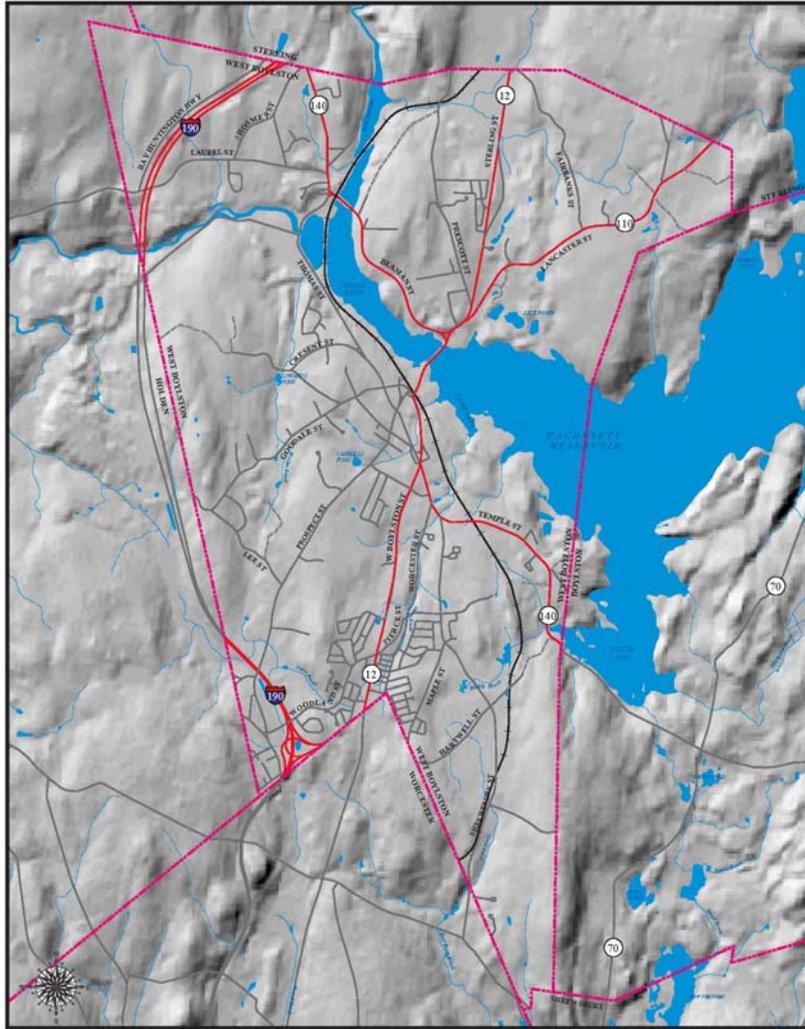


# West Boylston, Massachusetts

## Master Plan, 2005



Prepared by the Town Wide Planning Committee

With Technical Assistance by:



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## VISION STATEMENT

West Boylston is a charming New England town that exemplifies the best features of small-town life. We enjoy a beautiful natural environment, highlighted by the scenic Wachusett Reservoir. We cherish our historic roots, large expanses of protected open space, family-oriented neighborhoods, specialty retail shops, and a limited but productive industrial base. Our educational system and municipal services make efficient use of local tax dollars and offer top-notch quality. As an integral part of the Central Massachusetts region, our town has access to cultural assets and employment opportunities that rank among the best in New England. We have worked to craft a well thought out Master Plan that will meet the needs of the citizens of West Boylston.

Through its survey of the citizenry conducted in 1999, the Town-Wide Planning Committee learned that residents appreciate the Town's assets and do not wish to see radical change alter its overall appearance and small town charm. We seek to accommodate growth that will retain our character and make West Boylston an even better place to live and work. Our Vision of tomorrow includes:

1. A healthy, safe and clean environment similar to what we enjoy today.
2. An active citizenry involved in Town government dedicated to improving public services and nurturing our sense of community. The Town should adopt measures to encourage public participation in Town government.
3. Ample opportunity to participate in recreational activities suitable for those of all ages and abilities.
4. Improved communication and partnerships with state agencies such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Massachusetts Highway Department, other municipalities, and non-government agencies.
5. Equitable payment from the DCR, including in-kind contributions, for land held for water supply protection.
6. A school system with resources sufficient to provide a superior education for our children and is a source of pride for residents.
7. Preservation of plentiful open space in order to protect our natural resources, maintain scenic views, and offer residents the pleasure of enjoying an unspoiled environment.
8. Vibrant businesses and industries that provide employment, contribute to the tax base, and meet the needs of residents for goods and services.
9. A safe and efficient street network that offers convenient access to regional highways and community facilities, and protects neighborhood tranquility.
10. A network of sidewalks and trails between neighborhoods that provides ready access to commercial areas, schools, and recreation facilities.
11. A variety of housing options that meet the incomes, needs and lifestyles of a diverse population.
12. A strong supply of housing that is affordable and addresses the needs of our grown children and civil servants who appreciate what our community has to offer and who wish to live here.
13. A Route 12 Corridor that contains a mix of commercial activity to meet the needs of residents for goods and services. Our vision includes an improved roadway designed to carry traffic safely and smoothly, and an improved physical appearance (landscaping, lighting, signage, site design) that will make the Corridor an attractive gateway to the community.
14. Public buildings that are well maintained through adoption of a long-range capital improvement program, replacement of aging facilities on a priority basis, and investment in a sound maintenance program to prolong the useful life of such buildings.

15. An enhanced Town Center located in the vicinity of the Town Commons that can be the focal point of the Town's civic and cultural affairs. The Town Hall should be as near the Town Center as possible.
16. Greater regional cooperation and partnerships with neighboring towns to meet our Town's needs.

The Master Plan and this Executive Summary are organized under the broad topics of Economic Development, Housing, Open Space and Recreation, Transportation, Land Use, Municipal Facilities and Financial Constraints. Each topic is then developed outlining existing condition and describing the goals for the town and possible strategies to achieve these goals.

It should be noted that change is a fact of town life and therefore, some data reported in the charts created in 2003 may need adjustment. However, it can be said that broadly speaking, the data reflects life in West Boylston at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Summary of Existing Conditions**

1. The Town's economic base is composed primarily of small businesses. There is no one large employer that makes a high property tax payment to fund local services.
2. Two near-by interchanges with I-190 provide a ready access to the interstate highway system.
3. Bordering Worcester, there exists a strong regional economic market that West Boylston can draw upon. With Fitchburg and Leominster to the north, the Town is well situated to provide services to a large area.
4. Many small retailers find the Route 12 Corridor attractive, and there appears to be a wide diversity of offerings. Retail trade makes up the largest concentration of economic activity in the Town, and most of these shops have few employees.
5. The Route 12 Buildout Analysis demonstrated that only a few large commercial lots exist in the Corridor that can accommodate new growth. Because of the age and condition of many of the buildings, it is likely that renovation and expansion will be the primary vehicle for growth in the Corridor.
6. The Region possesses enormous resources of knowledge and expertise with its many schools of higher education.
7. Because of the small, stable population in town, business growth will be dependent upon the ability of existing firms to attract customers from beyond the Town's boundaries to sample what the Town has to offer. A marketing strategy keyed upon local assets is essential to draw regional residents to the Town, and provision of diverse activities will draw them back again.
8. The sewer construction project will bring the benefits of a public sewer system to most of the Town's commercial and industrial districts. In the past, development had been limited by soil conditions to accommodate on-site septic systems. Higher intensity development will now be possible, up to the floor area permitted by zoning.
9. The Business Survey results indicate that most business people feel West Boylston is a good place to run a business, but feel that Town officials do not support their needs.

### **Economic Development Goals**

1. Improve communication between the Town and business community to resolve differences and develop a closer working relationship.
2. Increase the capacity of the local government to promote economic development by insuring adequate resources are devoted to the task.
3. Seek to broaden the tax base by promoting new economic development in designated business and industrial zones where neighborhood impacts can be minimized.

4. Promote small-scale retail and tourist oriented outlets that build upon existing strengths and are compatible with the skills of the local workforce.
5. Implement a Marketing Strategy that highlights the Town's natural resource assets, convenient location, proximity to Worcester, regional economic strengths, and service-oriented government.
6. Seek to retain local companies wherever possible by offering consistent permitting practices, efficient services, and a supportive environment for running a business.
7. Provide quality physical infrastructure to meet the needs of business and industry, including an adequate supply of clean water, sewage treatment, and congestion-free roads in good condition.

### **Economic Development Strategies**

1. Create an Economic Development Commission or Task Force to promote economic development in West Boylston. Such an entity would serve as a vehicle for communication, where the public and private sectors can debate appropriate economic development policy for the Town, seek to develop a consensus, apply for grants to improve local infrastructure, and work to promote economic growth. An EDC would foster a better business climate by increasing communication between the business community and town government.
2. Promote and market the strengths of commercial and industrial areas:
  - a) The Hartwell Street industrial district should be focused on traditional industrial activities. Access should be improved to minimize traffic impacts on residential neighborhoods.
  - b) The Worcester Corporate Center provides opportunity for high value office, R&D, and light industrial uses.
  - c) The Route 12 commercial district should be reserved for restaurants, multi-tenant buildings, retail stores and service businesses that provide conveniences for West Boylston residents and draws outside shoppers from the larger region. Substantial public investment in the highway and adjacent land is needed to enhance economic growth along the highway.
  - d) Oakdale should be preserved as a traditional New England village with small-scale commercial activity.
  - e) The Town Center area should be reserved for high-end retail shops and small professional offices.
3. Encourage small business development. Since smaller companies make up the backbone of the economic base, it is important for the Town to do what it can to insure the public sector provides a safe and healthy environment within which to operate such a business.
4. Improve coordination among municipal boards and departments to insure that local land use boards have current information when acting on development applications.
5. Act in concert with regional economic strengths. The region is particularly strong in the areas of medicine, medical instruments, biotechnology, software development, computer equipment, insurance, and telecommunications. Recruitment efforts directed to companies in these clusters are more likely to yield successes than attempting to attract companies in sectors without a foothold in Central Massachusetts.
6. Become active in regional and state economic development planning. It is difficult for any one community or agency to have all of the expertise that is needed to sustain and grow the Central Massachusetts economy. Maintaining close communication with a wide variety of related organizations, and relying upon the expertise of other professionals can stretch limited resources to their fullest extent.
7. Become a member of an Economic Target Area (ETA). Because West Boylston is not a member of an ETA, it is at a disadvantage when companies are making expansion or re-location decisions.
8. Develop a marketing program to promote West Boylston as a desirable community to locate a small business. The marketing strategy should be geared to the economic strengths of the Town and its likely target business audience. The Town could: expand its web site to promote economic development;

maintain an inventory of available land and vacant buildings; promote quality of life issues that make the Town special; prepare a glossy brochure to attract corporate executives; and highlight the Town's low, one-class tax rate.

