning provisions are proactive steps that the Town should pursue to bring its affordable housing inventory closer to the 10 percent goal under Chapter 40B. Towards that end, West Brookfield should examine both inclusionary zoning and incentive-based zoning to determine which approach would work best for the Town. The responsible municipal entity would be the Planning Board.

Improvements to Existing Housing

As noted in the Housing Assessment (Table 2.9), nearly one-third of the Town's housing stock was built prior to 1940. It is quite likely that some older residences do not meet today's various housing codes (plumbing, electricity, weather-proofing, etc.). Aesthetic improvements could also be made to enhance the visual appearance of neighborhoods throughout the community. The Town should investigate grant opportunities to see if they make sense for West Brookfield and its property owners.

However, the Governor enacted Executive Order 418 (E.O. 418) to address the acute shortage of affordable housing in the state. E.O. 418 requires communities to obtain Housing Certification from DHCD in order to be eligible for many state grants. Currently, West Brookfield has not applied for or received Housing Certification.

There are numerous grant opportunities for housing rehabilitation projects, especially when they benefit low and moderate-income families. The following is a brief description of available housing rehab grants that can be utilized by the Town.

1. **Community Development Block Grant Program:** This program was developed at the federal level by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is implemented at the State level by DHCD. Funds for housing rehabilitation (code violations, roof and chimney repairs, siding, etc.) are available on an annual basis. Other activities are also eligible under this program. In more recent years, the Town of West Brookfield received funds for a Senior Center. Communities that have been Housing Certified by DHCD receive bonus points when applying for Community Development Block Grant funds.
2. **Housing Development Support Program:** The Housing Development Support Program is a component of the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program administered by DHCD. The program is designed to assist with project-specific affordable housing initiatives with the emphasis on small projects that might otherwise go unfunded. Typical projects include housing rehabilitation, new construction, reclamation of abandoned properties, elderly and special needs housing, and the conversion of obsolete and under-utilized buildings for housing. Funds can be used for acquisition, rehabilitation, site work and related infrastructure. Projects are limited to a maximum of seven housing units, 51% of which must be affordable to and occupied by low and moderate-income households (households earning up to 80% of the area's median household income).
3. **Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund:** The Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) was established under Chapter 121-D of the Massachusetts General Laws. The AHTF operates out of DHCD and is administered by MassHousing with guidance by an Advisory Committee of housing advocates. The fund enables creation and preservation of housing that is affordable to people with incomes less than 110% of the area median income. AHTF assistance can include:
 - Deferred payment loans, low/no-interest amortizing loans.
 - Down payment and closing cost assistance for first-time homebuyers.
 - Credit enhancements and mortgage insurance guarantees.
 - Matching funds for municipalities that sponsor affordable housing projects.
 - Matching funds for employer-based housing and capital grants for public housing.

Housing developments financed by the AHTF can include market-rate units, but the Fund cannot be used to support such units. The level of assistance provided by the AHTF to a specific project must be the minimum amount necessary to achieve the desired degree of affordability. Housing units created through the AHTF can be counted towards the Town's 10% threshold for affordable housing under Chapter 40B.

4. **Local Initiative Program:** The Local Initiative Program (LIP) is administered by DHCD and was established to give municipalities more flexibility in their efforts to provide low and moderate-income housing. The program provides technical assistance and other non-

financial assistance to housing developed through the initiative of local government to serve households below 80% of the area's median household income. The program limits the State's review to the most basic aspects of affordable housing: the incomes of the people served, the minimum quality of the housing provided, fair marketing and level of profit. LIP projects must be initiated by the municipality, either through zoning-based approvals (rezoning, special permits, density bonuses, etc.), financial assistance and/or through the provision of land and/or buildings. LIP projects can include new construction, building conversion, adaptive re-use and building rehabilitation. LIP projects are usually administered at the local level by a local housing partnership and approved by the Board of Selectmen. Affordable housing units created by a LIP project will be counted towards the municipality's 10% low and moderate-income housing goal under Chapter 40B.

5. **HOME Program and Housing Stabilization Fund:** These two programs are offered by HUD (managed at the state level by DHCD) and are designed to support the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of existing structures. Acquisition funds are only available to low-income families. Eligible projects include: property acquisition; housing construction and/or rehabilitation; connecting to public utilities (sewer & water); and making essential improvements such as structural improvements, plumbing improvements and energy-related improvements. These programs are offered every two years. Once again, interested communities need to do a substantial amount of advance work prior to submitting a grant application.
6. **The 'Get the Lead Out' Program:** This HUD-sponsored program is managed at the State level by the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (MHFA). This is a lead abatement program available to single family homes and 2-4 family properties. Offered on an annual basis, these funds are generally easier to apply for than the above referenced CDBG funds.
7. **Home Improvement Loan Program:** Another HUD program that is managed by the MassHousing agency offers funds for eligible owners of one-to-four unit residential properties so that they can make necessary improvements to their residential structures. Eligible improvements include: sewage disposal systems and plumbing needs; alterations and renovations that will enhance property safety; energy-related improvements and repairs designed to bring the structure up to local building codes. Offered on an annual basis, these funds generally have an easier application process than the above referenced CDBG funds.
8. **Weatherization Assistance:** HUD provides funding assistance to regional non-profit organizations for fuel assistance and weatherization programs. Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. is the regional agency that provides such services for Worcester County communities. In order to be eligible for the weatherization program, the applicant must receive some form of federal fuel assistance benefits.

Home Ownership Assistance

The 2000 U.S. Census reports there were 309 rental units that comprised 23 percent of occupied housing units in Town. Owning a home is a goal of most families, and homeownership has a positive influence on families, neighborhoods and the economy. With a fifth of Town residents renting their housing, some could be unaware that home ownership is within their grasp. Following are several actions the Town should pursue to increase home ownership opportunities.

1. **Homebuyer Counseling, Education:** Counseling and educational outreach can help West Brookfield residents bridge the information gap and prepare them for a successful application and ownership experience. The Town should create a first-time homebuyer program by partnering with an agency or institution that provides counseling, or inform residents about sources of information. Many nonprofit agencies offer this service and are trained, monitored and certified by the Massachusetts Homeownership Collaborative, which is coordinated by the Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA). Most have informational brochures that can be displayed at municipal offices. These agencies provide “soup to nuts” information about the home-buying process, from how to budget or repair damaged credit to the many types of mortgage products and down payment assistance programs. The CHAPA website (www.chapa.org) describes counseling agencies and their activities. Many conventional lenders conduct similar programs.
2. **Soft Second Loan Program:** The program provides loans to low and moderate-income first time homebuyers. Soft Second loans reduce the first mortgage amounts and lower initial monthly costs to enhance affordability. West Brookfield already participates in the Soft Second Loan Program and should continue to do so in years to come.
3. **Self-Help Housing:** The Town could explore Self-Help Housing programs. Self-Help programs involve sweat-equity by the homebuyer and volunteer labor of others to reduce construction costs. Some communities have donated building lots to Habitat for Humanity to construct affordable single housing units. Under the Habitat for Humanity program, homebuyers contribute between 300 and 500 hours of sweat equity while working with volunteers from the community to construct the home. The homeowner finances the home with a 20-year loan at 0% interest. As funds are paid back to Habitat for Humanity, they are used to fund future projects.

Local Housing Committee

The Board of Selectmen should appoint a *Housing Committee* to implement recommendations in this report. This Committee should include interested citizens, municipal board members, and the business community. The Committee can educate the public about housing needs, the social and economic issues associated with these needs, and opportunities to create diverse and affordable housing. The Town should play a role in providing this information and building the community support critical to the success of affordable housing initiatives. As noted previously, the Committee should also conduct an inventory of Town-owned properties that might be suitable for subsidized housing, and work with the West Brookfield Housing Authority and private owners to develop affordable housing using state and federal assistance programs.

Section 5: *Housing Unit Production and Land Use Suitability*

The high-level population projections supplied by the University of Massachusetts Institute for Economic and Social Research (MISER) forecast that West Brookfield will grow by 265 persons between the years 2000 and 2010. The average West Brookfield household has 2.53 persons and taking into consideration the trend toward smaller household size, an additional 106 units will be needed to house this population increase. On an annual basis, about eleven more housing units per year are needed to provide this level of housing production.

The Town, however, has exceeded this rate of housing production: fourteen building permits for new homes were issued in 2001; twenty-five were approved in 2002; and fourteen in 2003. These building permits alone will produce half of the units required for its 2010 population. If building permits continue to be issued at the levels of the past three years, population growth will exceed the MISER high-level forecast, resulting in greater impacts upon West Brookfield's rural character, natural resources and municipal services.

The Town currently has a lower percentage (22.7%) of rental housing units than surrounding towns, except Brookfield. The MISER high-level projections indicate that Town residents in the 15-34 age group will increase from 724 in 2000 to 770 residents in 2010 (6%); and the number of senior citizens will grow from 795 to 955 (20%) during this same period. Residents younger than 34 years of age and older than 65 years of age are more likely to rent housing than other age households (the U.S. Census data show that 45% of the 15-34 age households and 25% of senior households rented their housing in 2000). Based on the average household size of 2.03 persons for rental units in 2000, the increasing numbers of younger and older residents indicate a need for more rental units. Since most building permits issued over the past three years have been for single-family units, the Town should consider encouraging more production of rental units to meet the anticipated needs of its lower income residents. The recommendations discussed in the preceding section, which can help to create more rental units include: adaptive reuse; accessory apartments, and assisting first-time home buyers.

Although most housing stock in West Brookfield is relatively affordable, less than four percent are subsidized units that offer long-term affordability for low and moderate-income households. Recent U.S. Census data indicates that 127 of 177 low-income renters pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing. At present, West Brookfield needs roughly one hundred additional affordable units to achieve the 10 percent Chapter 40B housing goal, and should consider increasing its supply of subsidized units to 5 percent (roughly twenty units) by the end of the decade. Production of these Chapter 40B units will help the Town receive housing certification, and supply much-needed housing for low-income households including the rapidly expanding population of senior citizens in Town.

The following examines the potential for residential development to supply the variety of housing units that are needed in the Town. The Land Use Suitability Map in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1.6) depicts existing development constraints and identifies lands that are suitable for future housing. Analysis of land use suitability and zoning indicates the existing development pattern can continue to meet community housing needs. Potential housing types best suited for each of the three zoning districts in Town are described below.

West Brookfield Center

The General District in the Town center is zoned for 25,000 square foot lots. The Center has water service and roads to accommodate greater housing density, but presently lacks sewer service. Since the Center is situated over the Zone 2 Aquifer Protection area, careful review of proposed home sites and the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) are essential to prevent pollution of West Brookfield's water supply.

Subsidized senior housing at Old Village Place and the new Senior Center are both located in this part of Town. Existing infrastructure makes the Center suited for multi-family and rental units through adaptive reuse, accessory apartments and some limited infill development. A majority of the additional rental units needed could be located here to serve young adults and senior residents. The Town should also consider locating additional subsidized senior housing in close proximity to Old Village Place.

Apartments could be combined with additional business uses, such as offices, cafes, retail shops and tourist services. Adding offices and apartments will increase the number of workers and residents who patronize businesses in the Center. Increased population density can also help to foster and support bus service to Worcester and Ware in the future.

Lake Wickaboag Neighborhood

Similar to West Brookfield Center, this area has Town water and roads to accommodate higher density housing. The Neighborhood Residence zoning requires 45,000 square foot lots for residential uses, and some businesses can be located here with a special permit. Most of this area drains to Lake Wickaboag, an important community asset, and some portions overlie the Zone 2 Aquifer Protection District. Since there is no waste water treatment facility, special care must be taken to avoid pollution of surface and ground waters.

The Lake Wickaboag neighborhood can offer access to public transportation if bus service to Worcester and Ware is established in the future. This area is adjacent to West Brookfield Center, making it a favorable location to encourage accessory apartments and adaptive reuse of vacation homes surrounding the Pond. Creation of additional rentals here could serve young adults, empty nesters, single parent households and other residents who need smaller housing units.

The Wickaboag Neighborhood has former summer camps and older homes, some of which may need upgrading. This area can be targeted for state and federal funding assistance for housing rehabilitation and septic system improvements. The Town should also identify potential sites for subsidized housing projects to increase rental options for low-income seniors. As part of these efforts, the Town should work with the Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) to consider opportunities to combine affordable senior housing with a package wastewater treatment plant that can serve areas where malfunctioning septic systems are a concern.

Rural Areas

Most of West Brookfield is zoned as Rural Residential with a minimum lot size of 90,000 square feet. While much of this land has not been developed yet, there are many environmental constraints for residential uses, especially in areas along stream corridors or located on steep, rocky hillsides.

These rural parts of Town offer very scenic and desirable locations for future family home building on large lots. However, many rural roads are less accessible to municipal facilities, including schools and Town water services. Careful review of new home sites, especially those on difficult soils with steep, rocky slopes and near waterways is essential to prevent costly damages to private wells, septic systems, fragile habitats and valuable recreation resources like Brookhaven Lake and Lake Wickaboag. Passage of an Open Space Subdivision bylaw can help locate residential uses on the most suitable soils, in order to reduce impacts on streams, wetlands and wildlife. Better home sites can also preserve the rural character of West Brookfield, and help the Town avoid public investments to extend water lines or provide sewer services to these rural areas in the future.

In rural areas with especially severe limitations for home building, the Town should consider increasing the minimum lot size. Reduced residential density can be combined with an Open Space Subdivision bylaw to limit housing in the least suited areas of Town. This approach will be most effective if the Planning Board has the authority, discretion and technical assistance (via project application fees) to determine the best use of land. If carefully applied, an Open Space Subdivision bylaw can improve affordability for both the developer and future home buyers.

CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The 2003 community survey respondents indicated strong support for economic development, which can enhance community services and the quality of life in West Brookfield. While there is support for business expansion, survey respondents are concerned about the potential impacts of business growth on the Town's rural and historic character. Survey respondents favored small businesses that focus on using local resources as a means to preserve community character, strengthen the local economy and expand the tax base. By increasing small businesses in Town, new employment opportunities may be created which provide residents access to potential new part-time and full-time jobs.

A full-time job paying a living wage with benefits is usually the most sought after type of employment. Often employers that offer these full-time positions indirectly support a mix of retail and service industries. The result can be a mix of local businesses providing more products and services for residents. In addition, as the value of commercial property increases, the relative amount of a community's tax levy supported by residential property valuations can be reduced and stabilized. The cost of community services⁴ have been researched by the American Farmland Trust and the Southern New England Forest Consortium for communities in New England. These studies show that commercial and industrial uses may have a positive net fiscal impact and generate more in property taxes than they cost communities in term of services.

The first section of this chapter provides an assessment of West Brookfield's economic base and labor force characteristics, along with projected employment trends for the region.

The next section presents goals for economic activities, which incorporate diverse objectives. The four goals are to:

- Promote economic development;
- Attract and support businesses that complement town character;
- Expand employment opportunities in Town; and
- Increase goods and services available to West Brookfield residents and visitors.

The third section examines tourism and small business development in Town. This analysis examines barriers and recommends actions to foster tourist, recreation and home businesses.

The concluding section of Chapter 3 provides a map that depicts land use suitability criteria and identifies locations in West Brookfield that are suited for commercial and industrial uses.

⁴ "Cost of Community Services Studies" determine the ratio of municipal services costs relative to the municipal revenues (primarily property taxes) for various types of land uses. A ratio of greater than 1.0 shows a net loss to the town, while a ratio of less than 1.0 indicates a net gain. Usually, these studies find that commercial and industrial uses and open undeveloped lands have ratios less than 1.0; while residential dwellings with school-aged children often have ratios greater than 1.0 (i.e. residential revenues do not fully cover the costs of municipal services).