9. Work with the Massachusetts Highway Department to improve the Route 12 Corridor. The physical appearance of the Route 12 Corridor is an impediment to expanding business opportunity. But a reconstruction of the roadway, locating power lines underground, clearly identifying travel and turning lanes, eliminating confusing and unneeded curb cuts, adding street trees and planting strips, and providing safe pedestrian access via new sidewalks will promote additional private investment.
10. Develop tourism as an economic engine. The Town has numerous natural assets that attract residents of surrounding towns. While here, many will make the time to browse among local shops and may make impulse purchases as part of their outing. Local businesses should cater to these tourists.
11. Hold community fairs and special events. Community celebrations offer a positive way for residents to come together and celebrate the Town's heritage and its current community spirit. Residents from outside the community can be welcomed and perhaps spend some cash while visiting the Town.
12. Education / School to Work. All employers need access to a skilled and enterprising labor force. Even with the state's superior higher education system, the specialization of many highly technical industries in Central Massachusetts requires that the workforce be educated to meet diverse needs. The economic task force can help make local employers aware of technical and financial resources to assist companies in staying profitable in a highly competitive environment.
13. Provide lending sources and technical assistance to small businesses. Small businesses often have difficulty financing improvements from conventional lending sources. Banks with branch offices in West Boylston can provide a commitment to funding local businesses that wish to expand or start a new business here. The Town should implement existing state and federal funding options.
14. Create non-profit Economic Development Alliance with neighboring towns. As a small community, West Boylston may not be able to support a concentrated economic development program on its own. However, surrounding communities may be willing to forge closer ties through creation of a non-profit corporation dedicated to promoting economic development.

## **HOUSING**

### **Summary of Existing Conditions**

1. Much of West Boylston's housing stock was built in the post WW II era. Built on small lots by today's standards, and often of much smaller size than new homes, this housing stock plays a key role in offering lower cost housing for middle-income individuals.
2. However, there is an affordability problem in West Boylston today. Housing prices have escalated rapidly in the past several years, making it extremely difficult for first-time homebuyers, young adults who grew up in Town, and civil servants to be able to afford to buy a home.
3. West Boylston does not fare favorably in relation to Chapter 40B requirements as only 2.85% of the year-round housing units meet the state definition of affordability. ("Affordability" in terms of Chapter 40B requires government subsidies and qualifying residents based on income limitations, and is not a reflection of actual rents or costs.) As a result, there are incentives for developers to submit comprehensive permit applications designed to overcome zoning density limitations to meet the regional need for housing for those of low and moderate income.
4. In addition, there is a need for housing options for a diverse and changing world. In the past, most of the new housing occurred as large-lot, single family homes. However, in recent years, the majority of new housing in Town is designed for "active adults over 55".
5. The Town has taken positive steps in offering higher-density housing, e.g. the adoption of an elderly housing overlay district to allow Hillside Village condominiums to be built.
6. Census data reveals that few rental units were built in the previous decade, thus increasing the difficulty of finding an affordable unit in West Boylston for households of all incomes.

7. Condominiums offer a more affordable option for those entering the home buying market, and can help to build equity for later purchase of a single family home.
8. Compared to surrounding towns, West Boylston's older housing stock provides many affordable housing opportunities that are not subsidized; unfortunately, these do not qualify as low and moderate income units on the state's Chapter 40B subsidized housing inventory.

### **Housing Goals**

1. By the year 2020, West Boylston should have ten percent of its year-round housing stock determined to be affordable units as defined under MGL Chapter 40B.
2. West Boylston should continue to provide housing for a broad range of incomes. This would include ownership and rental housing for elderly, disabled and civil servants as defined by the Town's housing needs which may vary from time to time.
3. West Boylston should encourage housing developments that result in a diverse population and offers alternatives to meet the needs of residents of differing ages, economic status, and household characteristics. All proposed developments should be built in harmony with the environment, be mindful of neighborhood character, and wherever possible adhere to the principles of "Smart Growth".
4. Seek to amend MGL c. 40B to count the many market-rate units that are already affordable, even without a state or federal subsidy, as units that qualify toward a community's goal of having 10% of its year-round housing stock affordable.

### **Strategies to Meet the Goals**

1. The Town purchased land at the jail and should consider leasing a portion of the site for affordable housing.
2. The Housing Authority should seek funding to build additional rental units.
3. Form collaborative relationships with the Housing Authority or the regional administering agency, RCAP Solutions (formerly Rural Housing Improvement (RHI)), to increase the use of Section 8 certificates and vouchers. These should be project based, i.e. vouchers or certificates that remain with specific units in West Boylston.
4. Promote additional Local Initiative Projects (LIP). The LIP program affords the Town the opportunity to work closely with a developer on all aspects of a project. Even if no financial subsidy is provided, the technical assistance provided by the state is deemed a subsidy and units count towards the Chapter 40B goal.
5. Create a non-profit housing trust, or work with an existing organization, to raise funds for affordable housing activities. Such an entity offers flexibility in creating affordable housing since it can accept gifts of land or money and can borrow funds to build housing. In addition, the West Boylston Land Trust can be a vehicle for acquiring land for such purposes.
6. The Housing Partnership should be empowered to implement a housing agenda to address the needs of the community. Affordable housing development is a complex task that requires committed local leaders and experienced developers. The Partnership could work with an experienced non-profit housing developer to bring in expertise in affordable housing development not otherwise available to the Town. RCAP Solutions is one such agency that has expressed a willingness to work with the Town on affordable housing production.
7. Adopt an incentive Zoning Bylaw to encourage developers to provide housing for low and moderate-income households by allowing increased density and reduced frontage requirements as well "cluster development" options. An Incentive Bylaw allows for a percentage of the units in a development to be permanently restricted to low and moderate-income households.
8. The Housing Partnership should convene a forum on housing issues in West Boylston.

9. The Town should participate in the soft second mortgage program. First-time homebuyers obtain a second mortgage of 20% of the purchase price, which carries a lower rate and deferral of principal for 10 years to increase one's buying power.
10. Identify land in tax delinquency that may be suitable for housing. Continue with the tax title process for promising sites and offer such properties to developers or first-time homebuyers who will agree to long-term affordability restrictions.
11. Consider re-zoning additional land for higher density housing, especially land near bus routes and with access to water and sewer services. Zoning bylaw requirements for multi-family housing should be revised to include standards to achieve high quality design, neighborhood compatibility, and environmental protection.
12. Evaluate the existing building stock in West Boylston to identify opportunities to rehabilitate structures for affordable housing. Possibilities could include single-family conversions, and older apartment buildings that are in need of renovation.
13. Promote the use of the existing accessory apartment provision of the zoning bylaw to create units reserved for low and moderate-income renters. Determine if the Town can offer incentives that would encourage greater use of this technique.
14. Apply for CDBG funds to start a housing rehabilitation program. This will enable elderly and low and moderate-income households to make needed repairs to their property and to continue to live in their home. The Town can also help homeowners apply for grants and loans for home repairs and replacement of failed septic systems in non-sewered areas.
15. Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Under the CPA a real estate surcharge of 1%-3% is applied to all property to raise revenue for affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space acquisition.
16. Consider using the tool of "limited development" to create some affordable units. Limited development entails selling a percentage of land acquired as open space for new housing. The proceeds from the land sale help to defray the Town's cost of acquiring the site. Rather than seek the highest sale price, the land could be sold at below market value to lower overall housing costs for qualified applicants. Deed restrictions insure the property remains affordable for future buyers.

## **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

Based on the "Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2002 Update"

### **PLAN SUMMARY**

Certain key points became evident during the formulation of this plan. First, the survey of residents taken in 1999 indicates the priority that townspeople give to the preservation of the rural character of the Town. Second, DCR owns a tremendous amount of open space, and the Town benefits from these holdings in terms of open space and lovely vistas, but this land is restricted and is mostly unavailable for active recreational use by the local residents. Third, if the DCR were to prohibit public access to its lands, as Worcester has done with its watershed lands in Holden, the Town would have a real shortage of open space. Fourth, the small amount of Town-owned open space is very heavily used for athletic facilities, which limits other more passive uses. Fifth, the existing open space is very unevenly distributed throughout the Town.

The intent of the Open Space and Recreation Plan is to increase the awareness of citizens and public officials to the benefits of preserving undeveloped land and to plan for the future. The Plan provides strategies for conserving and managing open spaces. Recommendations include expanding recreational facilities, which are currently over-used, and improving access to those facilities. The Plan proposes to coordinate with DCR to investigate and negotiate community use of DCR lands that would not have a negative impact on the water quality of the Reservoir. The Plan recognizes the need to plan now to preserve open space threatened by the development that may result from the installation of sewers and from growth spreading westward from Boston.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Resource Protection Goals**

1. Assure that the Town's open space and recreation concerns are addressed when decisions are made regarding the future uses of DCR and former county-owned land.
2. Protect environmentally sensitive areas through restrictions on development or acquisition of development rights.
3. Establish wildlife greenway corridors.
4. Preserve existing farmland and establish a plan for acquisition/protection of land under Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B.
5. Create an open space/cluster zoning bylaw to protect water quality and to maintain open space, especially in areas that have been or will be sewered.
6. Coordinate open space preservation with historical preservation.
7. Work with town departments to protect existing natural features on town-owned open space
8. Preserve fisheries in the Reservoir and its tributaries.
9. Consider limitation of increases in inter-basin transfer of water that will occur with the sewer project.
10. Promote water conservation and reduce the amount of "unaccounted for" water.
11. Find ways to protect privately owned wetlands and seek certification of vernal pools.
12. Reduce stream bank erosion and eutrophication of ponds, such as Carroll's Pond.
13. Promote alternatives to polluting land use practices, such as excessive fertilizer use.

### **Community Goals**

1. Acquire more land for open space and recreation, and improve existing facilities.
2. Work with the DCR and state legislature to ensure local access to DCR-owned parcels for passive recreation and, where suitable, for active recreation.
3. Acquire more open space and develop recreation facilities in the more densely developed southern part of town.
4. Upgrade existing recreation facilities so they are handicapped accessible.
5. Develop maps, pamphlets, and informational packets about town-owned open space and recreational facilities, and develop an outreach campaign for the public.
6. Increase opportunities for passive recreation on town-owned land, especially for the elderly.
7. Preserve small town character of town.
8. Develop both North-South and East-West trail linkages for walkways and wildlife corridors, and develop linkages to trails and wildlife corridors in abutting towns.
9. Develop sidewalks and walking trails to facilitate pedestrian traffic.
10. Increase access to recreational facilities by very young children at Pride Park and Woodland Park.
11. Support historic interpretive trail development along the Mass. Central Rail Trail.