Section 1: *Assessment of West Brookfield's Current Economic Base*

Regional Context

West Brookfield is located in western Worcester County, Massachusetts, with an area of 21.12 square miles. Towns bordering West Brookfield are: New Braintree on the north, North Brookfield on the east, Brookfield on the south, and Warren and Ware on the west. West Brookfield is 20 miles west of Worcester, 30 miles northeast of Springfield and 60 miles west of Boston.



Figure 3-1: State Map

Of the 27 major watersheds delineated by the state, West Brookfield is situated completely within the Quaboag River basin, which flows into the Chicopee River. The Quaboag River Valley traverses the southern portion of Town in an east-west direction. The Quaboag River is fed by Quaboag Pond and Dunn Brook in Brookfield and converges with the Ware and Swift Rivers to form the Chicopee River, the largest tributary of the Connecticut River.

The Quaboag River Valley and the Mill Brook Valley have been in agricultural use since the Town's settlement by Europeans, and have played an important role in West Brookfield's rural character and economy. The Town's location, within commuting distance to urban centers of employment, has contributed to the changing demographics of the Town. The past twenty years have witnessed the rural, agriculturally-based community transform and grow into a more suburban, commuter community. Figure 3-2 shows the location of major roads, water resources and surrounding towns.

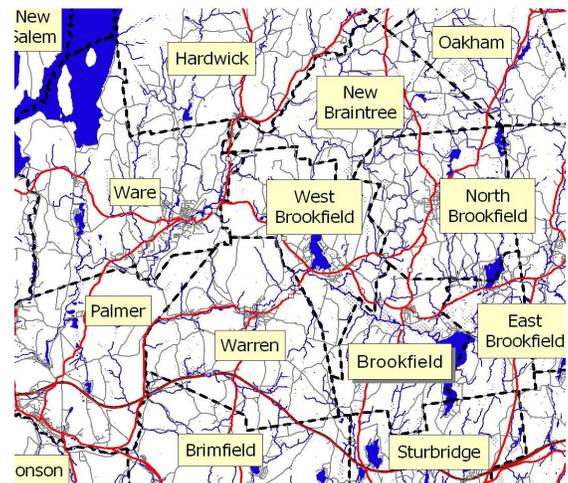


Figure 3-2: Area Map

Early Economy

The Quaboag Indian tribe, of the New England Algonquins, held the territory which now comprises Sturbridge, Brimfield, Warren, the Brookfields and New Braintree until 1660. In 1660, however, four farmers were granted these lands by the General Court and created the Quaboag Plantation. A trail from Cambridge to Connecticut traveled through West Brookfield, passing by what is the present Wickaboag Pond and across the Quaboag River. This pathway was well used until the establishment of the Bay Path, in 1673. The Quaboag Plantation became "Brookfield" in 1673 and West Brookfield was incorporated as a separate town in 1848.

The town has three historic districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the West Brookfield Center Historic District, the Wickaboag Valley Historic District, and the Salem Cross Inn Historic District. The first grist mill was built in 1665 on what is now Sucker Brook.

Farming and milling continue to play a part in the town and region. The manufactured products in West Brookfield have changed over time, from shoes and boots in the post Civil War era to machine tools, electronic devices, wire, plastic components and insulation today. The location of the railroad through West Brookfield also influenced the development of commercial and manufacturing land uses. The land uses that comprise West Brookfield today have been shaped by the history of the community.

West Brookfield’s Demographics

A review of the demographic profile of West Brookfield residents is helpful for understanding the characteristics of the existing and potential labor pools. This section discusses population trends, education levels, and incomes in West Brookfield, Worcester County, and Massachusetts as a whole. Statistics in this section include data provided by the U.S. Federal Census, the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, and the Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training.

Population Statistics – West Brookfield’s population grew 17% from 3,026 in 1980 to 3,532 residents in 1990 (Census data). This growth rate continued in the 1990s, and the Census shows an additional 8% increase to 3,804 residents in 2000. As shown in Table 3-1, between 1980 and 2000, the Town’s total population grew by 26 percent, or 778 people. Over the twenty-year period, West Brookfield’s rate of growth was greater than the County rate of 16 percent (an increase of 104,611 people), and the State rate of 11 percent (an increase of 612,060 people).

Table 3-1: Population for West Brookfield, 1980-2010, Comparison to the County and State

Total Population					% Change	% Change	% Change	% Change
Area	1980	1990	2000	Projected 2010	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	1980-2000
West Brookfield	3,026	3,532	3,804	4,070	16.6%	7.7%	7.0%	25.7%
Worcester County	646,352	709,705	750,963	793,321	9.8%	5.8%	5.6%	16.2%
Massachusetts	5,737,037	6,016,425	6,349,097	6,767,722	4.9%	5.5%	3.3%	10.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population & Housing, 1980, 1990, and 2000.

Every two years, the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) produces population forecasts for cities and towns across the state. MISER uses data from many sources to provide “high-level”, “mid-level” and “low-level” population estimates. MISER high-level projections most closely display the population trends that West Brookfield has been experiencing. The MISER “high-level” projections forecast that West Brookfield will grow an additional 7% to 4,070 residents by 2010. These statistics show the population density of West Brookfield’s 21 square miles of land area has increased from 144 persons per square mile in 1980 to 181 per square mile in 2000. MISER 2010 “high-level” estimates show West Brookfield at 194 persons per square mile (ppsm) nearly the same density as Warren (204 ppsm); much more populated than New Braintree (48 ppsm); and less populated than North Brookfield (212 ppsm), Brookfield (229 ppsm), and Ware (250 ppsm).

Education - The educational attainment level of a population is important. First, from a business owner’s perspective, educational attainment data provide insight into the ability of a community to provide labor and expertise for different types of businesses. Second, it can provide information regarding the potential customer base of different prospective business locations. Educational attainment can be a critical element in a company’s decision to locate to or remain in a community.

Based on Town residents older than 25 years of age in 2000, those with a high school diploma, or those with some college, represent the two largest groups in terms of educational attainment, with 32.1% and 22.4% of the population respectively. As shown by Table 3-3, the third largest group (19.0%) has no high school diploma, followed by Town residents with a Bachelor’s degree (12.2%), followed by a Graduate or Professional degree (9.2%). Overall, there are more people in West Brookfield with a Bachelor’s, Graduate or Professional Degree than in the majority of surrounding communities.

Table 3-2: Educational Attainment

Area	Population 25 years old and over	No High School Diploma	High School Graduate	Some College	Associate Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
West Brookfield	2,721	19.0%	32.1%	22.4%	5.1%	12.2%	9.2%
Brookfield	2,080	16.8%	42.3%	17.5%	6.6%	10.7%	6.1%
New Braintree	598	10.0%	43.5%	17.8%	7.3%	13.4%	8.0%
North Brookfield	3,100	19.6%	34.5%	21.8%	6.5%	11.8%	5.8%
Ware	6,512	19.5%	39.6%	19.1%	8.2%	9.8%	3.9%
Warren	3,171	20.6%	44.4%	17.7%	7.5%	6.6%	3.3%
Worcester Co.	495,868	16.5%	30.2%	18.5%	7.9%	16.7%	10.3%
Massachusetts	4,273,275	15.2%	27.3%	17.1%	7.2%	19.5%	13.7%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau.

Compared with statewide educational attainment levels, the largest group in Massachusetts had a high school diploma but no higher education, and the percentages of people with an Associate Degree and those with a Bachelor’s, graduate or professional degree were slightly higher than West Brookfield. Worcester County percentages for those with college degrees are between the West Brookfield and Massachusetts figures.

Income and Measures of Wealth - The health of the local economy is measured by per capita income, median household and median family incomes, as well as the percent of people for whom poverty status was determined.

Per capita income is equal to the total incomes generated by a population divided by the number of persons living in Town. Communities with a higher number of persons per household or smaller household incomes have smaller per capita income figures. The per capita income for the State of Massachusetts, using the 2000 U.S. Census data, was \$25,962, while that of West Brookfield was only \$21,501, approximately 17% less than the state average. West Brookfield’s per capita income was higher than the surrounding towns, but lower than Worcester County (See Table 3-3).

Table 3-3: Measures of Wealth, West Brookfield and Surrounding Towns, 1999

Community	Per Capita Income	Median Family Income	Median Household Income	% of People Living Below Poverty
West Brookfield	\$21,501	\$58,750	\$49,722	6.8%
Brookfield	\$20,144	\$54,519	\$45,655	6.1%
New Braintree	\$21,072	\$60,417	\$54,844	4.6%
North Brookfield	\$20,205	\$51,750	\$44,286	5.5%
Ware	\$18,908	\$45,505	\$36,875	11.2%
Warren	\$17,192	\$39,598	\$34,583	6.1%
Worcester County	\$22,983	\$58,394	\$47,874	9.2%
Massachusetts	\$25,952	\$61,664	\$50,502	9.3%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Additional indicators of wealth are the median family income and the median household income in Town. In Table 3-4, family incomes are differentiated from household incomes. For example, a single person living alone or two unrelated persons living in a house are both considered a household, but not a family. In 1999, the U.S. Census figures show that West Brookfield’s \$58,750 median family income was greater than most surrounding communities. The median household income is also somewhat more than most of the surrounding communities. The distribution of income for all 1,354 households:

Figure 3-3: Household Income Distribution in West Brookfield, 1999



Conversely, the percentage of Town residents living below the poverty level provides another measure of community wealth. Table 3-3 indicates that West Brookfield had a larger proportion of its residents living in poverty than neighboring towns, with the exception of Ware, and lower than state and county proportions. In 1999, the Census found 39 families below poverty level, and a total of 233 individuals with incomes below poverty level. More than half (5.8%) of the persons below poverty level were older than 18 years of age, and 4.6% were 65 years of age or

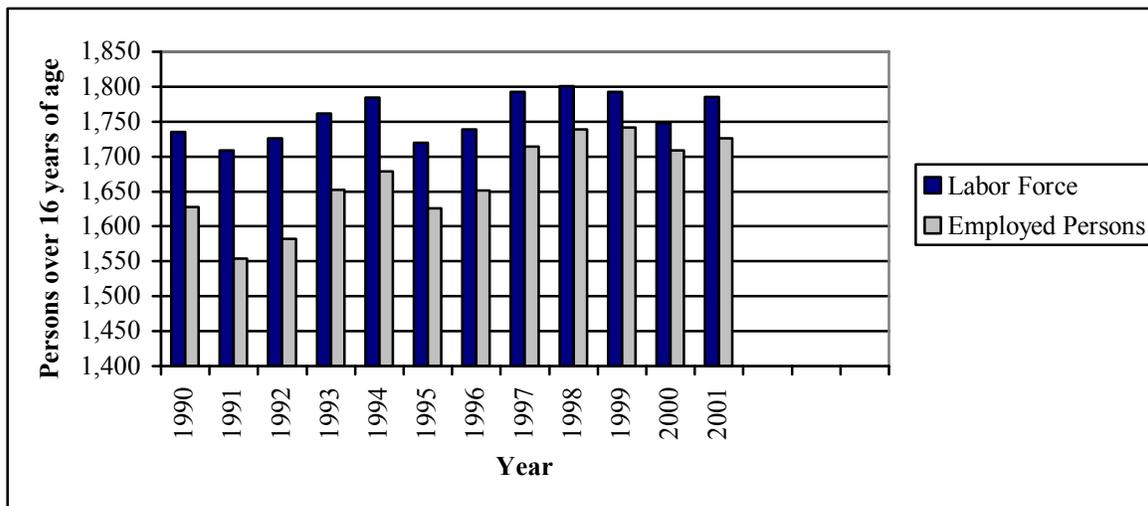
older. These statistics indicate that 6.8% of West Brookfield’s residents were below poverty level in 1999.

Efforts to improve the local economy can focus on increasing wages and creating new jobs . Economic development can advance these goals by attracting and retaining businesses with better-paying jobs, encouraging local entrepreneurs and small businesses, and providing social services, such as subsidized daycare to assist single-parent families and households with two working parents.

West Brookfield’s Labor Force

Labor Force & Unemployment - There has been a gradual increase in West Brookfield residents who work in Town and other communities during the 1990s. As Figure 3-3 displays, from 1990 to 2001, West Brookfield experienced periods of both growth and decline of its labor force and the employed people within that labor force. Overall from 1990 to 2001, West Brookfield’s work force saw little change from year to year. The labor force has stayed relatively steady and the number of employed persons has slowly increased.

Figure 3-4: Labor Force and Employed Persons in West Brookfield, 1990 to 2001



Source: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Employment and Training.

There has been a gradual increase in West Brookfield residents who work in Town and other communities during the 1990s. Despite setbacks in the first half of the decade, West Brookfield’s labor force grew 8.1%, from 1,628 employed workers in 1990 to 1,726 employed people by the year 2001. The Town’s unemployment rate declined from a high of 11.6% in 1991 to a low of 3.3% in 2000. However, as can be seen in Table 3-4, West Brookfield’s unemployment rate did increase in 2001 and 2002 mirroring the overall increase in the state’s unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for the Town has been consistently equal to the state average, which suggests that West Brookfield workers have similar characteristics as the State as a whole.

Table 3-4: Employment Status of West Brookfield Residents

Year	West Brookfield Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate of Unemployment	State Rate
1990	1,735	1,628	107	6.2%	6.0%
1991	1,709	1,554	155	9.1%	9.1%
1992	1,726	1,582	144	8.3%	8.6%
1993	1,762	1,652	110	6.2%	6.9%
1994	1,784	1,679	105	5.9%	6.0%
1995	1,720	1,626	94	5.4%	5.4%
1996	1,739	1,651	88	5.1%	4.3%
1997	1,793	1,714	79	4.4%	4.0%
1998	1,801	1,739	62	3.4%	3.3%
1999	1,793	1,742	51	2.8%	3.2%
2000	1,748	1,709	39	2.2%	2.6%
2001	1,785	1,726	59	3.3%	3.7%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training

Number and Types of Jobs in West Brookfield

The following DET data presents changes that occurred relative to *local employment in West Brookfield* from 1990 to 2001:

Table 3-5: Employment and Wages in West Brookfield

Year	Total Annual Payroll	Avg Annual Wage	Establishments	EMPLOYMENT								
				Total	Agriculture Forestry Fishing	Government	Construction	Manufacturing	TCU	Trade	FIRE	Services
1990	11508574	18991	70	606	conf	53	62	209	conf	167	conf	70
1991	11842896	21073	70	562	conf	56	45	200	conf	149	conf	71
1992	11781211	21499	64	548	conf	68	8	216	15	141	conf	65
1993	11882553	23073	64	515	conf	55	7	204	30	117	conf	68
1994	14485225	23439	73	618	conf	107	conf	204	45	142	conf	78
1995	15499501	23956	81	647	conf	113	18	186	49	171	9	69
1996	16310891	24491	84	666	conf	115	27	174	46	170	30	73
1997	17330404	27037	72	641	conf	114	32	170	39	156	24	73
1998	18411277	28023	74	657	34	112	34	177	40	161	24	75
1999	20449023	28167	82	726	33	124	42	182	conf	141	29	159
2000	25630092	28446	82	901	C	134	48	179	0	149	30	313
2001	26175452	27935	83	937	C	139	24	200	0	0	30	327

TCU = Transportation, Communication and Utilities; FIRE = Finance, Insurance and Real Estate; conf = data suppressed due to confidentiality; Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training

As shown in Table 3-5, the number of business establishments operating in West Brookfield has gradually increased since 1990, growing from 70 to 83 establishments. The slight increase in employment over this time period has included shifts in the types of jobs available in West Brookfield, with the greatest gains occurring in services (257 jobs) and government (86 jobs).