### **Management Goals**

1. Support the permanent Open Space Advisory Committee to develop overall plans and implementation strategies for open space. The Committee should have input into town decisions that affect open space, parks and resource protection.
2. Establish a plan to familiarize local officials and residents about the benefits of open space.

3. Help the West Boylston Land Trust become an effective community resource and coordinate actions of the Land Trust with town boards and commissions.
4. Develop and implement an operation and maintenance plan and, where appropriate, a fee structure, for the town's recreational facilities.
5. Obtain a commitment from the Town to preserve and expand the current amount of town-owned open space and recreational land.
6. Develop and implement rules and regulations for use of parks and recreational facilities.
7. Have professional assistance available for town officials making land use and recreation decisions and for interactions with state, county, and DCR officials.
8. Develop mechanism to ensure input from town boards and departments into Planning Board's site plan review and subdivision review process.
9. Create coordinated, professional management of the town's water supply and new sewers.
10. Improve enforcement of bylaws designed to protect the environment, such as Aquifer Protection Zoning.
11. Hold a public hearing to get public input whenever a use change is proposed for any open space owned by the Town.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Summary of Existing Conditions**

1. With two interchanges to I-190, the Town has excellent access to the interstate highway system. North/south travel is well developed with major routes such as I-190 and Routes 12 and 140 running in this direction.
2. East/west movement is generally limited by the Wachusett Reservoir and topographic constraints.
3. There are no major regional highway projects planned for the near-term. Town-wide traffic is expected to increase by 16% over the course of this decade and by about 10% the following decade. To accommodate this additional traffic, high volume roads will require intersection improvements and changes in geometry.
4. The principal transportation improvement project that should be planned for is the upgrade to Route 12 through the commercial corridor. Route 12 should be viewed as the principal gateway through the Town and improved to enhance economic development and travel conditions. A variety of improvements will be needed, including re-surfacing, new curbs and sidewalks, attractive landscaping, signage controls, and placing overhead wires underground.
5. The Town of Holden has proposed the construction of a new interchange with I-190 in Holden at Malden Street near Lee Street in West Boylston. West Boylston officials are opposed to the project because of anticipated negative impacts it would have on the community. Many issues will need to be considered and resolved before support for this construction can occur.
6. The sewer improvement project currently underway will result in many local streets receiving a finish course that will greatly improve neighborhood conditions.
7. Poor access to the Hartwell Street industrial district results in negative traffic impacts on residential neighborhoods in West Boylston and Worcester.
8. Recent cutbacks in the state's Chapter 90 program will drastically curtail needed road improvements in other locations.
9. With the re-construction of the Route 140 bridge over the Thomas Basin in 2003, there are no other bridges in need of repair in West Boylston at this time.
10. The top 4 accident locations are: Scarlett Marketplace site drive, the intersection of Routes 12 and 140, the intersection of Franklin Street and Route 12, and the intersection of Route 12, Woodland Street and Pierce Street.

11. The WRTA provides bus service to West Boylston along Route 12 to the Town Center. Typical weekday ridership is just under 100 passengers per day. The service provides an important mode of transportation for those unable to own a personal vehicle. With service cuts on the horizon for the WRTA, it is important for officials and residents support the service and to monitor possible route reductions.
12. Recent changes to the manner in which the MBTA assessments are calculated means that West Boylston will begin to pay an assessment of \$7,500 in 2005 and the amounts will increase in succeeding years.
13. Due to lack of funds, sidewalk maintenance has suffered. In general, the Town has not sought to develop a good interconnected sidewalk system for pedestrians.
14. The Wachusett Greenways Trail along the former Mass. Central Railroad offers a valuable amenity for local and regional residents. It is anticipated that the trail will eventually provide a long distance route from Sterling to Oakham. The *Open Space and Recreation Plan* and CMRPC's *North Subregion Inter-Community Trail Connection Feasibility Study* contains other trail options to encourage pedestrian activity in West Boylston.

### **Transportation Goals**

1. Promote efficient transportation systems that provide for different modes of travel to meet the needs of all West Boylston residents while maintaining a small town atmosphere.
2. Make improvements to existing roadway infrastructure to improve safety and reduce congestion.
3. Promote alternatives to automobile travel, including greater pedestrian activity, safe bicycling, and maximum use of transit services.
4. Develop property in coordination with the adjacent road and trail systems to promote greater connectivity, improve traffic circulation, and provide municipal services in an efficient manner.

### **Strategies to Improve Transportation Systems**

1. The highest priority for transportation should be the improvement of the Route 12 Corridor. The Town should begin the process of developing conceptual design plans with its own funds and work closely with MassHighway officials on long range funding. Such a project will bolster the Town's image as a business-friendly community and yield positive benefits on community aesthetics, economic development, and promoting alternative modes of travel. Recommendations of the *Route 12 Traffic Study* should be implemented, including consolidating curb cuts to allow one, or a maximum of two, curb cuts per site, in order to reduce the number of conflicting turning maneuvers, re-aligning intersections with poor geometry, upgrading or adding signal control where warranted, and making access improvements at high volume site drives.
2. The second highest priority for transportation is to improve the access to the industrial area. This will entail the reconstruction of the southern end of Shrewsbury Street, called Briar Lane in Worcester. Local officials should pursue road alternatives to the Hartwell Street industrial district in order to divert truck traffic on Maple Street and other residential neighborhoods. For example, perhaps Hartwell Street could be extended to Temple Street (Rt. 140) if topography permits.
3. The Town should adopt a Pavement Management Program to insure the continuing upkeep of the streets and walkway systems.
4. To reduce heavy reliance on automobile use, the Town should embark on a plan to improve and construct sidewalks and promote bicycling activity through expansion of the trail system. Particular attention should be provided to improving walking systems near schools to encourage more students to walk to school. In addition, sidewalks should be constructed where necessary along Route 12 to promote pedestrian safety along this busy roadway.
5. The Town should move forward on recommendations in the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* and *North Subregion Inter-Community Trail Connection Feasibility Study* regarding enhancements to the local and regional trail systems.

6. The Planning Board should review its Subdivision street width standards, particularly where traffic volumes are low, to determine if narrower streets are feasible without compromising public safety or affecting municipal services. Narrow streets encourage slower speeds, minimize the amount of storm water runoff, lower construction costs of development, and reduce long-term maintenance costs.
7. In addition, the Planning Board should review its Subdivision Regulations to improve street connectivity. Standards could be adopted for distance between intersecting streets and promoting pedestrian connectivity.
8. At high accident locations, the Town should undertake a careful analysis of traffic patterns and design improvements to reduce accident rates.
9. Local officials should participate in regional transportation planning activities, especially those of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. Such involvement can keep the Town abreast of possible regional transportation projects that may affect the Town and insure that Town supported projects are advanced to construction.
10. To insure that transportation issues remain “on the front burner” the Town should create a Transportation Committee to study transportation needs and work to implement targeted improvements. The Committee should tackle the Route 12 Corridor reconstruction, sidewalk and trail projects, and remedies at high crash locations.
11. Where currently absent in high traffic areas, curb ramps should be installed for handicapped accessibility to allow those in wheelchairs to use community facilities.
12. The Board of Selectmen should open a dialogue with the WRTA to seek improved transit services for West Boylston. Possibilities include more frequent service on the existing route, expanding the area currently served, and adding a shuttle from a central location in West Boylston to Union Station for Boston commuters.

## LAND USE

### Summary of Existing Conditions

1. A very high percentage of the Town (42.1%) is State or County owned (including the Wachusett Reservoir). Including municipal property and lands owned by churches, charitable organizations, railroads, and utilities, 46.5% of the Town is tax-exempt.
2. The required minimum lot size of the Town’s two residential districts is 40,000 square feet, thereby prohibiting new single-family development of a high or medium density. Low-density residential development continues in West Boylston at a steady, slow pace.
3. Excluding utilities, land actively used for commercial and industrial purposes accounts for 5.2% of the Town’s land area, while vacant commercial and industrial land accounts for 2.5%.
4. With the short supply of vacant commercial land, future growth in the commercial sector will need to come from re-development of existing properties at a higher intensity.
5. Land devoted to agriculture has been slowly disappearing over the years due to West Boylston’s prime residential market and purchases by the DCR for watershed protection.
6. A total of 460.7 acres is devoted to open space use and classified by the Assessors under various tax abatement programs as follows:

Chapter 61, Forestry	157.1
Chapter 61A, Agriculture	82.6
Chapter 61B, Recreation	221.0
Total	460.7

These lands are not permanently protected and may be removed by the owner for development.

7. While the DCR will remain vigilant in regulating development in the watershed, land purchases over the next few years will likely slow down since most of the environmentally sensitive land deemed necessary to protect the watershed has already been acquired.
8. Future growth may be constrained by limits on the Town's water supply. The Water District has instituted water conservation, meter replacement, and leak detection measures that have resulted in significant reductions in "unaccounted for" water use. A recent report for the District recommended maximizing the existing water supply sources, rather than seeking to develop new sources, to mitigate a projected water supply deficit. In addition, water treatment for high levels of iron and manganese may be needed in order to increase the quantity of water available.
9. While the overall land use pattern in West Boylston is unlikely to change in the future, the completion of the Town sewer system (projected for the end of 2005), will likely increase the rate of development and change the type of development that occurs. In particular:
  - a) The slow, steady pace of low-density residential development over the last 17 years may quicken as land previously restricted from development by slowly percolating soils is now able to connect to the public sewer system.
  - b) High-density residential development has increased during the last few years, reversing the trend that occurred between 1985 and 1999. With the availability of sewers, developers may take advantage of the strong housing market in West Boylston to propose multiple family developments using the Chapter 40B comprehensive permit process.
  - c) The current influx of industrial companies to the Hartwell Street area should continue; however, a worsening economy could cancel out the effect of the new sewer system in the near term. The Worcester Corporate Center is connected to the Worcester sewer system and will likely not face capacity constraints that may occur elsewhere in West Boylston.
  - d) Commercial development will not be able to spread out at low densities since there is so little undeveloped commercial land remaining. With most such development restricted to the Route 12 Corridor, the lack of available land and Cohen bill restrictions may make it economically attractive to replace older, low density commercial structures with a more compact and aesthetically attractive design.
  - e) There appears to be some disagreement regarding the overall capacity of the Town's sewer system, and the capacity of the sewer mains in Holden and Worcester that carry Town flows to the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District treatment plant. The Town should immediately develop a plan to accurately quantify the excess capacity for new development and to regulate system extension. The plan should include physical limitations as well as permitting and legal restrictions, and should be developed with public input. It should formulate criteria for expansion that are applicable to all landowners.

### **Land Use Goals**

1. With a heavy reliance on the residential sector to pay for municipal services, commercial and industrial development should be encouraged in appropriate locations. Re-development of under-utilized properties should be promoted to create higher value, job-creating enterprises.
2. With a dwindling supply of developable land, remaining land should be developed efficiently in order to maximize the benefit to the Town. New development should be compact in form, contain a mix of land uses, be of greater intensity, accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users, and preserve significant open space and sensitive natural resources.
3. Still rural areas of town should be maintained at low density. Residential developments should be designed to preserve open space, respect natural resources, and have visual compatibility with the character of the Town.
4. Limited water and sewer capacity should be managed carefully. Service extensions should only be allowed to areas that are consistent with the Town's water and sewer plans in order to accommodate

moderate density residential development (4 units per acre) or significant commercial/industrial development.

5. The villages of Oakdale, Pincroft, and the Town Center should be preserved as compact, mixed use districts by encouraging small-scale commercial and residential uses and architecturally compatible buildings that reflect the existing development pattern.
6. While the Route 12 Corridor has limited expansion potential, over time the Corridor should be re-developed from a commercial strip into a community Gateway to offer a positive image of the Town and foster private investment.
7. Moderate density multi-family housing should be encouraged in areas that have access to public transit, are connected to public water and sewer systems, and are near commercial services.
8. Improve coordination among municipal boards and departments to insure that local land use boards have current information when acting on development applications.
9. To help create a strong community identity, plans should be prepared to enhance the Town Center in the vicinity of the Library and Gazebo. Municipal buildings, public institutions, and cultural activities should be concentrated in this central location to create a strong focal point for community services and public events. An important step would be to re-locate the new Town Hall as near to the Town Center as possible.
10. Revise the Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations to implement the vision of the Master Plan.

### **Land Use Strategies**

1. Adopt a new Zoning Map with Assessors parcels as the base. Currently, zoning boundaries are defined as offsets from roads and natural features, and often split lot lines into more than one district. Zoning boundaries should be adjusted to align with parcel boundaries.
2. Create Village zoning districts for Oakdale, Pincroft and the Town Center to insure future development is compatible with the village character of each area. For properties with historic significance, owners should be encouraged to seek designation on the National and State Registers of Historic Places to provide recognition of their importance and aid in their preservation.
3. Assess the land use and zoning districts in town to consider adding land to the Business District where the impacts to surrounding areas are minimal and support services exist.
4. The Schedule of Use Regulations should be revised to insure appropriate land uses are proposed in each district.
5. Adopt a cluster development bylaw to preserve open space, preserve natural resource functions, and allow for a more compact development form.
6. Increase the permitted density of multiple family developments in the GR district now that sewers have removed concerns about poor soil suitability for septic systems. The existing density of 20,000 sq. ft. of lot area per dwelling unit (2.2 units per acre) should be increased to 4 units per acre.
7. To re-develop Route 12 as the Gateway through West Boylston, a plan should be prepared that not only includes roadway and traffic improvements but beautification elements as well, such as enhanced landscaping, pedestrian connections, and underground wiring.
8. The Planning Board should review its Subdivision Regulations to improve street connectivity. Requiring sidewalks and trails can encourage greater pedestrian and bicycling use and improve connections to adjacent subdivisions and commercial areas. Narrower street widths should also be examined for low-density developments to minimize land disturbance and the amount of runoff from impervious surfaces.
9. Consider passing the Community Preservation Act. As a local option, the Town can impose a surtax of between 1% - 3% to protect open space, develop affordable housing and preserve historic properties.
10. Study the feasibility of allowing Mixed Use Development, where a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional land uses is authorized at a greater intensity in a carefully planned manner. This

innovative technique minimizes the conversion of open space to low-density uses while providing a variety of services in close proximity that help to reduce automobile trips.

11. Consider prohibiting single-family homes in Business districts to minimize conflicts between incompatible land uses and insure that new development utilizes the limited supply of such property for high value uses.
12. Develop a policy for the expansion of utilities that will restrict growth in areas where growth is not consistent with the Master Plan.
13. With the merger of the MDC into the new Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Town should keep abreast of changes to the agency's land use policies. For example, will DCR continue to buy land for watershed protection, and what can be done to facilitate use of key parcels for recreational use?
14. Reduce the minimum lot size in Industrial districts from 5 acres to 2 acres in order to reduce the cost of buildable lots for industrial uses.
15. Enforcing the terms of the Zoning Bylaw, and requiring strict adherence to conditions imposed by land use boards in approving development applications, are necessary to insure the Town's land use policies are implemented in accordance with the wishes of residents. The Board of Selectmen must work to insure adequate resources are allocated for zoning enforcement.
16. Upon adoption of the Master Plan, the Town should undertake a thorough revision of the Zoning Bylaw to insure that its requirements are fully consistent with the Plan.

## **MUNICIPAL FACILITIES**

### **Summary of Existing Conditions**

1. The Town has a backlog of municipal building needs due to an inability to properly fund needed improvements over time.
2. The Town should adopt a long-range program for improving existing municipal buildings to insure that necessary repairs are made to provide efficient services for residents.
3. In a study prepared by Haynes, Lieneck and Smith, Inc. the following findings and deficiencies were noted in the area of municipal building needs:
  - a) Legislation was passed to allow the Town to purchase 61 acres of County land off Paul X. Tivnan Drive near the Jail for municipal buildings. The Town should move to acquire this land.
  - b) The municipal light plant should then build a new facility in this area.
  - c) The Streets and Parks Building no longer meets the Town's needs. A new facility should be built on the former County land to be acquired by the Jail.
  - d) As a former school, the Mixer Building is ill suited for municipal offices. The high cost of renovation makes it a poor use of public funds. The structure should be demolished.
  - e) Since the Mixer Building is the home of the senior center, a new home for the senior center/community center should be found.
  - f) The Shepard Building is structurally sound. It should be renovated and house the police, fire and dispatch services.
  - g) The Bancroft Building is structurally sound and should be renovated to house municipal offices.
  - h) The municipal pool is inadequate for today's needs. There is no strong consensus for the right approach to take at this time. Options under consideration include demolishing the pool, renovating it, enclosing it for continuous use, or constructing a new enclosed pool with 14,000 square feet of space.

**Municipal Facilities Goals**

1. The Town will adopt a long-range capital improvement program to adequately fund a municipal building construction program to replace aging capital facilities.
2. The Town will embark on an aggressive funding program to achieve a high level of services for residents. The Town will commit to a capital program to construct new facilities and renovate existing buildings for new uses.
3. To prevent a re-occurrence of municipal buildings deteriorating over time, the Town will create a funding mechanism to insure its buildings are properly maintained. The Town will investigate the feasibility of a centralized maintenance system for all facilities.

**Municipal Facilities Strategies**

1. Public Safety Building: Combine Police, Fire and Dispatch departments at the Shepard Building; expand the structure from 9,720 square feet to 12,260 square feet.
2. Streets and Parks Building: Construct a new building on former County land; combine with Municipal Light Plant building.
3. Town Hall: Convert Bancroft Building to town office building.
4. Senior Center: Demolish Mixter Building and provide a 12,025 square foot Community Center with a large function room and that provides offices and space for the Senior Center’s activities. This will make room for new playing fields and future building use.

<b><u>Recommendations of the Building Study</u></b>	<b><u>2003 Cost</u></b>	<b><u>Projected Cost</u></b>	<b><u>Year</u></b>
1. Public Safety Building	\$1,500,000	\$2,100,000	2005
2. Streets and Parks Building	3,000,000	3,800,000	2006
3. Town Hall	1,715,000	3,000,000	2008
4. Senior/Community Center	<u>1,860,000</u>	<u>2,700,000</u>	2009
Total	\$8,075,000	\$11,600,000	

**Other Short and Long Range Needs (Not Ranked):**

1. Build additional school classrooms as needed.
2. Build new light plant building with cost to be borne out of revenues.
3. Reuse the existing light plant building by school department or other town offices.
4. Purchase land near the Library for parking purposes. (Approx. \$300,000)
5. Repair or replace the Town Pool. (\$1 – 3 million)
6. Build new playing fields.
7. Acquire land for cemetery.
8. Permanent toilets for parks. (Approx \$160,000 each)

## FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

### Summary of Existing Conditions

1. Steeply rising costs that make it increasingly difficult to fund yearly operating budgets, much less pay for needed capital projects.
2. The Town has postponed needed capital expenses in order to reduce its debt payments; as a result, debt service decreased from 12% of the budget in FY 2001 to 9.6% in FY 2005.
3. Residential properties have been asked to shoulder an increasing share of local services. The average single family tax bill increased from \$2,911.31 in FY 2001 to \$3,637.55 in FY 2005. This amounts to an increase of 25% over the five-year period.
4. The residential tax levy increased by over \$2.0 million from 2001 to 2005, and now represents over 84% of the total tax levy.
5. Limited new growth due to lack of buildable land, significant land acquisitions by the State, and restrictions imposed under the Cohen Act have reduced the Town's ability to see significant growth to keep pace with rising costs.
6. Many citizens are not aware of the numerous challenges facing the Town in the form of aging capital infrastructure, operating revenue shortfalls, and compliance obligations, and of the implications of failing to take action to address these challenges.
7. Increased taxes will be accepted by West Boylston citizens only if they are convinced of the need. Yearly operating budgets must be balanced and should be paid for by recurring revenue. Costs will continue to rise well beyond revenue growth.

### Financial Goals

1. Develop and implement a budget process that considers the entire Town's needs fairly and promotes cooperation and understanding among the various departments. Improve citizen information and outreach in the budget process.
2. Develop and implement a realistic and effective capital improvement financial plan and process.
3. The Reservoir and the State Agency controlling it are here to stay and the Town must try to improve its relationship with whatever agency is in control. Continue working for higher PILOT funds.
4. Communicate regularly with the Worcester County Sheriff and increase efforts to get more benefits from hosting The House of Correction.
5. Explore expanding the tax base through increased economic development.
6. Explore new ways of providing Town services that will cut costs or improve services; including revisiting failed past attempts to see if conditions or attitudes have changed.
7. Seek grant money from outside sources to support Town operations as much as possible. Complying with State regulations increases the Town's eligibility for grants and other payments.
8. Identify state laws and regulations that negatively affect West Boylston, and pursue appropriate strategies to pass amendments more favorable to the Town.
9. Regionalize purchasing and/or other governmental functions and services where such will reduce costs.

### Financial Strategies

1. Consider the entire Town's needs fairly and develop priorities, understanding the impacts of any budget cuts. When evaluating the Town's needs, consider all major citizen groups within the Town and the relative ability of each to benefit or withstand changes in priorities.
2. Capital improvement funds should be included in all yearly budgets. In addition, insure building and facility maintenance costs are properly accounted for each year. Do not defer to later years.