Out of the total of 937 local jobs in 2001, 34.9% were service oriented, which reflects this national trend. By 2001, 21.3% of local workers remained in the manufacturing sector that has declined by nearly 7,000 jobs throughout the CMRPC Region. West Brookfield has maintained a higher percentage of its manufacturing jobs, though the region, the state, and all of New England lost a significant amount of manufacturing jobs during the 1990s.

Table 3-5 also shows the total annual payroll in West Brookfield expanded by 127% from 1990 to 2001. The average annual wage also increased from \$18,991 in 1990 to \$27,935 in 2000 (this 47% increase was slightly more than the inflation rate of 33% during this period, as measured by the Consumer Price Index). As a result, West Brookfield workers had more disposable income to spend on housing and goods and services.

Table 3-6 below compares the types and number of jobs in 2001 for neighboring communities, as well as employment and wages comparison. This data shows West Brookfield has the second lowest average annual wage of surrounding towns, and the second highest number of service sector jobs. Ware had the largest number of establishments and total annual payroll. New Braintree had the highest average annual wage in 2001, but had only one-eighth the number of workers in West Brookfield.

Table 3-6: Employment and Wages, West Brookfield and Surrounding Towns, 2001

Town	Total Annual Payroll	Avg. Annual Wage	# Est- ab- lish- -ments	# of Work- ers	Agri./ Forest/ Fish	Gov't	Con- struc- tion	Manu- facture	TCU	Trade	FIRE	Service
West Brookfield	26,175,452	27,935	83	937	conf	139	24	200	0	0	30	327
Brookfield	12,125,146	25,366	59	478	0	142	12	77	0	114	0	50
New Braintree	5,788,261	40,762	17	142	10	106	7	0	0	0	0	11
North Brookfield	38,071,883	32,457	82	1,173	conf	183	19	548	31	222	31	124
Ware	77,318,363	28,658	212	2,698	21	397	61	513	7	936	182	581
Warren	40,544,082	33,480	69	1,211	0	245	58	638	0	73	14	135

TCU = Transportation, Communication and Utilities; FIRE = Finance, Insurance and Real Estate; conf = data suppressed due to confidentiality. *Source: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Employment and Training*

Economic Sector's Contribution to the Local Tax Base

In fiscal year 2002, West Brookfield levied a total of \$3,006,665 in taxes, based on a tax rate of \$12.91 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for Residential, Commercial, Industrial, and Personal Property (single tax rate). West Brookfield homeowners accounted for \$2,702,373 (89.9%) of this total 2002 tax base, while businesses and industries accounted for \$222,187 (7.4%) of the tax base. The remainder (2.7%) was derived from taxes on personal property (\$82,105). The following two tables compare West Brookfield and surrounding towns in terms of their commercial and industrial tax bases.

Table 3-8 shows that West Brookfield’s commercial development nets the highest amount of actual tax dollars compared with neighboring communities, with the exception of Ware. However, North Brookfield and New Braintree have a slightly higher percentage of the Town’s total tax levy (5.2%), closely followed by West Brookfield and Brookfield (5.2%).

Table 3-7: Commercial Tax Base Comparison, 2002

Community	FY 2002 Tax Rate	Commercial Taxes Levied	Assessed Valuation	% of Total Tax Levy
West Brookfield	12.91	156,389	12,113,826	5.2%
Brookfield	19.52	136,363	6,985,834	5.2%
New Braintree	16.78	52,007	3,099,341	5.4%
North Brookfield	12.94	155,156	11,990,381	5.4%
Ware	19.50	832,858	42,710,658	10.7%
Warren	15.24	126,859	8,324,091	4.2%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Municipal Databank/Local Aid Section

Table 3-9 indicates that West Brookfield has one of the lowest percentages of the total tax levy (2.2%) from industrial property. North Brookfield, Ware and Warren derive between 3.2% and 4.8%. The other surrounding towns derive less than 1% of their tax base from industry.

Table 3-8: Industrial Tax Base Comparison, 2002

Community	FY 2002 Tax Rate	Industrial Taxes Levied	Assessed Valuation	% of Total Tax Levy
West Brookfield	12.91	65,798	5,096,700	2.2%
Brookfield	19.52	17,295	886,000	0.7%
New Braintree	16.78	4,351	259,304	0.5%
North Brookfield	12.94	112,325	8,680,419	3.2%
Ware	19.50	331,721	17,011,345	4.2%
Warren	15.24	145,097	9,520,800	4.8%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Municipal Databank/Local Aid Section

Developable Commercial/Industrial Land

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission prepared a build-out analysis for West Brookfield during 2000 and 2001. This analysis identified the amount of vacant, developable land in Town and examined the potential impacts if this land were fully developed under existing zoning standards. The build-out analysis does not specify when a community will reach full build-out, but anticipates the land uses that are likely to occur if it were fully developed according to current zoning policies.

West Brookfield’s build-out analysis identified slightly more than 4 acres of vacant, developable land within the Town’s General zoning district. Most of the Town’s current industrial business is located in this General Zoning District, which is approximately 4% of the Town’s land and is located along Route 9, near major transportation routes. Table 9 estimates the extent of buildable land and how much commercial/industrial floor space could be created if the land were fully developed under the Town’s current zoning standards.

Table 3-9: Non-Residential Build-Out Analysis

<i>Zoning District</i>	Developable Land (acres)	Potential Floor Space	Potential New Jobs*	Potential Water Use (gal/day)
General	4.24	184,700 sq. ft	739	13,873

Source: CMRPC Buildout Analysis for the Town of West Brookfield

(*The new jobs figure is based on four employees per 1,000 square feet of floor space per the EOEA buildout methodology).

These estimates suggest that as many as 739 new jobs could be created if build-out occurs. However, development of all vacant commercial/industrial land is unlikely. These potential new jobs would almost double the 937 jobs reported by DET in 2001 (see Table 3-7), if the industrial/commercial land in Town is fully developed under its current zoning. This expansion in local employment is unlikely to happen in the short-term and it should be expected that the current zoning standards will change. The development of some parcels may result in making potential commercial/industrial areas less usable and land constraints or conservation efforts can preclude development on certain properties. Careful attention to the configuration and limitations of parcels will help avoid missed opportunities and foster the best use of the existing commercial/industrial areas in Town.

Home Occupations

West Brookfield’s current zoning allows home occupations with no more than one non-resident employee. The home business must have “...no exterior storage of material or equipment and there is incidental display of products visible from the street, and that any display or advertising is in accordance with those allowed for residential uses”. Due to increased opportunities and the need for more than one income per household, more people are establishing home businesses and/or working from their homes. In addition, greater numbers of people employed by a company are able to work from home by “telecommuting”. The Internet and advances in home computers have created conditions where people are productive working out of their homes. The US Census found that almost twice as many West Brookfield residents worked at home in 2000 (7.7%) as in 1990 (4.4%). It is likely there will continue to be an increase in the number of people working from their homes, whether they are engaged in home businesses or telecommuting to a job.

Economic Trends for the Region

The Division of Employment & Training (DET) published a report on the “Long Term Job Outlook Through 2008” for the 16 Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) in Massachusetts. The Town of West Brookfield is considered part of Southern Worcester SDA, which includes the city of Worcester, the more urban towns of Auburn, Shrewsbury and Spencer, and 34 other surrounding towns. Following are highlights of the DET economic forecast for this region of the state.

State Employment Outlook

“The Massachusetts economy will generate more than 345,000 new jobs between 1998 and 2008, and an additional 797,000 jobs will open up during that time period because of workers who retire, change careers, or receive promotions. All in all, an estimated 1.1 million jobs will need to be filled over the ten years. Job growth will vary widely, however, among the state's 16 SDAs because each local economy is based on a distinct mix of industries.”

Southern Worcester Outlook

In the Southern Worcester SDA, the total number of 254,910 jobs in 1998 is expected to increase by 21,140 new jobs by 2008. Due to a smaller share of fast growing industries, this 8.3% growth rate is slower than the average rate of the 16 SDAs, which have rates ranging from 3.9% to 13.3%. In addition to new jobs, the DET forecast 60,600 replacement jobs for a total of 276,050 openings in the Southern Worcester SDA between 1998 and 2008. Key points regarding employment trends according to major industries are noted below.

□ **Services:**

Services industries are expected to generate 60 percent or more of each SDA's new jobs between 1998 and 2008. Types of services are diverse (e.g. hospitals, engineering, information technology, advertising, etc.) but most new jobs should arise in three industries - health care, business services, and social services – in response to local business and community needs. In the Southern Worcester SDA, the DET estimates 45% job growth in health and social services, 37% growth rate in business services and 18% growth of other services (see Table 10 below for projected number of new jobs).

□ **Wholesale and Retail Trade:**

Wholesalers and retailers account for 23 percent of all jobs in the state, and should generate the second largest number of new jobs in every SDA except Boston. The wholesaling and retailing share of job growth in all SDAs is expected to slow, but on average will still account for 22% of all jobs by 2008. Eating and drinking places are the largest retail industry in each SDA and are expected to remain one of the fastest growing areas.

□ **Construction:**

Construction job growth is expected to moderate in all SDAs. Although construction jobs grew rapidly (59%) in the neighboring Northern Worcester SDA during 1993-2000, the Southern Worcester SDA did not experience such growth and construction levels are still below 1980s peak levels. Several factors are expected to slow growth of construction jobs in each of the SDAs. DET also notes that construction activity can rapidly change in response to regional conditions and job growth forecasts should be “viewed cautiously”.

□ **Government:**

Jobs in most federal agencies should continue to decline at a slow rate. Local and state increases in education, police, fire and other municipal services are expected to correspond to population and business growth in Southern Worcester and other SDAs.

□ **Manufacturing:**

DET projects that manufacturing will continue to decline in every SDA, but at a much slower rate. Southern Worcester and other SDAs with a mid-proportion of manufacturing jobs will continue to decline. However, some job growth is expected in high-tech manufacturing industries, such as biotechnology, communications and precision medical instruments.

□ **Transportation, Communications and Utilities (TCU):**

This smaller sector is expected to generate 2 - 4% of each SDA's new jobs, and continue its current share of total nonfarm employment. Most new employment is likely to be in transportation, the biggest industry in this sector, which includes air travel, local passenger transportation, trucking, courier services and other jobs.

□ **Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE):**

Outside the Boston SDA, few new jobs are expected in the FIRE sector. In Southern Worcester and other SDAs, the total number of jobs is expected to decline slightly as banks and insurance companies restructure to reduce costs.

Occupational Outlook in Southern Worcester SDA

The DET report predicts 54% of new jobs in the region will be in the occupations shown below:

Registered Nurses	1,130	General Managers & Top Executives	540	Office Clerks, General	410
Home Health Aides	790	Retail Salespersons	530	Social/Human Services Assistants	400
Computer Engineers	770	Cashiers	520	Elect. & Electronic Techns/Tehnl	360
Secondary School Teachers	730	Teacher Aides	520	Medical Assistants	340
Hand Packers & Packagers	680	Waiters & Waitresses	500	Office/Admin Support Supvrs/Mgrs	330
Systems Analysts	610	Computer Support Specialists	480	Teachers, Elementary School	320
Nursing Aides/Orderlies/Attendants	600	Social Workers	480	Teachers, Special Education	320
				Total New Jobs	11,360

The following Table shows projected number of new jobs by industry for 1998 and 2008, and the growth rate percentage for this time period. The number of jobs by industry in West Brookfield in 1998 is also shown for comparison.

Table 3-10: Jobs and Growth Rate, Southern Worcester SDA
(Includes workers who may work in one or more SDAs)

	Total Nonfarm*	Construc-tion**	Manufac-turing	TCU	Trade	FIRE	Services ***	Government
1998 jobs	237,420	7,760	41,620	9,950	54,480	15,120	72,550	35,940
2008 jobs	256,980	8,160	37,410	10,350	58,640	15,210	90,110	37,100
New Jobs	19,560	400	(4,210)	400	4,160	90	17,560	1,160
Growth Rate	8%	5%	-10%	4%	8%	1%	24%	3%
1998 Jobs in West Brookfield	693	34	177	40	161	24	75	112

* excludes self-employed and unpaid family workers, ** includes mining, *** includes agricultural services
TCU= Transportation, Communications & Utilities, FIRE = Finance, Insurance & Real Estate

Section 2: *Goals and Objectives for Future Economic Development*

Proposed Economic Goals and Objectives

These proposed goals and objectives provide guidance for future economic activities in West Brookfield. Important considerations are how to attract and retain businesses which:

- Provide jobs for residents with low, moderate and middle income;
- Contribute to the rural character of West Brookfield; and
- Supply the goods and services desired by the community, with a strong emphasis on using local materials.

The following also incorporates goals and objectives identified by the West Brookfield 2002 Open Space Plan and 2003 Community Survey results.

Goal: Promote economic development:

- Encourage use of sustainable local resources
- Locate industrial/commercial uses where infrastructure exist
- Redevelop brownfields and underutilized buildings
- Diversify tax base with additional industrial/commercial development

Goal: Attract and support businesses that complement town character:

- Promote tourism based on the Town's rich heritage and natural environment
- Preserve and strengthen farming and forestry activities
- Encourage home businesses
- Improve and maintain Town bylaws, including historic preservation

Goal: Expand employment opportunities in Town:

- Consider General Zoning District for additional economic activity
- Provide education and job training for West Brookfield labor force
- Cooperate with regional entities to promote appropriate economic development initiatives, such as the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation (QV CDC)

Goal: Increase goods and services available to West Brookfield residents and visitors:

- Make zoning changes to encourage small-scale businesses that serve local needs
- Encourage community-gathering places, such as family dining restaurant
- Encourage diverse types of businesses in West Brookfield Center
- Expand recreational opportunities and facilities

Section 3: *Tourism and Small Business Development*

West Brookfield residents are concerned about Town's rural character and the potential impact of economic development in the future. The October 2003 community survey found that expansion of tourist, recreation and home businesses are among the most preferred means to bolster the local economy, diversify the tax base and preserve the tranquil New England landscapes that contribute so much to the quality of life in Town.

As noted earlier in this Chapter, the "Long Term Job Outlook Through 2008" prepared by the state Division of Employment and Training predicts that community services and retail trade, including eating and drinking places, will generate much of the job growth in the Southern Worcester SDA where West Brookfield is located. Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Massachusetts economy, and small businesses offer an appealing strategy to link environmental quality with employment opportunities for low, moderate and middle income residents. West Brookfield Center is situated on Route 9, an increasingly popular state highway that brings many visitors to the region. The wealth of historic places, scenic views and potential recreation amenities in Town make it well-positioned to become a weekend destination for people seeking respites from urban life in Worcester and Boston. Expansion of retail, recreation and tourist businesses will both benefit the region, and enhance West Brookfield as a place where people can shop for more diverse goods and services.

This section identifies locations of tourist and recreation businesses that can attract visitors, as well as provide products and services for residents of West Brookfield and neighboring towns. This section also maps the many recreation areas that are available in Town and the surrounding region. In addition, many of the Town's historic features are identified and mapped.

Farming, tourism and outdoor recreation are an important part of the community heritage. The Rock House Reservation, Salem Cross Inn, and Ye Olde Tavern are well-known attractions in Town. The West Brookfield Historical Commission has an excellent website that highlights many historic features, including an interesting walking tour of several sites in the Historic District. The Quaboag Valley Chamber of Commerce is also actively promoting tourism throughout the region with its *Quaboag Hills Region* website and tourist displays at many locations. In addition, the *Browse the Brookfields* website provides information on local business attractions. The Quaboag Valley Chamber of Commerce (QVCC) is preparing additional information to help visitors enjoy the various attractions in West Brookfield and surrounding towns. A telephone interview with the QVCC identified the need for a composite map showing the locations of recreation areas, activities and businesses, which visitors and residents can patronize. The maps and information in this section can help to address this need.