3. Implement the municipal building plan contained in this Master Plan as soon as finances allow. Our municipal buildings must be reconditioned, expanded or replaced. A capital building program must be started.
4. Form a permanent Capital Planning Committee to assist the Town in planning for, administering, and prioritizing capital improvement needs.
5. Investigate a centralized maintenance system responsible for maintaining all Town buildings and facilities.
6. The Wachusett Reservoir, extensive land holdings, and strong State land use controls affect the Town's ability to grow. It is in the Town's best interest to work to improve its relationship with the State agency in charge of watershed protection.
7. Continue working for higher PILOT funds (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes) from State-owned lands.
8. Negotiate for appropriate use of State controlled lands by the Town.
9. Take advantage of any technical assistance or grants offered by the State.
10. The new Sheriff and jail administration offer an opportunity to negotiate for payments to offset costs incurred by hosting this facility. Similarly, local officials should look for ways to increase prisoner work projects beneficial to the Town, take advantage of offers to use lockup facilities, and request use of Corrections personnel as special duty police officers when needed.
11. Implement strategies contained in the Economic Development section of this Master Plan.
12. If needed, allocate Town funds, and/or apply for State grants, to help increase the Town's tax base.
13. Explore new ways of providing Town services, such as:
  - a. Establish a "Pay as you throw" trash pickup service. (Short term)
  - b. Develop a trash transfer facility. (Long Term)
  - c. Cut or cap employee health care costs.
  - d. Control legal expenses by eliminating unproductive law suits.
  - e. Consolidate departments.
  - f. Enforce zoning bylaws and town regulations that will increase revenues.
  - g. Share equipment and manpower wherever possible.
  - h. Improve communication among departments.
  - i. Improve equipment maintenance programs.
  - j. Improve citizen understanding of the financial costs required to provide the services they want and promote citizen involvement in any changes.
14. Seek to comply with State regulations to increase the Town's eligibility for grants and other payments.
15. Communicate openly and work cooperatively with State agencies to insure the Town's interests are represented in State decision-making processes.
16. Keep required planning efforts, such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Housing Plan, up-to-date and meet any other requirements that make the Town eligible for State funds.
17. Do not establish costly programs not needed by the Town just because they result in State grants.
18. While regional service and purchasing proposals might not have been approved in the past, potential cost savings may be realized through efforts to gain the public's trust and support.
19. Take a proactive approach to Regionalization of functions, purchasing, and/or departments.

## **CHAPTER 2: FACTORS INFLUENCING THE GROWTH OF WEST BOYLSTON**

### **HISTORY OF THE TOWN**

A northern suburb of Worcester, West Boylston is a residential community of approximately 7,000 people. The Town entails a geographic area of fourteen square miles, approximately one square mile of which now contains the Wachusett Reservoir. Initially populated by Indians, the land contained rich soil with open fields, hills and valleys. The many streams and springs made it an ideal location along the Indian trail to Mt. Wachusett.

The original European settlers arrived around 1650 as part of the Lancaster Plantation grant. The original inhabitants were farmers, but with an abundant water supply, a few businesses were started along the waterways. A gristmill, saw mill, and blacksmith shop soon appeared.

The 18th century witnessed the arrival of more settlers attracted to the area by the fertility of its soil and the opportunities for development afforded by its location at the site where the Quinapoxet and Stillwater Rivers join to form the southern branch of the Nashaway or Nashua River. The latter part of the century saw a gradual change in emphasis from agriculture to manufacturing as a mill complex grew along the rivers.

In 1794, when Major Ezra Beaman and others built the first church on the present day Common, a community of about six hundred persons had formed in the adjacent corners of Boylston, Sterling and Holden. The common interests of these neighbors, although citizens of three different towns, caused them to petition the General Court for incorporation. This petition was refused, but they were granted Precinct status in 1796 by Governor Samuel Adams. Major Beaman and others persisted in their efforts to create a town, and on January 30, 1808 an Act was passed incorporating the Second Precinct into the Town of West Boylston. Ezra Beaman, often called the Father of West Boylston, served simultaneously as Selectman, Treasurer, and the first representative of the Town to the State Legislature. Beaman was also instrumental in the incorporation of the Town of Boylston from part of Shrewsbury and had been its first chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Treasurer and representative to the State Legislature.

West Boylston was created from parts of Shrewsbury, Lancaster, Sterling, Boylston and Holden. These lands had been parts of earlier grants made to the settlers of the region. The northeastern area came from the Nashaway Grant given by Chief Sholan to Thomas King in 1643; the northwestern section was derived from the Malden Grant; the southeastern section from Sagamore Quiquonasset in 1674; and a final section of undetermined size from a nephew of Chief Sholan. As the surrounding towns were incorporated, sections of what was to become the town of West Boylston were shuffled back and forth.

Robert Thomas, editor of the *Farmer's Almanac* and the first Town Clerk of West Boylston, wrote in an account of his life "It is rather paradoxical, but no less a fact, that I have resided in four incorporated towns, two distinct parishes, and one precinct, yet never moved from the same farm."

In the early 19th century, West Boylston was primarily devoted to agriculture. Rye was converted to meal and exported to Boston for use in the making of that famous brown bread. There were extensive apple orchards, and in 1820 there were 30 cider mills, which decreased to only one by 1880 because of the temperance movement. In that year there were 80 farms in West Boylston consisting of from 30 to 200 acres and many smaller ones. Several farmers had successful milk routes in Worcester.

West Boylston's industrial development was typical of many New England towns that could take advantage of waterpower, which was utilized widely during the Industrial Revolution. Since the first mills were wooden structures, fire was a constant danger. Many mills were rebuilt from stone and brick. The cotton mills of the West Boylston Manufacturing Co, L.M. Harris, Warfield's Mills, the Holbrook Mill (later becoming the Bigelow Mills, where the first power loom for weaving carpets was invented), the Clarendon Mills, Cowee's Grist Mill, the boot shop of Howe, Morton, and Lovell, Brigham Basket Co., Warner's Saw Mill, the Goodale ice business, and George Reed's organ shop were all prospering in West Boylston by 1895.

The population of the town grew steadily from 600 at its incorporation in 1808, to 1600 in 1840, 2,293 in 1865, and 2,968 in 1895. By 1895, West Boylston was a prosperous growing community with thriving

industries, schools and churches, of which its citizens were proud. The Town had an excellent library and confidence in its future development.

"In considering the plans for the proposed reservoir above the Lancaster Mills, we have been impressed by the very serious changes which will be produced in the towns of Boylston and West Boylston. It does not appear to us to be a very important objection to our plans that certain mill sites will be 80 feet beneath the surface of the basin, nor that the homes of many industrious people dependent upon these mills for a living will be submerged, because all these can be paid for, and an equivalent will be given..... damages for which we have caused careful estimates to be made." So stated the 1893 report of the Massachusetts State Board of Health.

The availability of pure water and swift streams, which had so favored the industrial development of West Boylston, was responsible for the selection of the Town as the best site for a reservoir to serve the needs of the city of Boston.

From 1896 through 1905, West Boylston endured the building of the Wachusett Reservoir and the accompanying destruction of mills and farms, including the Beaman farm and its famous Beaman oak tree, four churches, and eight schools, as well as acres of fruit trees. By 1905, all the Town's industries were gone except for the Reed Organ Co., which had been located outside the reservoir land. The employees of the mills were forced to seek work elsewhere. The population of the Town dropped from 2,968 in 1895 to 1,500 in 1908. 38 houses were either moved or torn down. All other buildings were removed and the soil stripped from the area to be covered with water. This material was used as fill to construct a road across the reservoir (now Route 12) that opened to traffic in 1904. The Beaman Cemetery was dug up and sixty bodies were moved to the present day cemetery. Over 750 workers were employed to clear the land for the Reservoir. Many were immigrants from Italy whose descendants still live in West Boylston.

A decade and \$11 million later, Wachusett Reservoir was completed. The Old Stone Church stands as the last remnant of the town in the valley. The citizens who had survived this drastic change resolved that a newer and better town would rise above the waters. Undaunted, they held the Town's Centennial celebration in 1908, planning for the future.

During the 20th century West Boylston struggled to recover from its displacement. A new Town Hall was built in 1904 that could seat 350 on the main floor and 125 in the balcony. It also contained the town offices, a dining room, and the library. However, in 1917 the building burned to the ground and was never rebuilt. A new library was built in 1911 with money donated by George Rice and named for Ezra Beaman. Town officials used the library as a meeting place until the 1940's, and Town Meetings were held in the Odd Fellows Hall. All of the churches, except the Methodist Church, which was spared from destruction, were rebuilt near the present day town center.

The Goodale Street School was built in 1903, and with the surviving Oakdale School, contained all of the Town's 128 students. Thus, West Boylston was unintentionally a leader in the school consolidation trend. Nevertheless, the Town has struggled with school overcrowding for most of the 20th century, with many solutions proposed and discarded. The Woodland Street School was completed in 1924 after much discussion and indecision. The Major Edwards building was opened in 1936 and contained grades 7 thru 12. It became an elementary school when the present High School was constructed in 1957. This ended West Boylston high school students' attendance at Wachusett Regional High School from 1953-1957. When the Mixter School opened in 1962, the total school population was around 1,500 students.

The Municipal Light Department brought electric lights to the Town in 1910, and the new electric railroad began service thru West Boylston (via the causeway over the Reservoir) from Worcester to Leominster in 1906. The West Boylston Water District was not established until around 1940 and now provides water to most of the Town. Town Meetings were held in the Edwards School after it was built in 1936, and now are held in the High School. Town offices moved into the Public Works Building (Bancroft Building) when it was built in 1941. Town offices were on the second floor, fire equipment on the first. Town offices later moved to the Mixter Building in 1981 when it was no longer needed as a school. A new Fire-Police building was built in 1970, and the Highway Department then moved into the Bancroft Building.

The growth of the Town started very slowly during the first half of the 20th century. It was not until the building boom in suburban communities that occurred all over the country after WWII that significant growth took place. The population of 1,500 in 1908 had increased to only 1,822 in 1940. The largest

population increase occurred in the 1950's and 60's; it leveled off in the 70's and increased slowly during the 80's and 90's to the present day figure of just over 7,000 people. This includes inmates of the County Jail, which moved to West Boylston from Worcester in 1973. It is located adjacent to the Worcester County Tuberculosis Sanitarium, which was built in the 1930's and closed in the early 1970's. The abandoned Sanitarium is scheduled for destruction soon.

The Town celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1958 with a gala ball in the newly dedicated high school gymnasium on January 30th. On Patriots Day residents planted a new Beaman Oak, which was cut down a few weeks later. (It was replaced in November.) The Old Stone Church was saved from the elements by the DCR, and after a 20-year struggle, was restored and re-dedicated in 1983 as a National Historic Place.

The original Boys Truant School, built in 1888 on Beaman Street, was destroyed by fire and replaced with the brick John Augustus Hall to house the Worcester County Training School for Boys. It was converted into a state Division of Youth Services (DYS) facility, which closed in the 1970's. The building is now occupied by the DCR and Department of Education for office purposes.

During the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several notable projects left their mark on the Town. I-190, a divided interstate highway between Worcester and Fitchburg, opened in 1982. In 1983, the Orchard Knoll elderly housing development on Maple Street was completed and dedicated. Voters approved curbside trash pickup in 1986, and the landfill closed the following year. The Watershed Protection Act, known locally as the Cohen bill, became law in 1992. This legislation, designed to protect the Reservoir, tributaries and surrounding wetlands, has had a profound effect on the Town. The Board of Selectmen expanded to five members in 1985 and the Town adopted the Town Administrator form of government in 1995. Major renovations to the schools and the Library were completed by 1999.

After many years of discussion, an DCR study determined that septic system failures in Holden and West Boylston were contributing to the pollution of the Reservoir. In 1991, a Sewer Facilities Study Committee was formed consisting of DCR and state officials, Town officials and residents. A Sewer Engineering Study contract was awarded to Weston & Sampson Engineers by the DCR in 1993. Sewer construction began in the Pinecroft section in 1999 and went into service in 2001. The second section went into service in 2002, and construction of the final section began that same year. The system will contain 30 miles of sewer lines when completed. The State, DCR, and the Town are sharing the cost of the system.

West Boylston will be celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2008. It has already passed its 200th year as a separate political unit, and has seen almost 300 years as a settled community. With its retail business and industry in concentrated areas, and the last remaining dairy farm bought by the DCR in 2000, it remains a pleasant residential town with beautiful scenery, albeit very different from its beginnings as a typical New England farming and mill town.

**April 2002**

**Charles Greenough**

- Sources:

The History of West Boylston by Helen Maxwell Hamilton, originally written in 1954, and a Chronology of Events from 1954 to 1999, by the West Boylston Historical Society, 2000.

Sesquicentennial Celebration - West Boylston MA. 1808-1908, by the Celebration Art Committee, copyright 1958 by the Town Of West Boylston.

Know Your Town, West Boylston MA. prepared by the West Boylston Section of the Worcester Area League of Woman Voters, 1977.

West Boylston Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1996, and 2002 Update

West Boylston Land Use Plan, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, 1988.

**ASSETS AND LIABILITIES INVENTORY**

<b>Assets</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>
<b>DCR/Wachusett Reservoir</b>	
The Wachusett Reservoir provides fishing, wildlife habitat, and scenic views along its 37-mile shore.	The large land takings for the Reservoir in the 1890's have left a deep emotional scar that remains to this day. With the flooding of the Town Center, the heart of the community was lost along with its economic center.
The DCR currently owns 37.7% of the Town's land and protects it as open space. Town service costs are less than if the land was developed, and consists principally of public safety response.	The DCR restricts recreational access to its land in an attempt to protect the water quality of the Reservoir. Homeland security threats may further curtail access.
A new sewer system is largely being funded by the DCR and State, and is scheduled for completion in summer of 2004 (50% complete as of Aug. '02.) All commercial and industrial zoned parts of Town will have sewers. 60% of Town residents will have access to a sewer line. Sewers will greatly reduce the risk of ground and surface water pollution caused by failed septic systems.	DCR-owned land takes property off the tax rolls, but the Town receives a Payment In Lieu of Taxes as compensation. While this amount has increased significantly, some perceive that the amount the Town receives is still less than if this land remained in private ownership. A five-year revaluation cycle freezes the payment during the intervening years.  As a state agency, the DCR exerts a strong influence on the Town but is not accountable to the local electorate.
The Old Stone Church on the shore of the Reservoir serves as a monument to the many buildings that were razed when this body of water was created over 100 years ago. It is a historical and scenic landmark in the Town that is much photographed.	Because of state funding limitations, the Town will have to contribute over \$8 million to the project. The Town will also be responsible for operating and maintaining the system.
	State law and DCR regulations contain strict prohibitions on development within protection zones of tributaries and other water features. This restricts development from occurring and requires owners to obtain DCR approval in regulated areas.
	The fact that the DCR owns such a large portion of the Town's land area limits development and restricts the supply of land for new housing.
<b>Environment / Open Space / Recreation (other than DCR)</b>	
The Mass Central Rail Trail, with 1.5 miles completed in West Boylston along the Quinapoxet River, will be part of a long-distance trail network. The trail provides a recreational amenity for walking and bicycling in a natural setting.	The Town has had widespread problems with failed septic systems, particularly in the Gates Brook watershed. The threat posed to the Reservoir was the catalyst for constructing a sewer system.

<b>Assets</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>
Wachusett Country Club provides recreation as well as panoramic views of the reservoir. It is presently under Chapter 61B (recreational land tax abatement) and is not permanently protected from development.	Existing recreational facilities are in need of repair, especially the Town pool. The Open Space Plan recommends additional playing fields and improvements to existing facilities to meet demand.
Goodale Park, established 80 years ago, contains athletic fields and a pine grove planted after the hurricane of '38.	The contaminated Shell Oil Tank Farm poses a threat to ground water quality. A long-range cleanup program is currently underway that relies on poplar trees to mitigate the pollution.
Malden Brook Farm, the only privately owned farm left in Town, was named a "Century Massachusetts Family Farm" by the Mass. Dept. of Food and Agriculture because the same family has owned it for over 100 years. This haying and horse farm includes 202 acres of fields and woods and historic structures. It will continue to operate under the auspices of the Malden Brook Heritage Foundation.	Despite the large amount of protected open space, there is little Town-owned land available to meet the increasing needs for park and recreation uses. There is insufficient land at the school complex to meet the need for athletic fields and team sports. The (defeated) plan to cut the pine grove at Goodale Park was due to of the shortage of Town-owned land to meet the demand for playing fields.
	There is little active agricultural activity remaining in West Boylston. There are 83 acres assessed under Chapter 61A for agriculture and horticulture. 157 acres are classified under Chapter 61 for forest production, and 221 acres under Chapter 61B as recreational land.
<b>Town Facilities and Services</b>	
<p>The West Boylston Water District supplies 99% of the water used in Town from local groundwater supplies. Only 1% of the Town's users get their water from private wells.</p> <p>While current well yields will not be able to meet projected water use in 2020, local aquifers may have sufficient water to allow pumping rates to be increased. The District will need to apply to DEP in order to obtain an increase in its permitted withdrawal.</p> <p>The Town has the right to obtain 1.0 mgd of water from the Reservoir. It is unclear at the moment whether filtration of this water will be required.</p> <p>The analysis of the Water District engineering consultant indicates that through a combination of new source approvals and water conservation measures, the District can supply sufficient water to meet the Town's future water needs.</p>	<p>Due to the presence of total coliform bacteria detected in routine sampling, the Water District is pursuing emergency chlorination.</p> <p>Recent drought conditions have caused the Water District to impose a mandatory water use restriction. The District has exceeded its DEP-approved pumping limits for the past several years. However, aggressive leak detection and water main replacement have brought about a substantial reduction in unaccounted-for water loss.</p> <p>By 2020, the District will have a water supply deficit of 0.25 mgd during the maximum day demand (MDD) period if current operational capacity does not change.</p> <p>High manganese content at the Oakdale well exceeds the secondary maximum contaminant level established under the Safe Drinking Water Act. This may require construction of a treatment facility in order to increase well yields.</p>
The schools have undergone \$15 million in renovations and expansions within the last few	School enrollments are rising steadily, and have increased by 213 students (22%) since 1994.

<b>Assets</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>
<p>years. Schools are perceived as providing a high quality education for residents.</p> <p>The school system provides a complete K-12 curriculum and is not part of a regional district. Schools are located at one complex to provide an integrated school campus for all children.</p>	<p>Schools are at capacity, and costs continue to rise due to requirements such as special education.</p> <p>As the sizable elderly population in Town moves out of the older housing stock, families with school-age children may purchase these homes. This could bring about an upsurge in enrollments and lead to new school construction.</p>
<p>According to the Town-wide survey, residents are satisfied with ambulance, fire, police, electric, library, water, and trash collection services.</p>	<p>The Mixter Building (currently being used as the Town Hall) needs costly upgrades to adequately meet Town government needs.</p>
<p>The Beaman Memorial Library was recently expanded and renovated and should meet Town needs well into the future.</p>	<p>The Light Department must build a new building to meet space requirements. A bill signed into law in 2002 allows the Department to purchase land at the Jail at fair market value for the facility.</p>
<p>The West Boylston Municipal Light Department gives the Town control over its own destiny in providing electricity. Decisions regarding capital expenses and rate increases can be decided locally.</p>	<p>Several attempts to regionalize services with nearby towns to reduce costs have proven unsuccessful.</p>
<p>Mt. Vernon Cemetery provides a beautiful final resting place for West Boylston residents.</p>	<p>The Shepard Public Safety Building housing the police and fire departments is in need of substantial repairs to meet building code and space needs.</p>
<b>Town Character and Form</b>	
<p>West Boylston maintains the feel of a small, rural-town with considerable open space and scenic views of the Reservoir. Extensive DCR holdings will insure much of the Town remains undeveloped.</p>	<p>When the Town Center was flooded for the Reservoir, the Town was left without a true municipal center for civic affairs.</p>
<p>Route 12 provides commercial services that, for the most part, meet the needs of the Town.</p>	<p>The Route 12 commercial strip detracts from the small-town feel prevalent elsewhere in the Town.</p>
<p>The Town Common is well landscaped and is surrounded by historic buildings, well-maintained homes and 2 churches. A skating rink is created in the winter and band concerts are held in the gazebo there in the summer.</p>	<p>Including land owned by the Town, State, DCR, the Reservoir, I-190, railroads, churches, and service organizations, a total of 4,351 ac. (49.2% of the Town) is classified as tax-exempt property. This places a heavy burden on taxable property owners to pay for needed services.</p>
<p>The Bigelow Tavern Historic District and the Oakdale Village Historic District are valuable historic resources that preserve treasured remnants of the Town's past.</p>	