Along with identification of existing recreation resources and services, this section looks at some barriers and opportunities for tourism. Recommendations for community actions that can promote tourist, recreation and home businesses are discussed in the concluding part of this section.

Tourism and Recreation Maps

Tourist and Recreation Businesses – Small businesses were identified through the *Quaboag Hills Region* and the *Browse the Brookfields* websites and brochures, which have an extensive listing of these enterprises in West Brookfield and surrounding towns. Additional research on potential tourist related businesses included such websites as the MapQuest and AOL Yellow Pages, the Central Massachusetts Tourism Council, Central Quabbin Area, and Mass Parks, as well as various publications and field visits. The maps provided in this section show the locations of those small businesses that offer recreation or tourist products and services.

The proximity of various business attractions to West Brookfield was also reviewed. The Town has at least forty tourist/recreation businesses, but there are types of tourist services, retail shops and attractions that presently do not exist in Town, and may offer opportunities for future development of small businesses. For example, the state Division of Fish and Wildlife stocks trout in local brooks and there are also warm water fisheries in Town, but West Brookfield does not have a fishing shop for anglers who visit the area.

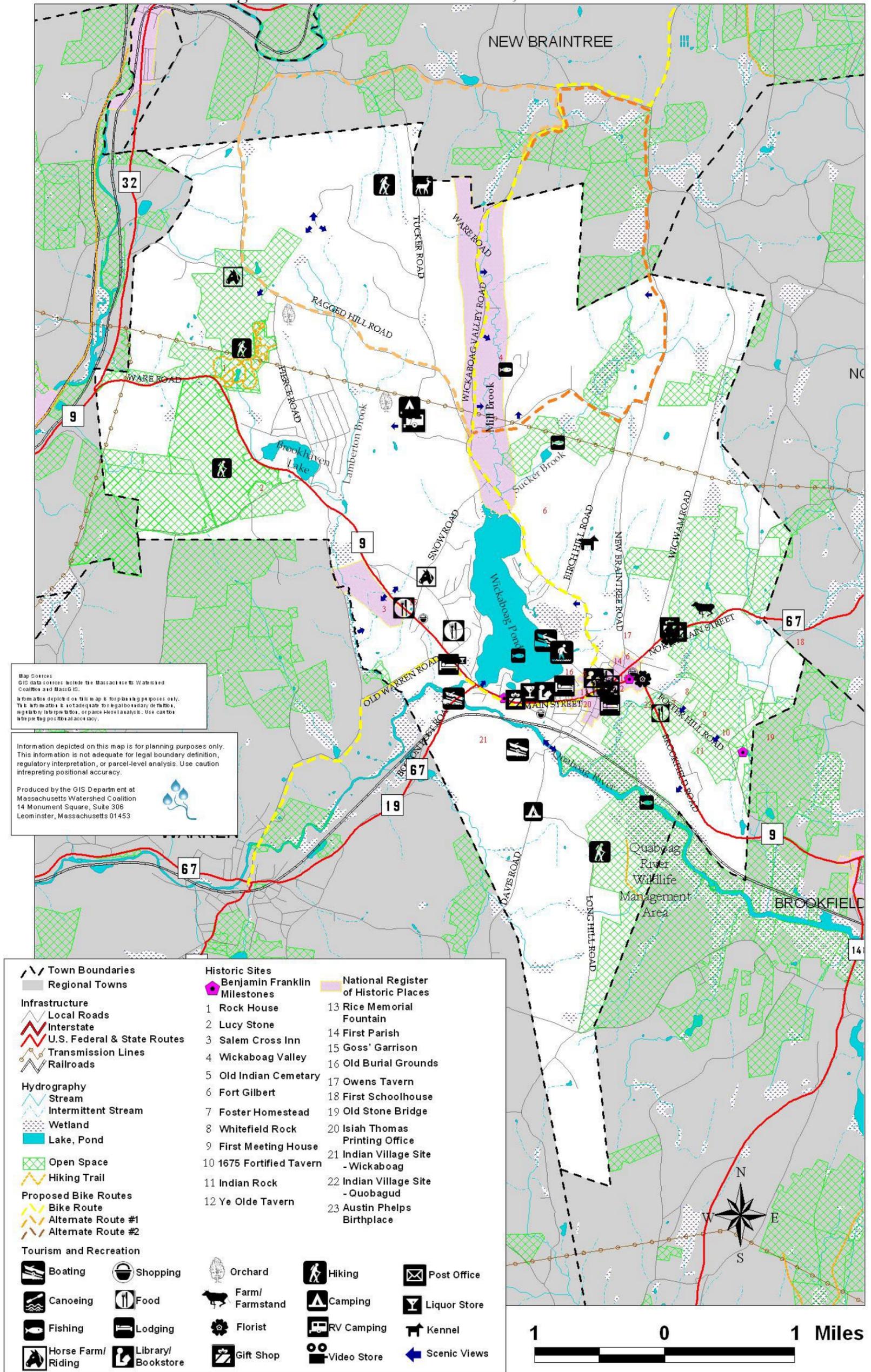
Recreation Areas and Activities – Conservation and recreation lands owned by state and municipal agencies, or owned by organizations such as The Trustees of Reservations, were identified from GIS data, the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan, and Town assessors maps. Recreation activities permitted at these areas were also determined from these sources, as well as various publications, Internet websites and field visits. Some of the permitted activities are indicated by the map symbols for these recreation areas.

Historic and Scenic Resources – Historic buildings and sites were identified from information provided by the West Brookfield Historical Commission website ([www. Westbrookfield.org](http://www.Westbrookfield.org)). Three areas in Town are listed in the National Register of Historic Places – the Wickaboag Valley Historic District, the West Brookfield Center Historic District and the Salem Cross Inn Historic District. In addition, many scenic views were identified during field visits in Town. These historic and scenic assets are highly valued by Town residents, as well as important attractions for visitors.

Three composite maps of small businesses, recreation resources, historic features and scenic views were produced, which show: (1) the entire Town; (2) an enlargement of the West Brookfield Center Historic District; and (3) the West Brookfield region. These maps are useful tools to analyze existing and potential attractions in Town, and also can help the Quaboag Valley Chamber of Commerce to enhance its recreation guide that is available to residents and visitors. Each map is discussed below, followed by recommendations for Town actions to promote tourist, recreation and home-based businesses.

(1) **The Town map** shows extensive protected open spaces that can offer diverse recreation opportunities throughout West Brookfield. This map identifies nearly forty recreation/tourist businesses, which are mostly located beside Route 9 as would be expected. It is worth noting that the Salem Cross Inn, the Highview Campground, the Old Sawmill Campground, Lake Wickaboag, and the Rock House Reservation are popular destinations that attract visitors to Town.

Figure 3.5: Tourism & Recreation, West Brookfield



Ongoing improvement of the home site of Lucy Stone - who was a leader for women's rights in the 19th Century – has much potential to become another special attraction in Town. In addition, there are scenic farms and orchards, picturesque lakes, tranquil rivers and streams in pastoral valleys, forested hills and other features that can make West Brookfield an appealing destination for a broad array of visitor interests.

While there are a variety of recreation resources and potential attractions in Town, it is difficult for visitors (and new residents) to learn about recreation activities or find these areas. Parking and access to recreational opportunities are very limited, although Town residents may know where to go. In contrast to the Rock House Reservation facilities, many attractive areas in Town are not inviting at present, even if found by a visitor.

Although West Brookfield can offer diverse outdoor pursuits for residents and visitors, some very important activities are not readily available. Swimming is always a popular attraction and nearly all respondents to the community survey are in favor of preserving areas for swimming. While the Town Beach is a great recreation facility for residents, there are no public swimming areas for visitors. There is public boat access to Lake Wickaboag, which is listed as a Great Pond, at the Town Beach.

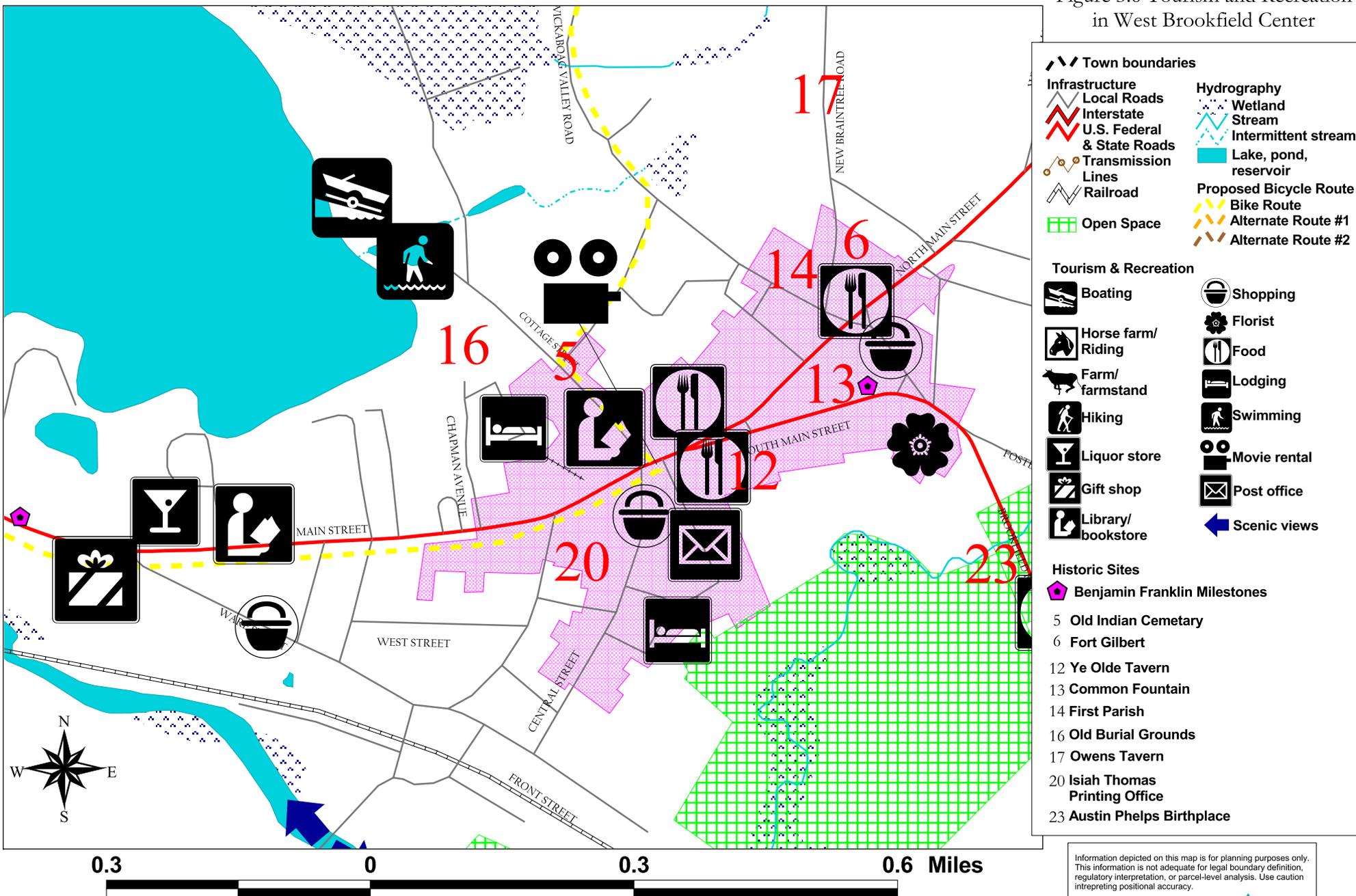
The community survey also found very strong support for creating trails and preserving forests, brooks, wildlife habitats, fishing and hunting areas. Except for the Rock House Reservation, there are no visible hiking or biking paths at present, although there are efforts underway to recreate the Old Bay Path trail through Town. While golf was not rated by survey respondents, a challenging course will draw golfers from miles around. All of these facilities can provide recreation opportunities for residents, and offer attractions to foster tourism. Additional recreation facilities will encourage small retail shops and recreation businesses, which are consistent with the types of businesses most preferred by survey respondents.

(2) **The Town center map** shows most of the tourist/recreation businesses are clustered in the vicinity of the Common. The presence of unique and diverse shopping can help foster tourism. Retail stores are somewhat sparse and interspersed with other businesses, and there is potential for additional shops. For example, the Center lacks many popular goods and services, such as a pharmacy, clothing/apparel shop, art gallery, crafts shop, florist, sporting goods or outdoor café. As a result, there are few shopping attractions to bring visitors or residents to the Center.

The Common is a focus for community activities, and it is cited in the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan as one of the most attractive commons in Central Massachusetts. Landscaping can further enhance the appeal of this unique historic resource - the addition of pathways, flower gardens, ornamental trees and parking areas can also be a catalyst to attract additional specialty shops. Picnic tables, well-publicized band concerts on the Common, and a farmers' market are other amenities that can draw visitors into Town.

There are several locations off Route 9 for a seasonal tourist center that can provide information about local attractions. Since there is decreasing state support at present for tourist centers, it will require a local initiative by area businesses and organizations. Along with information, this

Figure 3.6 Tourism and Recreation in West Brookfield Center



Map Sources
 GIS data sources include the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition, the Massachusetts Highway Department, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, and MassGIS.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Produced by the GIS Department at Massachusetts Watershed Coalition
 14 Monument Square, Suite 306
 Leominster, Massachusetts 01453

facility can provide the much-needed public restrooms that are not available for visitors. There is a void of small-town shopping attractions in Central Massachusetts, and a local tourist center can be an important element for advancing this opportunity in West Brookfield.

Improved signage for local businesses, historic features and recreation facilities can further enhance the center as a destination for family outings. Local businesses should also help promote local attractions. For example, the state stocks trout in Coys Brook and Mill Brook, yet few visitors will discover this family activity is available very near to the West Brookfield Center Historic District.

Expansion of the current mixed-uses in the Town center, including affordable apartments, senior housing and office spaces will increase the number of workers and residents who can support more businesses here (see Chapter 2 for information about affordable housing). Increasing the density of people and businesses where water, sewer and transportation are available is a focus for “smart growth” concepts that are gaining national attention. State agencies are creating incentives to help communities manage their growth, and there are added points for community grant applications that achieve “smart growth” objectives. Development of a lively center can provide more services for residents, diversify the tax base, preserve rural character and enhance the quality of life in West Brookfield. A lively center can provide opportunities for additional places (e.g. restaurants), events and activities that foster community interaction, which was strongly favored by respondents to the community survey. It is worth noting that there is limited parking in the Center, so the Town should investigate opportunities to provide adequate parking to serve additional business and residential uses.

(3) The regional map shows the locations of diverse recreation areas and activities in surrounding towns. Popular visitor destinations include Old Sturbridge Village, the Quabbin Visitor Center, Swift River fishing areas, Brookfield Orchards, the Brimfield Antique Fair, and town fairs or events in nearby communities. These regional attractions help draw people to West Brookfield and can help support more recreation, tourist and home businesses. The Browse the Brookfields business association is working with regional chambers of commerce to market these attractions through visitor information displays at local businesses, as well as the *Browse the Brookfields* and *Quaboag Hills Region* websites. There seems to be much potential for more information about attractions in the West Brookfield area.

In the past, the entire region has been a popular spot for family vacations in the summer. The rural character of West Brookfield and adjacent towns is unlike some towns to the east, which are losing farms, forests and ‘swimming holes’ to make way for sprawling residential subdivisions and strip malls along major roads. The open spaces that attracted people to live in these towns are diminished, and their growing populations result in more people near West Brookfield who are likely to explore the attractions in the area. It is important to provide information at various locations in Town, which can help visitors enjoy local historic and recreation resources. Word-of-mouth is an effective and inexpensive means to market these attractions, and can also gradually make West Brookfield a day-trip destination for people in Worcester (only 20 miles away) and metropolitan Boston (an hour drive on the weekend).