Assets	Liabilities
<b>Housing</b>	
There are well-established older neighborhoods that offer good options for raising families.	New homes are well out of the price range of typical West Boylston families.
A moderate pace of subdivision development provides housing choices at the upper end of the market.	The Town has a relatively small amount (18.6%) of rental housing -- 24 of the 40 Towns in the CMRPC region have a higher percentage. This contributes to the Town's lack of affordable housing.
Briarwood Continuing Care Retirement Community provides a continuum of housing options for local elderly residents to allow them to stay close to family and friends. Hillside Village condominiums will soon add 118 new townhouse units for those 55 and over, which should satisfy most of the need for elderly market-rate housing.	West Boylston falls short of its regional affordable housing goal-- only 2.85% of the housing in Town is considered affordable under M.G.L. c. 40B. However, the Town's older housing stock provides affordable ownership opportunities for moderate and middle-income households.
<b>Economic Development</b>	
Proximity to Worcester provides a large labor pool for local employers to draw upon. The diverse economy of Central Mass. provides numerous employment opportunities for residents.	The expansion potential for existing built lots along Route 12 is restricted due to their small size and/or Cohen Bill stipulations. Site drainage on many of these lots will have to be improved before expansion can occur.
The Worcester Corporate Center (Century Drive) is a new industrial park that is quickly filling up and adding to local tax revenues. Infrastructure was built largely with state grants.	Along the Route 12 Business district, few vacant lots exist and only 4 of them exceed the Town's minimum lot size. A recent zoning amendment increased the height limit to 50' in the district to try to compensate for the lack of available land.
Commercial space increased by 122,664 square feet the Town in 2001 as a result of the construction of 4 new buildings and 2 large expansions.	According to Assessors' records, there are few developable and potentially developable lots for industrial development remaining. A recent zoning amendment created the Multi-Story Overlay district to increase the height limit to 68' in portions of the industrial district to allow for greater floor area.
As a result of the sewer system installation, greater industrial and office development will be possible since soil conditions will no longer be a limiting factor.	The Hartwell St. industrial district has poor highway access, and trucks travel through residential neighborhoods. The Worcester portion of the road is in poor condition.
<b>Traffic and Transportation</b>	
West Boylston has good highway access with 2 interchanges to I-190. Routes 12, 110, and 140 provide good local connections to adjacent towns.	Route 12 is congested during the morning and afternoon rush hours. Traffic spills over to adjacent side streets impacting residential neighborhoods.

<b>Assets</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>
While many local roads are in poor condition due to age and lack of state funds for repairs, roads will be re-constructed where sewers are being installed.	Pedestrian access to businesses along Route 12 is poor since there are few sidewalks. Most of the rest of the Town is rural in nature with few sidewalks.
The WRTA provides hourly bus service 6 days a week to and from Worcester with reduced bus service on Sundays.	The railroad poses a contamination threat to the Wachusett Reservoir since tracks cross directly over the water and trains may carry hazardous materials.
The Guilford Railroad offers the potential of freight rail to West Boylston companies. Commuter rail service to Boston is available in near-by Worcester.	The Route 12 business corridor presents a poor image of the Town. Excessive curb cuts impede traffic flow. A complete reconstruction is in order, including removing overhead utilities, new drainage, sidewalks, curbs, landscaping, etc.
	While north-south travel is quite good due to I-190 and Route 12, there is poor east-west circulation, partly due to the Wachusett Reservoir.
<b>Jail</b>	
The jail is the largest customer of the Town's Municipal Light Department. Its monthly electric bill averaged \$55,900 between 6/01 and 5/02.	The Town receives no property taxes, PILOT payments, or fees of any kind for hosting the jail. Yet the Town incurs municipal service costs, principally for ambulance and fire fighting services.
The state owns a large amount of land at the jail. In 2002, a bill was passed that gives West Boylston the right to purchase 61 acres for municipal purposes at fair market value. The Light Department may decide to build a new headquarters on this land.	Expansion at the Jail will probably be needed in the future to accommodate over-crowded conditions.
A proposed regional lock-up may benefit the Town with the ability to accommodate prisoners with over night stays.	The facility is the Town's largest employer (approximately 650 employees). However, the Town receives little economic benefit from the jail.
	The vacant former County Hospital on the Boylston town line seems to have been abandoned and is in a state of disrepair. Now in state hands, a demolition and/or reuse plan should be initiated that involves the two communities.

## DCR INFLUENCES

### **History of the Wachusett Reservoir**

The pristine waters of the Nashua River were selected in 1895 as the best place to construct a reservoir in order to supply drinking water to the growing population of the Greater Boston area. In West Boylston this meant the loss of the Town Center, which included all of its mills—about a dozen, 8 of its schools, and several farms. Thirty-eight houses were taken and more than half of the residential population of 3,000 was displaced. In 1905, the Wachusett dam on the Nashua River in Clinton was completed and the valley was flooded. Today the reservoir is eight miles long, 6.5 square miles in area, and has 37 miles of shoreline. It covers the central region of West Boylston, and parts of Boylston, Sterling, and Clinton.

The Wachusett Reservoir/Quabbin Reservoir water system is New England's largest drinking water source. It supplies water for 2.5 million people in 61 cities and towns. The Quabbin Reservoir, created 60 years ago and the system's largest water body, receives water from its own 187 square mile watershed. From October through June, an additional inflow occurs from the Upper Ware River, as long as that river's level is adequate. The Stillwater and Quinapoxet Rivers, which enter the Wachusett Reservoir at the Thomas Basin in West Boylston, are its two main tributaries. Water is also piped in from the Quabbin Reservoir into the Quinapoxet River before it reaches the Thomas Basin. The water taken from the Wachusett Reservoir is then delivered to the Metropolitan Boston area through a series of tunnels and pipes.

A very large proportion of the Quabbin Reservoir's watershed was acquired for water supply protection at the time of its creation. As a result, the reservoir's water is of a very high quality -- it meets clean drinking water standards without filtration. In contrast, a very small percentage of the Wachusett Reservoir's watershed was preserved, which has led to a multi-faceted approach to prevent deterioration of its water quality.

### **Roles of the DCR and MWRA**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation assumed the Metropolitan District Commission's Division of Watershed Management (DWM) and has the responsibility for managing and protecting the entire watershed. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) was created in 1984 and has the responsibility of managing the distribution system to supply clean water to member communities.

In 1990 the DWM and the MWRA jointly established a protection plan for the Wachusett Reservoir watershed in order to insure protection of the water supply and to remain in compliance with the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). This plan – the Watershed Protection Plan for the DCR/MWRA Water Supply Sources -- includes a list of short and long-term actions to be undertaken by these two agencies.

- A. Preserve sensitive land by acquiring parcels and implementing watershed protection legislation.
- B. Promote wise land use and development.
- C. Control recreational use and public access
- D. Solve septic system pollution problems
- E. Clean up contaminated sites
- F. Ensure proper handling of hazardous materials and waste
- G. Manage forests and wildlife
- H. Inspect and monitor watershed conditions

Source: Watershed Protection Plan Update for Metropolitan Boston Water System, Wachusett Reservoir

The Watershed Protection Act (Cohen Bill) was passed in 1992 and gave the DWM the legal power to implement the goals spelled out in their 1991 plan. The major tenets of this law are summarized below:

1. Establish protective buffer zones
  - Primary Protection Zone -- Building or alteration of land in any way within 400 feet of a reservoir and 200 feet of perennial streams and surface waters is prohibited.
  - Secondary Protection Zone -- Limited development is permitted to occur in secondary protection zones, subject to close scrutiny of the DCR. These zones include:

- ✓ Land between 200 and 400 feet of perennial streams and surface waters that are tributary to the reservoir, and the flood plains of such tributaries;
- ✓ Bordering vegetated wetlands that border on tributaries, surface waters or the reservoir; and
- ✓ Land over aquifers with a potential well yield of 100 gallons per minute (gpm) or more.

Within secondary protection zones, the following activities are regulated:

- ✓ Rendering impervious less than 10% of a lot or 2,500 square feet is permitted. (The part of the lot falling within a primary zone can be used to determine the 10% threshold.)
  - ✓ Storage, disposal, or use of toxic or hazardous materials, storage of liquid petroleum products (except that incidental to normal residential use) junk and salvage yards, outdoor storage of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides, and similar activities are prohibited.
  - ✓ Altering bordering vegetated wetlands is prohibited.
  - ✓ Residential dwellings are permitted if the density does not exceed two bedrooms per acre or generate more than 220 gallons per acre per day of sewage.
2. Protect groundwater supplies
    - Residential development on land overlying aquifers that have potential well yields of between 100 – 300 gpm is permitted provided the density does not exceed 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> bedrooms per acre if the lot is served by an on-site septic system.
    - Residential development on land overlying aquifers that have potential well yields of greater than 300 gpm is permitted provided the density does not exceed one bedroom per acre if the lot is served by an on-site septic system.
  3. Acquire lands critical for protecting the water supply, with funding of \$8 million per year, and \$135 million in total.
  4. Provide technical assistance to watershed communities for planning studies, land use controls, and protection of public health.

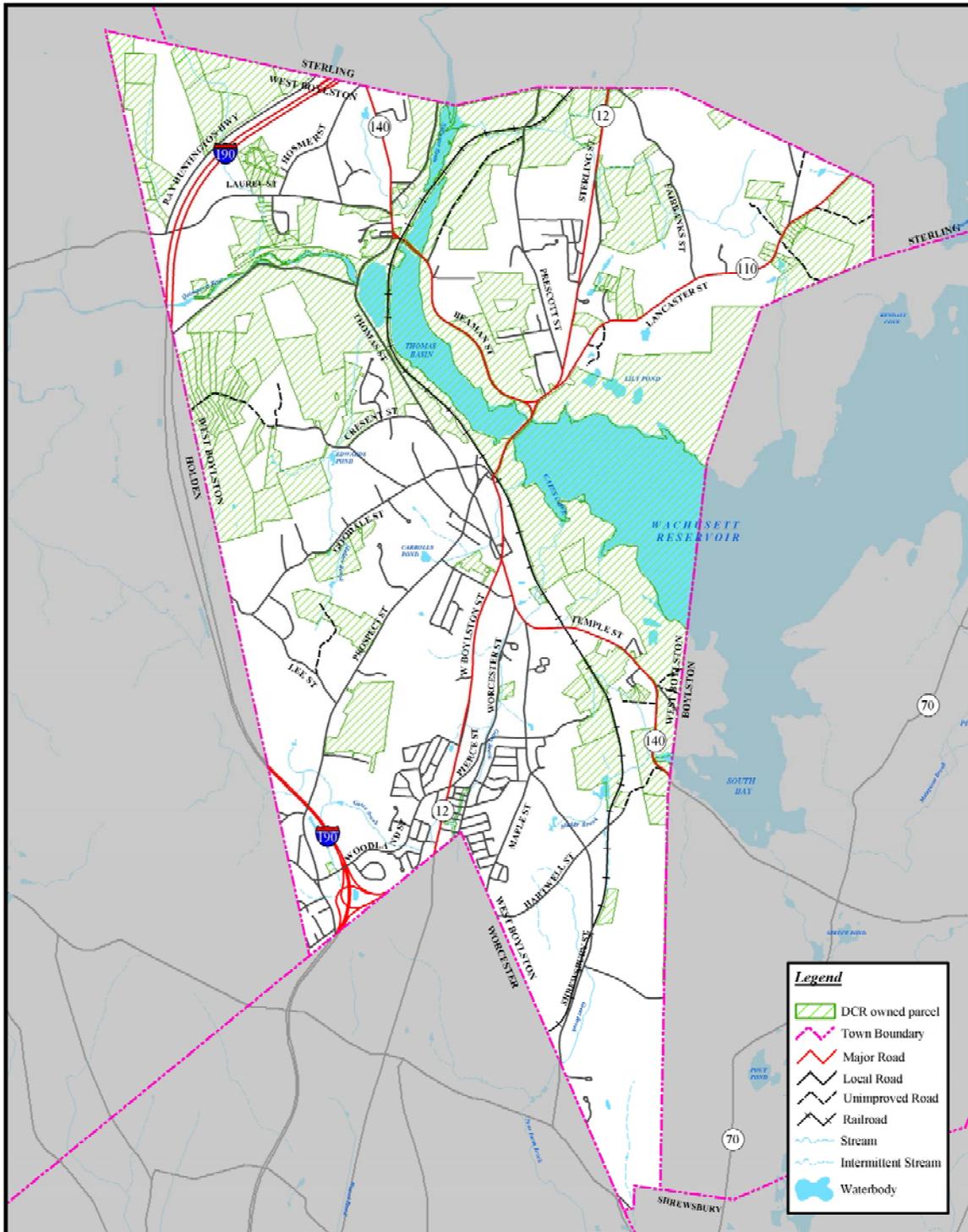
Source: Watershed Protection Plan Update for Metropolitan Boston Water System, Wachusett Reservoir

Throughout the 1990's the DCR actively pursued its agenda in West Boylston, acquiring land, controlling public access to that land, managing development within buffer zones, and implementing construction of a sewer system. These are discussed below.

### **Land Acquisitions**

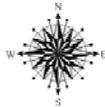
DCR-owned land in the Wachusett Watershed increased from 7.9% in 1985 to 22.5% in 1998. Including the Wachusett Reservoir, the DCR owns about 3,331 acres in West Boylston or 38% of the Town's land. The Reservoir and the DCR-owned land provide the Town with environmental benefits, including:

- The Reservoir provides fishing, and scenic views along its 37-mile shore.
- The land is protected as open space enabling the Town to retain its rural character into the foreseeable future.
- Because the DCR acreage is open space, Town service costs are minimal.
- Much of the land is accessible to the public for passive recreation.
- These protected lands provide a pristine habitat to support a diverse wildlife population.



Source Data:  
 Base data provided by MassGIS and enhanced by CMRPC.  
 DCR Owned Lands determined using Assessor database  
 provided by town.

**West Boylston Master Plan**  
**Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**  
**Managed Lands**  
**Map 1**



The 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.

West Boylston receives payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT payments) from the MWRA for the DCR-owned land. The Department of Revenue (DOR) determines the land value every five years at full and fair cash value. DOR valued the DCR-owned land at \$29,566,800 in 2000. The PILOT payment is calculated by multiplying the land value by a community's commercial tax rate, where the community has adopted a tiered tax structure. (West Boylston has a single tax rate.) At the latest revaluation, West Boylston's annual payment more than doubled, from \$258,874 in 2000 to \$569,752 in 2001. This amount is now locked in for 5 years. Payments are secure because the money is funneled through the MWRA, a separate authority that is not dependent upon the State budget. According to the Director of the Division of Watershed Management, West Boylston receives the largest PILOT payment under this program; the Town receives 12% of the PILOT funds while containing 3% of the total land area. In comparison, West Boylston receives an average of \$214 per acre, while the average is \$123 per acre in the Wachusett Reservoir watershed and \$48 per acre in the entire DCR-MWRA system.

The Board of Assessors believes that the assessments do not represent actual land values and DCR's annual payment to West Boylston should actually be closer to \$1 million. With an increasing need for additional revenue to maintain services, local officials are looking to increase its payments from the Town's largest landowner. The Assessors may present a case for higher values in 2006, the next opportunity the Town will have to contest the valuations. There is also a perception by some townspeople that the large area of land owned and protected by the DCR has curtailed the Town's ability to grow – both commercially and residentially. The DCR counters these perceptions by pointing to the former lack of a sewer system as a much greater limiting factor to growth than the land it has purchased for water protection. In addition, the DCR feels that the Town actually benefits financially by its land holdings because few municipal services are required to maintain open space. According to the Citizen Survey conducted in 1999, the majority of citizens highly value the presence of the reservoir, the open space, and the recreational facilities. They feel that the DCR should acquire more land to protect the reservoir and preserve open space, but they also want the DCR to allow more recreational use of its land.

### **Public Access**

To protect water quality, the DCR carefully regulates public access to its land. The following are the types of activities allowed and the associated areas:

- Walking, hiking, and cross-country skiing.
- Seasonal fishing along the shore, except in the Intake Protection Zone.
- Year-round fishing, wading, and canoeing in the tributary headwaters zone only.
- Bicycling throughout the tributary headwaters zone by DCR permit
- Dog walking with leash on off-watershed lands only.
- Hunting in the tributary headwaters zone only – DCR permit required.
- Organized tours – DCR permit required.
- Field sports – DCR permit required.

Source: Wachusett Reservoir Public Access Rules

All in all, given the importance of the Reservoir, West Boylston residents can engage in passive recreational activities and enjoy some benefit from DCR control of much of the Town. DCR's Public Access Plan for the Wachusett Reservoir watershed was prepared in 1996 with an update scheduled to begin in 2001. Public access to the reservoir and DCR lands may diminish in light of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the resulting tighter security of public drinking water supplies. The Open Space and Recreation Plan urges greater Town involvement in the update process to advocate for greater recreational use of DCR land.

### **Managing/Regulating Development**

Property owners whose land may fall within an area regulated by the Cohen Bill have several avenues available prior to developing the land or enlarging structures. Owners should contact the DWM to determine the applicability of the regulations and possibly lessen their effect. These include:

An Advisory Ruling provides an informal indication of whether the Watershed Protection Act applies to the property and if the proposed use or structure is permitted.

A Determination of Applicability provides a formal determination of whether the Act applies to the property, and if the activity is prohibited, whether an exemption may apply.

When an activity is subject to DCR jurisdiction, an Application for a Variance may allow the activity to proceed if the property owner can prove that “because of the physical context, the proposed use or structure or activity will not impair water quality”. If a variance is granted, the DWM may impose conditions, usually involving onsite stormwater controls.

An Application for Exemption of a Tributary allows a property owner to obtain a decision that “a Tributary or portion can be exempted with no significant risk to water quality”. Again, if an exemption is granted, the DWM may impose conditions.

Source: DCR DWM Guidance Document April 1994

Particularly in already densely developed areas subject to the Act, the DWM may grant a variance to exceed the impervious surface thresholds; however, the DWM may require mitigation measures to insure on-site recharge and the use of Best Management Practices to improve the quality of water leaving the site.

Lots and uses existing prior to July 1992 are considered “grandfathered” and the owners are allowed to execute a “non-substantial improvement/expansion”. Property owners would be allowed to do interior work, add a floor, or build a porch/deck of some kind. They would not be allowed to expand the building’s footprint unless they obtain a variance. If a residential building or use were proposed for a commercial use, the exemption would not apply.

In general, the extent of the Act is quite comprehensive in scope and must be dealt with in a forthright manner by property owners. The DWM encourages owners to seek advisory rulings before preparing detailed plans of development in order to identify the effect of the Act on the property. The DWM may require a change in the plan, such as moving buildings or parking areas away from protection zones, or modifying drainage plans to minimize impacts on surface or ground water quality. Such efforts may increase the time and expense associated with development, but the DWM review is unlikely to prohibit such activity altogether.

### **Sewer Construction**

In 1994 the DCR recommended that large areas of Holden and West Boylston be sewered. Sanitary surveys had previously documented that numerous septic system failures were leading to the contamination of the reservoir’s tributaries. In addition, the existence of unsuitable soil was limiting residential and industrial development in many parts of town. At a special town meeting in October of 1995 West Boylston voted to construct a sewer system.

The construction of West Boylston’s sewer system is scheduled for completion by the end of 2004. As of August 2002 the construction was 50% complete. At the end of the project, 60% of all properties in town and 100% of the commercial and industrial properties will be sewered. According to the Superintendent of Sewers and Drains, there will be 2,149 residential connections, 120 commercial, and 37 industrial, for a total of 2,306 connections. While originally estimated to cost \$54 million for both Holden and West Boylston, the current project estimate is about \$74 million. West Boylston’s share of the project is about \$8 million, but this cost could grow before the project is completed. There have been disagreements between the Town and DCR over the Town’s share of the project and local officials are resisting any further increases.

Some water lines are being replaced while the sewer system is under construction; however, the replacement program is not fully funded and not all deficient lines are being replaced. The West Boylston Water District approved a \$1.0 million bond to address critical needs in the Franklin Street and Colonial Drive areas. The Town has also approved over \$3.0 million for drainage and roadway improvements in order to take advantage of cost savings possible with the sewer construction work.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan states that an estimated 481,925 gallons per day of wastewater will flow into the new sewer system from West Boylston once it is completed. This wastewater will be diverted out of the Wachusett Watershed, through Worcester to the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District’s treatment plant, and then discharged into the Blackstone River. While the closing of the

individual septic systems will certainly improve the quality of groundwater and water in the reservoir, the effect of diminished groundwater recharge to town wells, wetlands, and streams has not been studied.

### **Other DCR Activities**

The DCR provides technical assistance to member communities to manage growth. West Boylston applied for and was awarded \$10,000 from the DCR in the summer of 2002 to help fund the Master Plan. The Town's GIS parcel maps were originally digitized by the DCR and have been maintained by the Board of Assessors and a private consultant. The DCR has provided GIS assistance to the Town on other matters in the past. And the DCR funded a comprehensive revision to the Planning Board's Subdivision Regulations.

Over the last few years the DCR has partnered with Wachusett Greenways to construct the Rail Trail, including a 1.5-mile stretch that extends through West Boylston along the Quinapoxet River between Thomas Street and the Holden/West Boylston line. It is located on the abandoned line of the Mass Central Railroad and opened in October of 1997. This stone dust packed trail is intended for walking, bicycling, wheel chair users, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. The West Boylston section appears to be very popular, drawing visitors from the surrounding area. The trail has been recently extended to River Street in Holden.

The only structure to remain in its original location after the creation of the Wachusett Reservoir is the Old Stone