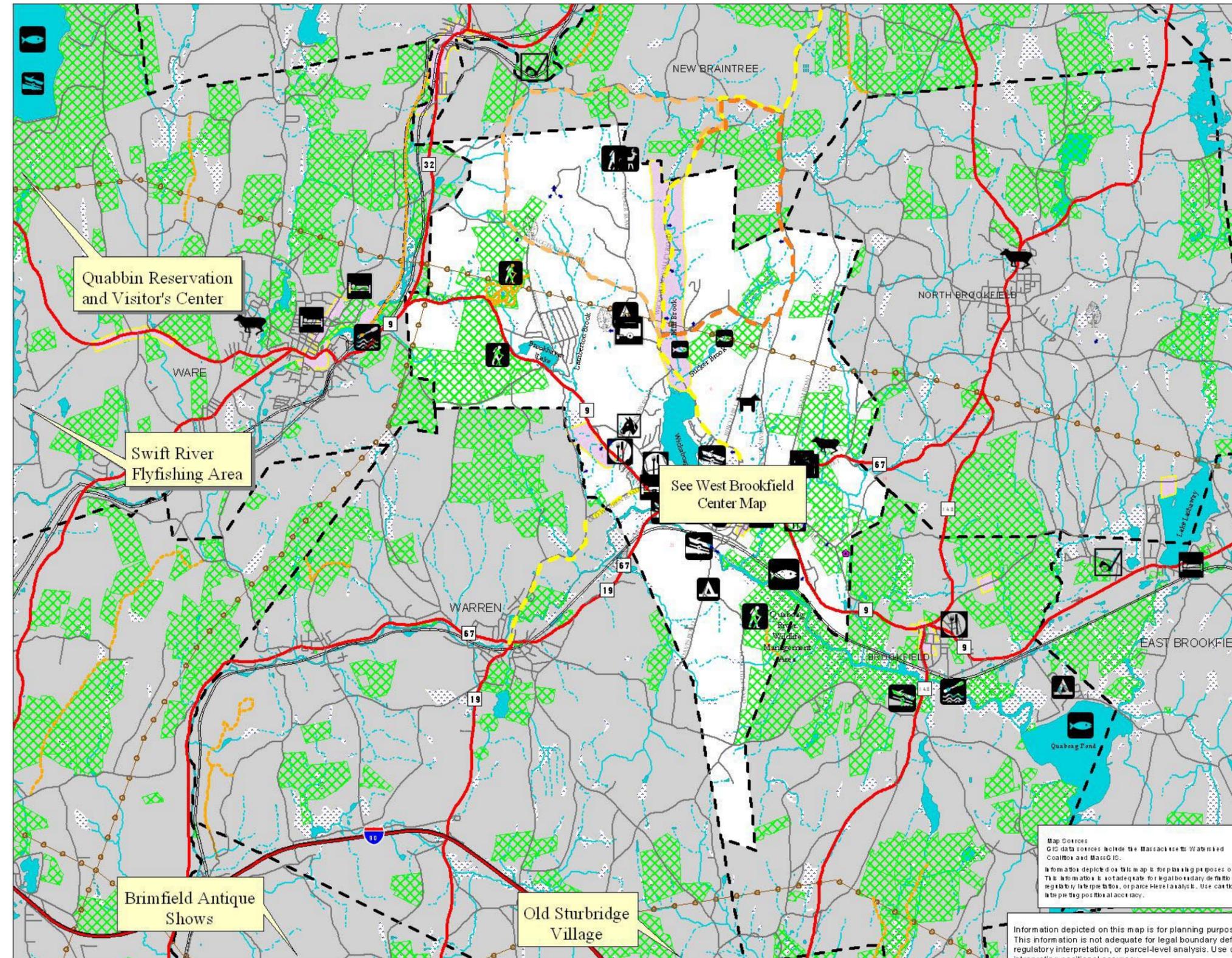


Figure 3.7: Tourism and Recreation in the West Brookfield Region

Town boundaries Town boundaries	
Roads Local Interstate U.S. Federal State Transmission Lines Railroad Hiking Trails	
Hydrography Wetland Stream Intermittent stream Lake, pond, reservoir Open space	
Proposed Bicycle Routes Bicycle Route Alternate Route #1 Alternate Route #2	
Tourism & Recreation	
Boating Canoeing Fishing Horse farm/Riding Farm/farmstand Hiking Liquor store Gift shop Library/bookstore Post office	Orchard Vineyard Shopping Florist Golf Food Lodging Kennel Camping RV Camping Video Store Scenic View
Historic Sites	
Benjamin Franklin Milestones 1 Rock House 2 Lucy Stone 3 Salem Cross Inn 4 Wickaboag Valley 5 Old Indian Cemetary 6 Fort Gilbert 7 Foster Homestead 8 Whitefield Rock 9 First Meeting House 10 1675 Fortified Tavern 11 Indian Rock 12 Ye Olde Tavern 13 Rice Memorial Fountain	National Register of Historic Places 14 First Parish 15 Goss' Garrison 16 Old Burial Grounds 17 Owens Tavern 18 First Schoolhouse 19 Old Stone Bridge 20 Isiah Thomas Printing Office 21 Indian Village Site - Wickaboag 22 Indian Village Site - Quobagud 23 Austin Phelps Birthplace

Map Sources
 GIS data sources include the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition and MassGIS.
 Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Produced by the GIS Department at
 Massachusetts Watershed Coalition
 14 Monument Square, Suite 306
 Leominster, Massachusetts 01453



Recommendations for Tourism and Small Business Development

The recommendations below are proposed to stimulate tourism and the expansion of small business in West Brookfield. Development of tourist, recreation and home businesses can help preserve the Town's rural character and offer new employment opportunities to residents with diverse skills and incomes. West Brookfield appears well positioned to draw visitors, as well as increase services for Town residents and adjacent communities. The development of additional recreation and retail attractions will facilitate efforts to make the Town an increasingly attractive destination.

- Consider opportunities for the Town to work with the Browse the Brookfields business association to produce and distribute information that will help residents and visitors learn about and access the recreation resources, historic features and small businesses in West Brookfield. Pocket maps with descriptions of local attractions and activities can be made available at a visitor center (see below) and at local businesses. Many examples of effective recreation/tourist information are available - such as placemats at local eateries, brochures, flyers and the like – which can increase outreach to different target audiences. Browse the Brookfields and similar business associations in other towns have organized special events and other activities that attract both residents and visitors.
- Evaluate potential locations for a seasonal visitor center along Route 9, which can provide information and public restrooms, as well as recreation activities on site, such as fishing, hiking or nature study. A visitor center could include a small rustic-style building with space for Historical Commission displays, recreation businesses (e.g. bicycle or canoe rentals), arts and crafts shops, and a café. A visitor center can also provide parking for trail users, if the town-wide trail system discussed below is created.
- Increase and improve recreation facilities identified as important community needs, which can also offer popular visitor attractions. Town boards should work with the Browse the Brookfields business association to coordinate recreation development with state agencies and organizations such as The Trustees for Reservations. There are state and federal assistance programs that can help the Town to design and develop recreation facilities, such as:
 - 🏊 Creation of a public swimming facility available to residents and visitors;
 - 🚶 Development of a town-wide trail system that links the proposed Old Bay Path with the Historic District walking tour, a Quaboag River greenway trail, a Lamberton Brook valley trail, and a potential Coys Hill to Ragged Hill trail (i.e. connecting the Lucy Stone Home Site, Rock House Reservation, APR lands, and the Ragged Hill lookout tower);
 - 🎣 Increased public access and marketing of fishing opportunities on Coys Brook, Mill Brook, Lake Wickaboag and the Quaboag River (e.g. a stocked trout pond on Coys Brook can offer an appealing spot for unique family outings near the Common and West Brookfield Center);

- Improve signage in Town to help residents and visitors locate recreation areas, historic places and businesses. Work with the Division of Fish and Game, other state agencies, and The Trustees of Reservations to clearly designate public parking, access points, and permitted activities at recreation areas. Design of a common tourist information sign, using consistent colors and graphics, can enable visitors to more easily discover the attractions in Town.
- Consider opportunities to add landscaping and other features that can enhance the West Brookfield Common as a family destination for residents and visitors. The Town center is the hub for community activities and the Common can be an increasing source of civic pride in Town. Applications for funding assistance from state grant programs can highlight how improvements in the Town Common will link with new “smart-growth” objectives.
- Manage community growth to preserve rural landscapes that are highly-valued by Town residents and will attract visitors. These unique historic/scenic resources include the Wickaboag Valley, Whortleberry Hill, Ragged Hill, Coys Hill, Long Hill, Foster Hill, the Salem Cross Historic District, and the Quaboag River valley. Consider “smart-growth” strategies that retain rural character, such as downzoning (large lots to decrease housing density), an open space subdivision bylaw, and transfer of development rights (to encourage in-fill development and affordable housing in Town center), as well as conservation/recreation land acquisitions in cooperation with state agencies and The Trustees of Reservations.
- Support pending state legislation to create a Quaboag and Ware Rivers Valley Heritage District (S. 1198), which includes West Brookfield and thirteen other surrounding communities. The act will assist towns, local businesses, state and federal agencies to preserve and enhance historic, cultural and natural resources; to promote tourism and compatible revitalization and development; and to produce educational programs and exhibits. The proposed legislation will create a Heritage District Commission to access diverse funding sources and to provide assistance for resource preservation, recreation, tourism and intergovernmental coordination.

Section 4: *Land Suitable for Commercial and Industrial Development*

The Economic Suitability Map provides an enlargement of the Land Use Suitability Map. This enlarged map covers those portions of West Brookfield where the Town's General zoning district is located, as noted by the map label. This map applies the same criteria for the absolute development constraints and partial development constraints, which are outlined in Section 4 of the Open Space and Resource Protection chapter.

The Economic Suitability Map also shows the area where Town water lines are located, which serve only this part of West Brookfield. While the General zoning district has water service available, there is no sewer service and land uses require private septic systems. The 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan notes: "As a consequence of this lack of a municipal sewer system, West Brookfield does not have infrastructure to support major development due to the increased lot sizes and setbacks required under Title 5 for septic system construction." Other important considerations relative to land suitability for business and industrial uses include areas located on major transportation routes, buffers for existing residential uses, and environmental constraints.

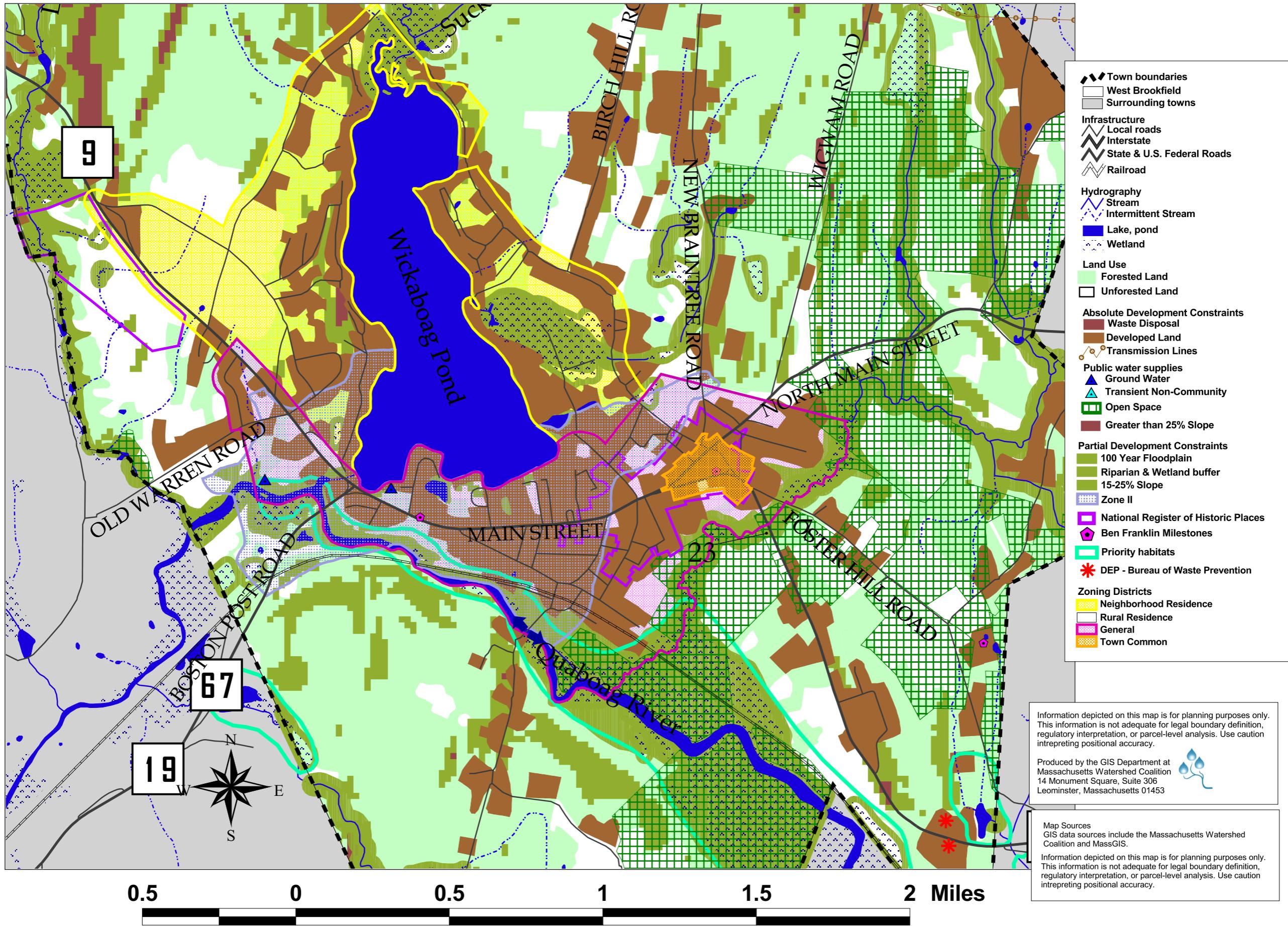
Absolute development constraints shown by the Economic Suitability Map include wetlands, slopes greater than 25%, water bodies, well-fields, certified vernal pools, and permanently protected open spaces. The map also shows partial environmental constraints that do not prevent development, but can affect the location and types of uses, including 100 year floodplains, 100 foot wetland buffers, 200 foot resource protection areas for perennial rivers and streams, slopes greater than 15%, Zone II Aquifer Protection District, and rare/endangered species habitats. There are other constraints posed by existing developed lands, as well as the West Brookfield Center Historic District.

Most of the General zoning district coincides with the aquifer recharge area for the Town's water supply wells. Eleven potential contamination sources within the General district were identified in the December 2000 SWAP Zone II Study by Tighe and Bond. Along with possible pollution sources, an increase of impervious surfaces over the aquifer has the potential to affect ground water recharge. Protection of the drinking water supply is a major goal of the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan, and there was unanimous support for this goal by respondents to the community survey. Strict enforcement of the new Ground Water Protection District bylaw will help to preserve the quantity and quality of the Town's water supply.

Analysis of constraints finds that the current General district is most-suited for light industry, small manufacturers, retail and tourist businesses, recreation services, medical services and professional offices. All of these business types are the most favored by respondents to the 2003 community survey. However, the General district is near fully occupied, which suggests the Town may consider expanding this zone in the future to allow additional business uses. Due to infrastructure and other constraints, there are few options for expansion, although the Route 67 corridor south of the Quaboag River is an area to investigate. The Town should also consider opportunities for allowing small package wastewater treatment plants to enable higher density mixed-use development (e.g. housing, offices and retail shops) to foster a lively center with more diverse goods and services. Package treatment plants can also provide a means to remedy problem areas where malfunctioning septic systems are a concern.

The preceding section identified several recreation and tourist businesses outside the General district in the Center. It is worth noting that home businesses, Bed and Breakfasts, farms, farm stands, greenhouses, gift shops, antique shops, riding stables, golf courses, family campgrounds and other small enterprises are either allowed by right or permitted in residential zones. The 2003 community survey learned that respondents strongly preferred these business types, and the ongoing development of recreation, tourist and home businesses can enhance the rural character that West Brookfield residents would like to preserve.

Figure 3.8: Economic Suitability, West Brookfield



CHAPTER 4

DRAFT TRANSPORTATION/COMMUNITY TRAILS ELEMENT

The Community Development Plan (CDP) Committee’s vision statement includes goals to improve transportation systems in town and to preserve West Brookfield’s rural character, open spaces and environmental quality. Some of the objectives to achieve these goals are to preserve rural scenic character of roads, encourage safer options for walking and bicycling throughout the Town, and create greenway trails both within town and connecting with greenways in surrounding towns.

Section 1: *Proposed Regional Bikeway*

This section identifies a proposed bikeway that links the towns of West Brookfield, New Braintree, and Warren. A regional bikeway allows for increased alternative transportation, recreation uses, and tourism development.

Types of Bikeways

The Federal Highway Administration defines three types of bikeways: Bicycle Paths, Bicycle Lanes, and Bicycle Routes. These three types are briefly described below:

Bicycle paths are independent paths designated for the exclusive use of bicycles, on a separate right-of-way or easement. Bike paths offer the least conflict with motor vehicles, but also involve the most expensive construction and land acquisition.

Bicycle lanes are restricted right-of-ways on a roadway that is shared with motor vehicles. Bike lanes are delineated by either markings on the roadway surface or a physical barrier. Bike lanes can be constructed in areas where exclusive bike paths are not a feasible option.

Bicycle routes are right-of-ways on a street shared with motor vehicles. Bike routes are typically designated with signage and because signage alone provides less protection than the above options, they are practical for lower volume streets. Bike routes can be easily and economically implemented into most existing road networks. Roadway improvements such as smooth pavement and railroad crossings may be required to designate a bike route. These types of improvements for bicycle travel are usually the most affordable and can often be incorporated into regular maintenance and road resurfacing projects.

Of the three types of bikeways available, a bicycle route is recommended for the regional bikeway to connect the Towns of West Brookfield, New Braintree, and Warren.

Existing Recreation Routes

Currently there are no bikeways or greenway trails that connect West Brookfield with any of the surrounding towns. There are few locations that offer formal recreation paths or trails in Town. These locations are limited to the Rock House Reservation (owned by The Trustees of

Reservations) and the Quaboag Wildlife Management Area (owned by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game).

West Brookfield has three locations that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They are the Salem Cross Inn, the West Brookfield Center Historic District that includes the Town Common, and the Wickaboag Valley Historic District. While these areas do not have formal recreation areas, the potential exists to create historical and recreational tourist opportunities. Of the three, the Wickaboag Valley is the largest. Encompassing 55 properties and approximately 500 acres, it is relatively untouched by existing development. The CDP Committee chose the Wickaboag Valley to be part of a proposed regional bikeway that will connect West Brookfield with its neighboring towns.

Background

There are many historically traveled areas within southwest Worcester County. One of the oldest known routes is the Old Bay Path. The Old Bay Path is a historic path followed by Native Americans that traversed many current-day towns in the Quaboag Valley. Historically the route followed is described below:

The Old Bay Path came down from the North in south Barre and extended into New Braintree along West Road until it came to a small hill just north of the junction of West Road and Padre Road. The path then went around the western slope of the hill and over the present Padre Road. It continued along Padre Road, crossed Gilbertville Road to Skiviras Lane, then to the Mill Brook. It followed the Mill Brook until it crossed the New Braintree-West Brookfield line at the beginning of Wickaboag Valley Road. At this point the Path followed the westerly slope of Whortleberry Hill along Madden Road and crossed Shea Road. The Path made a slight detour around the swamp at Sucker Brook, just below the small Mill Pond. The Path continued along the westerly slope of Birch Hill and crossed Wickaboag Valley Road to the Northern shore of Wickaboag Pond. The path then followed down to Council Grove around Bradish Brook swamp and entered the present Cottage Street near the public beach (description from the West Brookfield Historical Commission, www.westbrookfield.org). The Old Bay Path then traveled across the Quaboag River just south of Wickaboag Pond, and continued westward into the Town of Warren.

The Old Bay Path historic route is impractical for a bicycle route in many locations. This is due to a variety of conditions, including steep grades without a smooth surface and areas that are very narrow, suitable only for pedestrian travel. An alternative route was proposed by the CDP Committee, the Old Bay Path-Wickaboag Valley loop. This bicycle route generally follows the historical path, traveling on existing roads near the historic route that are suitable for touring and road bicycles.

The Old Bay Path-Wickaboag Valley bicycle route is described in four sections below, from west to east.

Section 1

From the border of Warren and West Brookfield, this section travels north on Route 67 to the intersection of Route 9 and 67.



Section 2

At the intersection of Routes 9 and 67, turn right onto Route 9, traveling east (Route 9 to West Brookfield Center is a *Rubel Bike Map* recommended route). Follow Route 9 into the center of West Brookfield.





Section 3

At the lights in the center of Town, turn left onto Cottage Street heading north. Take Cottage Street north until you come to Lake Street on the right. Turn right onto Lake Street and follow it until the intersection of Lake Street and Wickaboag Valley Road.





Section 4

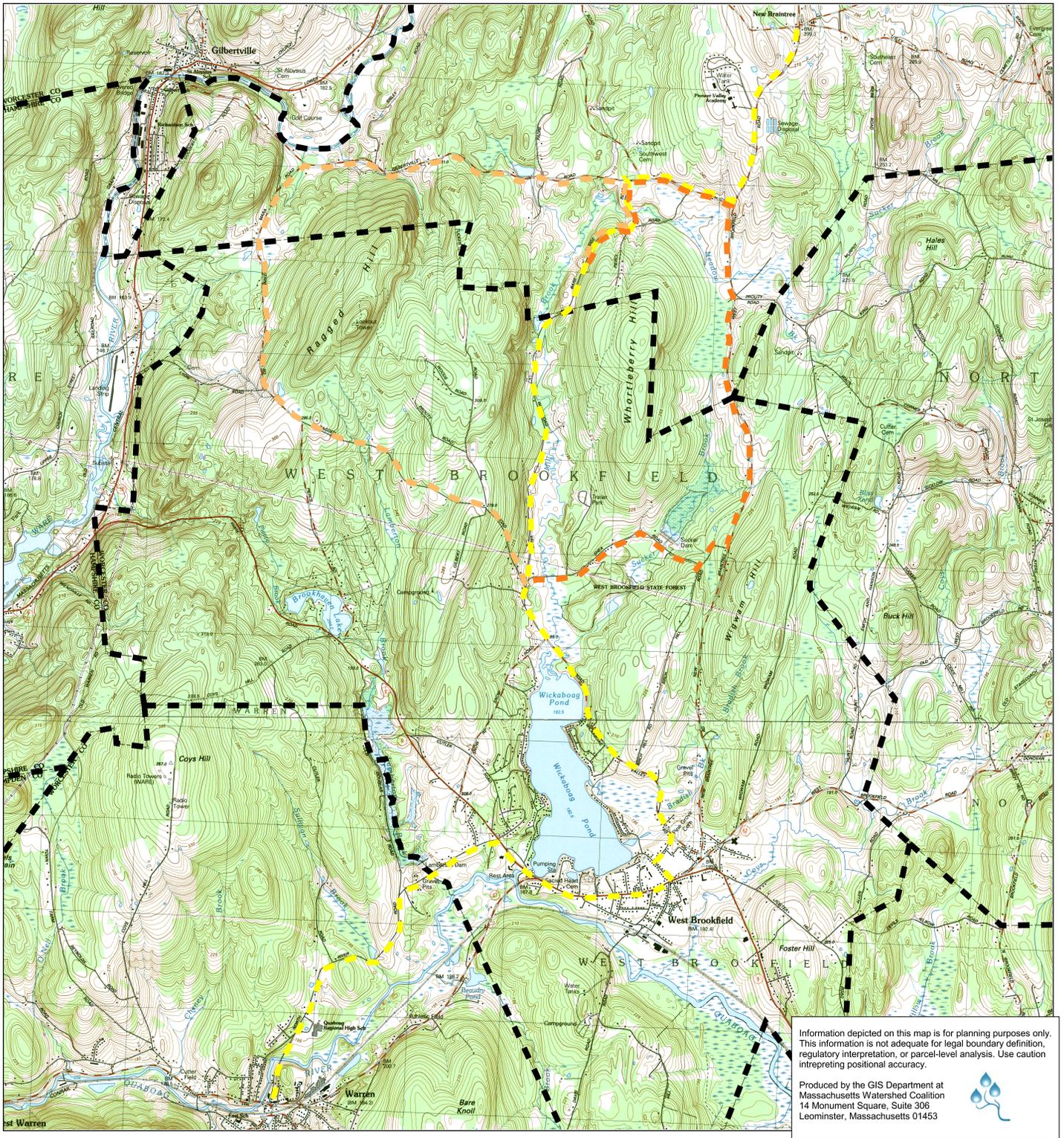
At the intersection of Lake Street and Wickaboag Valley Road, turn left onto Wickaboag Valley Road heading north. The Wickaboag Valley Historic District follows Mill Brook and Wickaboag Valley Road from the center of Town up to the New Braintree border.

Follow Wickaboag Valley Road north for approximately two and a half miles. Wickaboag Valley Road becomes Barr Bridge Road in New Braintree, continue north until the intersection of Gilbertville Road.



Turn right on Gilbertville Road and continue until the T intersection of West Brookfield Road. Turn left on West Brookfield Road and continue north until you reach New Braintree center.

Figure 4.1: Bicycle Route, West Brookfield



Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

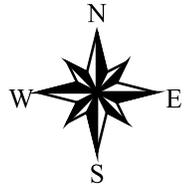
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 14 Monument Square, Suite 306
 Leominster, Massachusetts 01453



- Proposed Bicycle Route**
-  **Bicycle Route**
-  **Alternate Loop #1**
-  **Alternate Loop #2**

Map Sources
 GIS data sources include the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition and MassGIS.

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Alternate Route Options

Option #1 – Loop Route to West Brookfield Center

To create a loop, back to West Brookfield Center, continue north on Wickaboag Valley Road, entering New Braintree (Road name changes to Barr Bridge Road).

At the intersection of Barr Bridge Road and Pierce Road, turn left onto Pierce Road and head north until the intersection of Gilbertville/Ware Road.

Turn right onto Gilbertville/Ware Road and bike east until the road T's into West Brookfield Road. West Brookfield Road changes to New Braintree Road in West Brookfield (Gilbertville/Ware Road and West Brookfield Road/New Braintree Road are recommended routes by *Rubel Bike Map*).



Turn right, heading south on West Brookfield Road/New Braintree Road until you see Shea Road on your right.



Turn right onto Shea Road and head west until the intersection of Shea Road and Wickaboag Valley Road.

Turn left and head south on Wickaboag Valley Road. Follow this road south for approximately two miles and you will intersect with the West Brookfield Town Common.

Turn right heading west to return to the center of Town.

Option #2 – Ragged Hill Loop Route to West Brookfield Center

Please note: Option #2 loop route is significantly more strenuous than Option #1.

To create a loop to the west, back to West Brookfield Center, continue north on Wickaboag Valley Road, enter New Braintree (Road name changes to Barr Bridge Road).

At the intersection of Barr Bridge Road and Pierce Road, turn left onto Pierce Road and head north until Gilbertville/Ware Road.



Turn left onto Gilbertville/Ware Road and bike west approximately 2 miles until you see Mara Road on your left.

Turn left onto Mara Road. Mara Road becomes Kennedy Road as you cross from New Braintree into West Brookfield.

Travel south on Kennedy Road, with the peaks of Ragged Hill uphill to the east. At the intersection of Lyon Road and Kennedy Road, bear left onto Ragged Hill Road.

Continue southeast on Ragged Hill Road for approximately 2.25 miles until the intersection of Wickaboag Valley Road. Bear right onto Wickaboag Valley Road and continue on it until you reach the Town Common in the West Brookfield Center Historic District.



Recommendations for Old Bay Path Bikeway

Development of a bikeway that parallels the Old Bay Path can provide diverse community benefits. The proposed recommendations below can increase recreation opportunities and enhance community enjoyment of the Quaboag River, West Brookfield Center, and Wickaboag Valley, as well as create alternative transportation routes for Town residents and visitors.

- Organize a bikeway committee that includes representatives of the Conservation Commission, Recreation Committee, Quaboag River Watershed Association, West Brookfield Business Association, and outdoor recreation groups and businesses in West Brookfield. In addition to refining the proposed bikeway routes, this committee can work with Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, state and federal agencies to arrange assistance for the design and development of the route.
- Produce a map of bikeways and trails in West Brookfield (and nearby towns), which can be made available at a Visitor Information Center, local businesses and other locations in Town. This guide can identify parking/trail access points, show recommended bicycle routes and include brief descriptions of interesting historic places and natural features. Once established, the Old Bay Path Bicycle Route can be highlighted as part of this guide.
- Consider providing a bikeway and trails update as part of the Annual Town Report to stimulate community support and encourage volunteer help with existing and future projects.

Section 2: *Funding Opportunities for Bikeway Projects*

There are a variety of funding sources to help create bikeways and other recreational trails and routes. A selection of Private, State, and Federal funding sources are described below.

Private Funding Sources

Bikes Belong Coalition:

Sponsored by Bikes Belong Coalition, this grant is intended for bicycle facilities projects. Bikes Belong Coalition seeks to assist local organizations, agencies, and citizens in developing bicycle facilities projects that will be funded by TEA-21, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. Applications are accepted for grants up to \$10,000 each, and will consider successor grants for continuing projects. Funding decisions are made on a rolling basis.

Contact information: 368 Beacon St., Ste. 102, Brookline, MA 02446-2800, 617-734-2800

www.bikesbelong.org

Kodak American Greenways Awards:

The Conservation Fund and Eastman Kodak Company accepts applications for the Kodak American Greenways Awards. Awards provide seed money to stimulate greenway planning and design. Grants are available for \$500 to \$2500 to support pioneering work in linking the nation's natural areas, historic sites, parks and open space. Community-based organizations, including local, regional, and statewide nonprofits, are encouraged to apply. The Kodak American Greenways Awards Program grants can be used for all appropriate expenses needed to complete a greenway project, including planning, design, construction, technical assistance, legal and other costs. Grants may not be used for academic research, general institutional support, lobbying, or political activities. Applications may be submitted from March 1st to June 1st of each calendar year. Applications are due on June 1st.

Contact information: The Conservation Fund, American Greenways Program Coordinator, 1800 North Kent St., Ste. 1120, Arlington, VA 22209-2156, 703-525-6300

www.conservationfund.org/?article=2106

Oracle Corporate Giving Program:

Oracle provides grants for medical research, endangered animal protection, environmental protection, and K-12 math, science, and technology education. Past recipients have included trail groups.

Contact information: Oracle Giving, 500 Oracle Parkway, Mail Stop 50P11, Redwood Shores, CA 94065 www.oracle.com/corporate/giving/community/index.html?giving.html

PowerBar's Direct Impact on Rivers and Trails Program (D.I.R.T.):

Sponsored by Powerfood, Inc., the Direct Impact on Rivers and Trails (D.I.R.T) Program provides grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 in support of efforts to protect, preserve, and restore recreational lands and waterways.

Contact information: Attn: DIRT Program, 2150 Shattuck Ave., Berkley, CA 94710
www.powerbar.com/whoWeAre/dirt/index.asp

New England Grassroots Environment Fund:

The New England Grassroots Environment Fund (NEGEF) offers small grants to foster and give voice to grassroots initiatives in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. It provides grants of up to \$2,500 to fuel civic engagement, local activism, and social change. NEGEF funds community involvement in projects that address a wide range of environmental issues including: agriculture, air quality, alternative energy, aquifer protection, biotechnology, community gardens, environmental justice, energy conservation, forestry, global warming, land trusts, marine environment, public health, sprawl, sustainable communities, toxics and hazardous waste, trails, water quality, watershed management, wetlands, wildlife, and youth-organized environmental work. Past awardees have included trails projects.

Contact information: Cheryl King Fischer, Executive Director, NEGEF, P.O. Box 1057, Montpelier, VT 05601, 802-223-4622. www.grassrootsfund.org/

State Funding Sources

Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grants Program:

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Greenways and trails projects are at the center of this program. Creating greenway and trail networks is an effective means of protecting and providing access to a number of places that make Massachusetts a special place to live. Approximate funding maximum is \$5,000. DCR will also consider requests up to \$10,000 for multi-town greenway and trail projects. These additional funds are intended to encourage linkages across town boundaries and foster partnerships among neighboring communities. Funding categories include: planning, research, mapping, public education and community outreach, ecological assessment, trail construction, maintenance and expansion. Projects must encompass multiple parcels of land; no local match is required. In recent years, focus has been on projects that either educate the public or work on river greenways, however all greenways/trails projects are eligible. Chances of success are high with a good proposal. Applications are due in January/February every year.

Contact information: Jennifer Howard, Director, Greenways Program, 136 Damon Rd., Northampton, MA 01060, 413.586.8706 ext.18

www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/greenway/grants.html

Historic Landscape Preservation Program:

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program is a state-funded competitive grant program established in 1997 to support the preservation and restoration of historic landscapes listed or, in certain instances, eligible for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places. Many municipal landscapes across the state are over a century old and continue to suffer from deferred maintenance, intrusive additions and limited ability of municipalities to fund rehabilitation projects. By providing assistance to these important, municipally-owned historic landscapes, the DCR helps to ensure the preservation and revitalization of these treasured resources.

Contact information: Katy Lacy - Grant Manager, Office of Historic Resources, 100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA 02202, 617-727-3160 ext.519

www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/histland/histland.htm

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), Regional Transportation Improvement Program:

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Highway Department and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. No funding maximum. Funds are available for transportation related open space improvements. Project definitions are flexible, but must be related to transportation, e.g. a bike path that connects a dense area of housing with employment or shopping areas. Chances for success are moderate to high.

Contact information: www.ctps.org/bostonmpo/resources/tip/tip.htm
www.cmrpc.org/Transportation/Index.htm

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), Enhancement Program:

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. No funding maximum, but a \$100,000 minimum is requested by MHD. Funds are available for a variety of transportation “enhancement” projects. Eligible projects include: bikeways, walking paths and rail trails. This is a special dedicated fund that amounts to 10% of statewide spending from ISTEA monies. The Federal government typically pays for 80% of project costs; the project sponsor pays the balance. Project sponsors must be a State, a local government, or a non-governmental organization. Chances for success are moderate to high.

Contact information: www.enhancements.org

National Recreational Trails Act (NRTA):

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Approximate funding maximum is \$30,000. As part of the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Act, NRTA provides funds for trail construction. Trails must be recreational. There is no limit on grant funds, but projects must have a 50% local match (matching funds may be “non-cash”). Motorized and non-motorized trail use must be included in the grant with at least 30% of the funds going to each use. Projects may include: land/easement acquisition, trail construction, handicapped accessibility, interpretive areas/facilities, and education. Chances of success are high with a good proposal. Applications are due in October of each year.

Contact information: www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/trails/grants.htm

Self-Help Program:

Sponsored by the DCR Division of Conservation Services, this land acquisition program is intended for natural resource and passive outdoor recreation purposes. The Self-Help program was established in 1961 to help municipal conservation commissions acquire land for wildlife habitat, trails, unique natural, historic or cultural resources, water resources, forests, and farms. Compatible passive outdoor recreational uses such as hiking, fishing, hunting, cross-country skiing, and wildlife observation are encouraged. Access by the general public is required. This program provides reimbursement for the acquisition of land, or a partial interest (such as a conservation restriction), and associated acquisition expenses such as appraisal reports and closing costs.

Contact information: Jennifer Soper - Self-Help Program, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services, 617-626-1015
www.state.ma.us/envir/dcs/selfhelp/default.htm

Federal Funding Sources

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grants:

Sponsored by the National Park Service, the LWCF program includes trails and greenways. Funding comes from the sale or lease of nonrenewable resources, primarily federal offshore oil and gas leases and surplus federal land sales. LWCF grants can be used by communities to build a variety of parks and recreation facilities, including trails and greenways. LWCF funds are distributed by the National Park Service to the states annually. Communities must match LWCF grants with 50% of the local project costs through in-kind services or cash. All projects funded by LWCF grants must be used exclusively for recreation purposes, in perpetuity. Projects must be in accordance with each State's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Through the life of this program, \$3.2 billion dollars has been allocated, nearly 2.5 million acres have been acquired and 38,000 land and water projects have been funded. Applications are due in October of each year.

Contact information: www.ncrc.nps.gov/programs/lwcf/index.html

Federal Public Lands Highways Discretionary Fund Program:

Sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration, this Public Lands Highways Program includes trails for pedestrians and bicycles. The Public Lands Highways (PLH) Program was originally established in 1930. The intent of the program is to improve access to and within the Federal lands of the nation. The latest transportation act, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21, Public Law 105-178), has continued the program through FY 2003.

Contact information: Larry Beidel - Highway Engineer, Office of Program Administration, 202-366-4653 www.fhwa.dot.gov/discretionary/pipl0103.htm

Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program:

Implemented by the Federal Highway Administration, this Pilot Program is intended for planning and implementing a variety of transportation programs that can include trails. The Program is a comprehensive initiative of research and grants to investigate the relationships between transportation and community and system preservation and private sector-based initiatives. States, local governments, and metropolitan planning organizations are eligible for discretionary grants to plan and implement strategies that improve the efficiency of the transportation system; reduce environmental impacts of transportation; reduce the need for costly future public infrastructure investments; ensure efficient access to jobs, services, and centers of trade; and examine private sector development patterns and investments that support these goals. The TCSP program is a FHWA program being jointly developed with the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Rail Administration, the Office of the Secretary, and the Research and Special Programs/Volpe Center within the US Department of Transportation, and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Contact Information: www.fhwa.dot.gov/tcsp

Recreational Trails Program:

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) administers this program. It is intended for recreational trails. The U.S. Congress is authorized under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The Recreational Trails Program

provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. Examples of trail uses include hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, four-wheel driving, or other off-road motorized vehicles.

Contact information: Christopher B. Douwes - Recreational Trails Program Manager, Federal Highway Administration, 400 Seventh St SW, Rm. 3301, Washington, DC 20590 202-366-5013
www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrail.htm

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Many recommendations are presented for consideration in the four preceding chapters, including the Five-Year Action Plan provided in the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Planning Committee has identified five priorities for initial activities to implement this Plan, as depicted by the Community Development Priorities map (see Figure 5.1).

- 1) *Enact zoning bylaws to help retain the Town's rural character.* The Housing Chapter recommends increasing the minimum lot size in areas that lack infrastructure and have difficult environmental constraints. Residential downzoning can redirect future housing growth to protect water resources, to manage impacts on traffic and schools, and to preserve scenic views. The Planning Board should investigate creating a Rural Landscape Conservation District that can increase lot sizes to ten or more acres on Ragged Hill, Whortleberry Hill and other especially scenic landscapes with very steep slopes, poorly drained soils and other environmental constraints. A similar district can be proposed to preserve the important roadside landscapes along Route 9.

The Planning Board should also consider an Open Space Subdivision bylaw that enables subdivisions to have smaller lot sizes with other portions of the land set aside as open space. This bylaw should encourage home building in the most suitable locations while retaining open spaces for farming, forestry, wildlife and other uses that are compatible with the small-town character preferred by residents. As part of this effort the Planning Board could distribute educational materials that inform residents how these bylaws can help to preserve the rural qualities of Town.

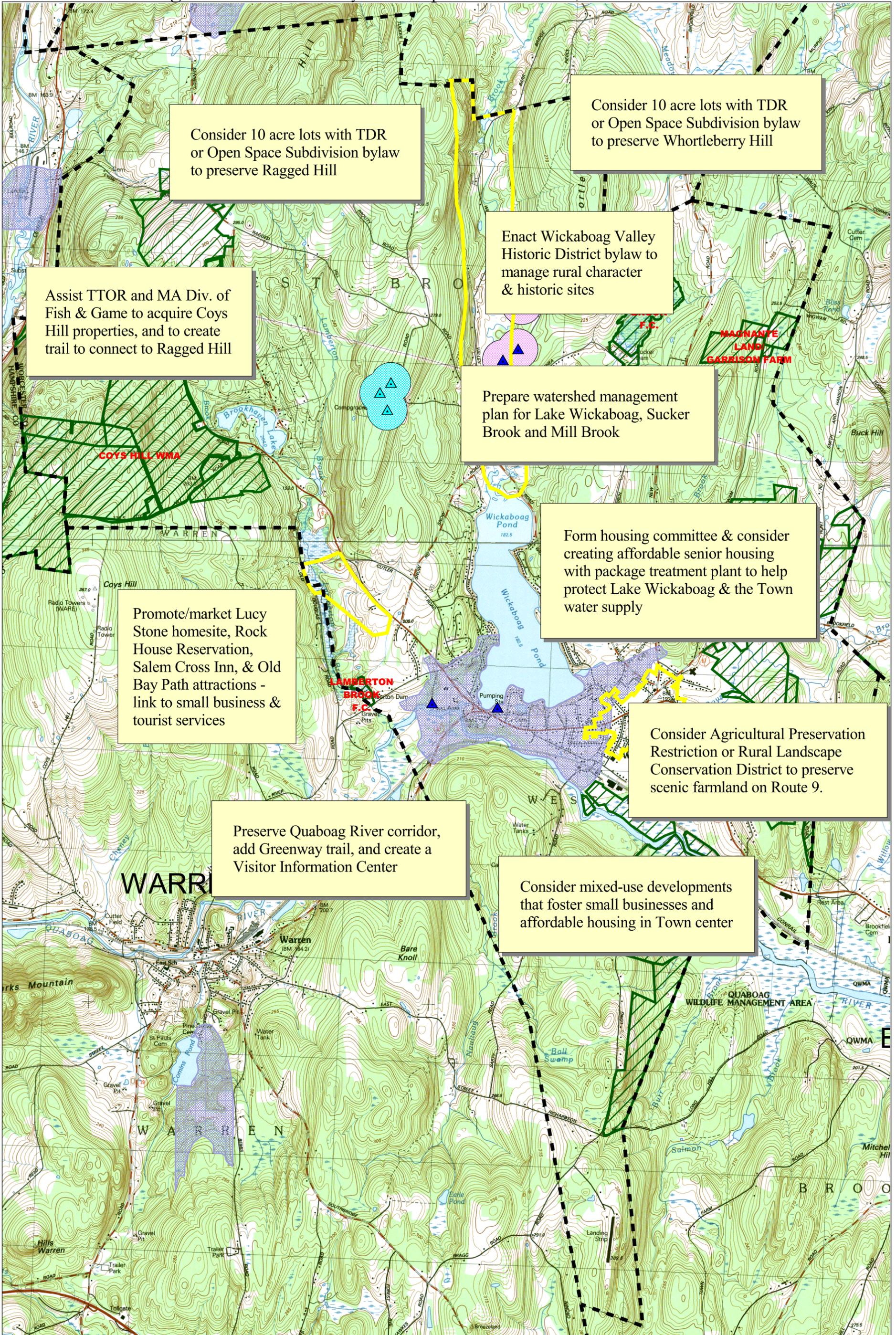
In addition, the Historical Commission should work with the Conservation Commission and the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association to propose a voluntary guidelines or a bylaw to protect the Wickaboag Valley Historic District.

- 2) *Prepare a watershed management plan for Lake Wickaboag.* The Conservation Commission should work with the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association to assess the Mill Brook, Sucker Brook and Lake Wickaboag drainage and determine existing and potential concerns affecting these water resources. The watershed management plan should identify specific measures that can protect water quality and preserve community uses of the brooks and Lake Wickaboag.
- 3) *Establish a housing committee to help implement recommendations in this report.* The Board of Selectmen should appoint a Housing Committee that could include the West Brookfield Housing Authority, municipal board members, and the business community. The Committee should identify Town-owned properties that are suitable for subsidized housing, and work with private owners to rehabilitate housing or develop affordable housing using state and federal assistance programs. This Committee could also work with state and federal agencies to create affordable senior housing with package treatment plants that can help to remedy septic system problem areas.

- 4) *Consider expansion of the current mixed-uses in the Town center.* A housing committee and the Planning Board should work with the Browse the Brookfields business association to foster affordable housing and the types of businesses preferred by residents. Increasing the number of residents and workers can support small businesses that could offer employment for residents with diverse skills and incomes. In addition to supplying more diverse goods and services than now available, these small businesses can expand the tax base and provide places that enhance community interaction, which was strongly favored by community survey respondents.

- 5) *Expand recreation trails and tourism opportunities in West Brookfield.* The Open Space Committee should work with the Division of Fish and Game and The Trustees of Reservations to create a trail that connects the Lucy Stone Home Site, the Rock House Reservation and the lookout tower on Ragged Hill. In addition to this trail, the Historical Commission and Recreation Committee should work with the Browse the Brookfields business association in linking and marketing several existing and proposed trails in Town (including the Old Baypath Indian Trail, the Historic District walking tour, the Quaboag Plantation Trail, the Quaboag River Water Trail and the regional bikeway described in Chapter 4 of the Plan).

Figure 5.1: Community Development Priorities, West Brookfield



Consider 10 acre lots with TDR or Open Space Subdivision bylaw to preserve Ragged Hill

Consider 10 acre lots with TDR or Open Space Subdivision bylaw to preserve Whortleberry Hill

Enact Wickaboag Valley Historic District bylaw to manage rural character & historic sites

Assist TTOR and MA Div. of Fish & Game to acquire Coys Hill properties, and to create trail to connect to Ragged Hill

Prepare watershed management plan for Lake Wickaboag, Sucker Brook and Mill Brook

Form housing committee & consider creating affordable senior housing with package treatment plant to help protect Lake Wickaboag & the Town water supply

Promote/market Lucy Stone homesite, Rock House Reservation, Salem Cross Inn, & Old Bay Path attractions - link to small business & tourist services

Consider Agricultural Preservation Restriction or Rural Landscape Conservation District to preserve scenic farmland on Route 9.

Preserve Quaboag River corridor, add Greenway trail, and create a Visitor Information Center

Consider mixed-use developments that foster small businesses and affordable housing in Town center

Map Sources
GIS data sources include the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition, the Massachusetts Highway Department, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, and MassGIS.
Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.



Town Boundaries	Public Water Supplies
Protected Open Space	Ground Water Well
State Register of Historic Places	Transient Non-Community Well
	Intern Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA)
	IWPA-community wells
	Zone II



Produced by the GIS Department at Massachusetts Watershed Coalition
14 Monument Square, Suite 306
Leominster, Massachusetts 01453

APPENDIX

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

The Community Development Planning Committee distributed the following survey to obtain residents' views on housing, transportation, open space and resource protection, and economic development. The surveys were mailed to all households in Town in October 2003. Residents were asked to either mail or drop-off their completed survey to the Town Clerk's Office.

More than two hundred households in West Brookfield returned completed surveys. The Planning Committee compiled the responses and reviewed the survey findings at its meetings in November 2003 and January 2004. The survey respondents expressed strong support for preserving the open spaces, natural resources and rural qualities of West Brookfield, which also affirmed the goals and objectives of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

This Appendix shows the tally of responses for each numeric question on the survey form. All survey questions were compiled and analyzed, including the write-in comments that are not listed in this appendix. The Committee reviewed these survey results and used this information to develop the Vision Statement that is presented in the Executive Summary of the Plan.

This information also assisted the Committee to prepare the Assets and Liabilities Inventory that follows the survey results.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Planning for West Brookfield's Future

Dear West Brookfield resident:

West Brookfield is often cited by other towns as having the best Common. What are other community resources you value? What are your concerns? Would you like some things changed or keep everything the same? By taking twenty minutes to complete this survey, your valuable opinions will make a difference in the future of West Brookfield.

The Community Planning Committee will create a long-range plan to guide development in Town towards a vision of what residents would like. This is your first opportunity to help create this Community Development Plan. The results of this survey will help define Goals and Objectives, which will provide the framework for the plan.

Please return your survey by **October 31** – either mail to or drop-off at the Town Clerk's Office in Town Hall, 2 East Main Street, West Brookfield, MA 01585. Your answers will remain anonymous.

This survey is a first step in the planning process. There will be a community meeting to discuss the vision for West Brookfield's future, and the Goals and Objectives aimed at achieving that vision. This public meeting will be held in next spring and will be announced in area newspapers. Your participation in this process is greatly appreciated.

West Brookfield Community Planning Committee:

Sonia Burke, Glenn D'Alessio, Gordon DeWolf, David Fitzgerald, Timothy Morrell

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Q1. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the Goals and Objectives below. *Please circle a number for each item where 1= strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree.*

Community Development Plan Elements	Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Disagree 3	Strongly Disagree 4
HOUSING				
<i>Goal:</i> Encourage diverse housing opportunities while preserving the rural character of the Town.	59	87	24	18
<i>Objectives:</i>				
• Encourage housing development in areas served by Town water to help promote sustainable growth.	24	89	40	24
• Encourage additional development of senior housing.	32	89	43	28
• Consider "cluster development" bylaw to preserve open space without increasing the number of houses that Town zoning currently allows.	47	76	41	30
• Encourage affordable housing.	31	80	46	32
• Promote energy-efficient housing.	64	107	13	7
• Foster siting of homes to maximize use of solar energy.	45	83	48	17
• Other (write-in):				

TRANSPORTATION	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>Goal:</i> Improve transportation systems.	49	51	31	14
<i>Objectives:</i>				
• Increase alternative transportation such as bus service.	55	69	44	5
• Preserve rural scenic character of roads.	118	64	6	3
• Retain current unpaved surfaces for some roads.	46	79	46	19
• Encourage safer options for walking and bicycling throughout the Town (both on and off road).	89	83	15	8
• Improve dangerous or confusing intersections in Town.	85	76	21	8
• Encourage public transportation planning.	47	81	37	18
• Other (write-in):				
OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE PROTECTION				
<i>Goal:</i> Preserve West Brookfield's rural character, open spaces and environmental quality.	130	30	3	2
<i>Objectives:</i>				
• Protect the health of lakes and brooks in Town.	164	51	31	-
• Protect the Town's water supplies.	161	36	-	-
• Preserve the Quaboag River Valley landscape between Route 9 and the River.	132	56	1	1
• Protect scenic views.	136	56	5	-
• Create greenway trails both within town and connecting with greenways in surrounding towns.	91	76	20	4
• Other (write-in):				
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT				
<i>Goal:</i> Foster economic development.	41	83	16	4
<i>Objectives:</i>				
• Maintain and improve Town by-laws to ensure sound development practices.	86	90	7	-
• Encourage businesses that preserve rural character.	114	84	6	2
• Encourage businesses that make use of local resources (forestry, agriculture, recreation, home businesses).	77	106	13	2
• Promote tourism opportunities (hiking, biking, etc.).	84	101	26	4
• Allow mixed uses (residential/commercial/industrial) along Route 9.	42	78	50	20
• Other (write-in):				
COMMUNITY IDENTITY				
<i>Goal:</i> Foster community participation in Town affairs.	72	79	9	2
<i>Objectives:</i>				
• Encourage diverse interests to join in community activities, Town boards and Town meetings.	79	106	8	1
• Improve opportunities for community gatherings.	77	109	7	-
• Other (write-in):				

LAND USE, OPEN SPACE AND ZONING

Q2. Do you favor efforts to preserve the following? *Please circle a number for each item.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Farmlands	124	51	23	-
Forests	154	55	2	1
Wildlife habitats	136	49	5	-
Water supplies for Town residents	146	50	-	-
Areas for fishing or hunting	104	74	5	2
Areas for swimming	109	82	5	-
Other (write in):				

Q3. Do you favor the following actions? *Please circle a number for each item.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pursue State funds to meet open space, recreation and resource protection objectives.	104	78	6	2
Adopt bylaws to preserve farms, forests & open space.	123	58	4	4
Provide local tax incentives to help keep working farms and forests in Town.	112	71	16	4
Contribute Town funds to support open space, recreation, and resource protection objectives.	85	70	43	4
Designate areas for motorized recreation vehicle trail.	42	52	51	43
Obtain grant writing services to help Town apply for funds.	75	81	23	4

Q4. Which zoning approaches would you favor for residential development in West Brookfield? *Please circle the number for each item below that you favor:*

1. Development of houses in clusters on a small part of the property so that the remaining land is protected as open space. (55)
2. Development of houses in the back of the property so that land along the roads may be protected as agricultural land, forest or open space. (64)
3. Decrease building lot size and frontage in some zoning districts. (33)
4. Increase building lot size and frontage in some zoning districts. (100)
5. Set annual limit on new housing building permits. (143)
6. No changes to current zoning bylaws are needed for residential development. (20)
7. Other (write-in): _____

Q5. “Site Plan Review” addresses the layout of new development of a parcel of land including location and height of structures, parking, traffic, roadways, landscaping, and types of building materials in order to arrive at the best possible design for a specific location. Would you favor a Site Plan Review process for proposed large subdivisions to ensure that new development is compatible with the existing character of West Brookfield. *Please circle a number.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Site plan review for large residential subdivisions	122	46	12	7

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Q6. Do you favor development of business and employment within the Town? **Yes** -129 **No** - 23

Q7. If you answered Yes to question 6, do you favor the following types of businesses? *Please circle a number for each item:*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Medium-sized manufacturer with 25 to 100 employees	40	62	37	19
Small-sized manufacturer with less than 25 employees	53	81	14	8
Light industrial (non-manufacturing activities)	39	82	19	6
Farming, nurseries, aquaculture (fish farms), forestry	79	83	8	-
Arts and crafts operations	46	89	10	1
Home-based businesses	72	89	5	1
Tourism services such as Bed & Breakfast, gift shops	72	89	9	1
Hotel/motel	16	51	61	24
Fast food franchise	14	29	54	65
Conference center	18	37	57	47
Recreational services	38	87	23	11
Medical services	54	91	15	7
Business/professional offices	39	102	10	8
Discount department store	15	17	54	76
Large shopping center	5	14	48	81
Supermarket	24	28	42	62
Other (write-in):				

Q8. How should the Town support existing businesses (commercial/industrial)?

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Q10. How important is it to preserve the following historic resources? *Please circle a number for each item where 1 = very important; 2 = important; 3 = not important.*

	Very important	Important	Not Important
Historic buildings	131	48	5
Historic districts	127	54	9
Historic landscapes and historic sites	136	41	4
Other (write-in):			

Please list historic buildings, landscapes and sites that you feel are especially important:

Q11. Historic districts in West Brookfield center and the Wickaboag Valley are listed in the State Register of Historic Places. What type of architectural and appearance control do you favor for future development in these historic areas? *Please circle only one (1) number.*

1. No regulation of new or existing structures or features. (15)
2. Establishment of guidelines that serve as suggestions for new development. (45)
3. Moderate controls, affecting major structures only. (63)
4. Strict controls, including regulation of changes made to all current structures. (57)
5. Other (write-in): _____

Housing Resources

Q12. What actions do you favor on housing issues? *Please circle a number for each item.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
More development of housing for senior residents.	38	79	44	20
Financial assistance to help comply with the state's Title 5 septic system mandates.	59	79	28	19
Town participation in existing programs that can help first-time homebuyers.	31	63	63	23
Town create program to help first-time homebuyers.	19	44	89	30
Development of affordable housing for low and moderate income families.	22	43	63	50
Grants for rehabilitation of low and moderate income housing (e.g. painting, repairs, housing code violation)	32	81	41	28
Expansion of Town water services.	39	77	45	15
Establish Town sewer services.	65	59	42	24
Other (write-in):				

Q13. What types of housing development do you favor? *Please circle a number for each item.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Single family residential: 1 acre or smaller lots.	31	54	45	38
Single family residential: 2 acre or larger lots.	90	60	19	9
Multi-family residential: three or more units.	5	20	81	68
Conversion of single family to two family units.	4	40	73	53
Cluster development that helps to preserve open space.	30	71	43	37
Condominiums, such as attached townhouses.	10	45	58	65
Apartment Houses	6	27	58	82
Other (write-in):				

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Q14. Do you favor safety improvements that slow traffic in the Town center? **Yes** -112 **No** - 79
 How should the Town improve traffic flow in the center? _____

Q15. Do you favor additional parking in the Town center? Please *circle* **Yes** – 51 or **No** - 92

How should the Town improve the parking? _____

Q16. How important is it to address the following issues? *Please circle a number for each item.*

	Very important	Important	Not Important
Maintenance of paved roads	129	70	5
Maintenance of unpaved roads	58	109	21
Road improvements	80	86	26
Paving of dirt roads	28	59	97
Provision of bike paths and walking trails	63	75	52
Provision of sidewalks in Town center	80	87	27
Provision of bus service	38	76	76
More services for elderly and handicapped	47	94	42
Other (write-in)			

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

The following ask you to offer information about yourself. These answers will help in the survey analysis and will remain anonymous. You may skip any question you prefer not to answer.

Q17. In what section of Town do you live? *Please check one (1) box:*

Coy Hill (0); Long Hill (17); Ragged Hill (20); Lake Wickaboag (64); Brookhaven (8); Ridge Road (3); New Braintree Road (8); Town center (65); other (4)

Q18. How long have you lived in Town? *Please check one (1) box:*

0-5 years (49); 6-10 yrs (10); 11-20 yrs (38); 21+ yrs (100)

Q19. Which apply to your home? Single family (172); multi-family (11); own (91); rent (11)

Q20. What best describes your household? *Please check one (1) box:* Single adult (25); Single adult with children (5); Adults with children (54); Adults, no children (106)

Q21. How many acres of land do you own? *Please check one (1) box:*

less than ½ acre (35); less than 2 acres (72); 2-5 acres (49); 6-15 acres (11); 16+ acres (12)

Q22. What originally attracted you to live in West Brookfield?

Q23. What do you like about West Brookfield?

Q24. What do you dislike about West Brookfield?

WEST BROOKFIELD COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES INVENTORY

Transportation

Assets:

- Generally light traffic (only one traffic light)
- Major roads (Route 9 and 67) in good condition
- Scenic country roads, some of which are good for walking during spring, summer, and fall
- Flat downtown area, good for senior access and walking
- Usually adequate parking in downtown area
- Good snow removal
- Generally well maintained roads



Liabilities:

- Not enough scenic road designation - scenic highway law insufficiently stringent
- Many roads not safe for biking and/or walking
- Lack of biking trail
- Lack of hiking trails
- No public transportation
- Main Street (Route 9) very heavily traveled on weekends
- Route 9 bisects the Town and village center
- Additional traffic volume (on Rt. 9) may have deleterious effect on the Town
- Increase in population = increase in number of vehicles = increased wear and tear on current roads = increase in Highway Department budget OR deterioration of road quality

Economic Development

Assets:

- Some local employment
- Some successful small businesses
- Good transportation access on Routes 9 & 67
- Proximity to Worcester and other major cities such as Springfield, Hartford and Boston
- Adequate labor markets



- Traffic volume high on Route 9
- Potential for tourism opportunities – historic setting, bed & breakfasts, beautiful downtown and common, large lake with some areas for public recreation
- Moderately low taxes
- Low crime compared to more urban areas
- Scenic rural Town with no large shopping malls or industrial parks
- Some home based business
- Potential for forestry, agriculture, and horticulture
- Local restaurant - Salem Cross Inn
- Historic downtown district with beautiful, well maintained homes
- Quaboag-on-the-Common – large, well regarded nursing home



- Historical Commission working to identify and protect historic sites
- Quaboag Historical Society soon to be housed in historic railroad depot building
- Current industry should be encouraged, and perhaps encouraged to increase in size

Liabilities:

- Current zoning outdated – no commercial or business zone, encourages sprawl
- Sign bylaws for businesses outdated, not consistent with rural atmosphere of Town
- Permitting process is overly slow and restrictive
- No plan for controlling growth
- There is the feeling that the Town discourages small businesses and/or “cottage” industry

Housing

Assets:

- Diversity of houses in styles and price range
- Historic houses/historic town center
- Some affordable housing
- Senior housing available
- Rental housing available
- Elementary school near Town center
- Adequate Town services
- Plenty of potentially available land for houses

Liabilities:

- No plan for building on public/private roads

- Large older population on fixed income threatened by possible increase in property taxes
- Rate of development is not controlled
- No cluster zoning bylaw
- Most of building lots on present road system have site problems such as water, rocks, drainage, slope
- State push for low income housing: may have negative effect on town/school budget



Open Space and Resource Protection

Assets:

- Lake Wickaboag
- Quaboag River
- Rock House Reservation
- Lucy Stone home site
- APR properties in Town
- Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife properties in Town
- Mill Brook and Sucker Brook
- Numerous brooks, ponds, and vernal pools, with excellent aquifers that provide good water supply
- Businesses generally reflect rural atmosphere



- Much privately owned open space (many Chapter 61 lands)
- Beautiful Town Common
- Open land with beautiful vistas (Foster Hill, Ragged Hill, Route 9)
- Western edge of Town on Route 9 largely (but not wholly) protected
- Tourist attraction potential for valleys and Lake Wickaboag

Liabilities:

- Lake Wickaboag is extremely densely populated
- Lake Wickaboag is an artificial lake with problems: chemical pollutants, sewage disposal, siltation, flow
- Limited Town money to maintain health of Lake or to protect Lake
- Mill Brook, Sucker Brook, and surrounding valley have limited protection from development
- Much privately owned open space is not protected (such as Chapter 61 land)



- Downtown area zoning inadequate to protect present character of Town
- Present rural residential zoning encourages sprawl, lot size and frontage should be studied and cluster development encouraged
- Planning for open space protection does not have financial backing
- Town may need to purchase land to protect the valleys and Lake Wickaboag
- Lack of biking trails
- Lack of hiking trails

Other

Assets:

- Library with access to books throughout Worcester County
- Site of original colonial settlement (1660s) on Foster Hill
- Numerous other significant historic sites, including Pynchon grist mill, colonial roads and Indian trails (Bay Path, New Bay Path, Hadley Path and Boston Post Road)
- Numerous activities on Town common (bandstand, 4th of July celebration, baseball, flea market, Earth Day, etc.)
- Town Hall with facilities (Great Hall, etc.) for meetings and gatherings
- Many long-time residents who know each other



Liabilities:

- Citizen participation in Town affairs could be increased

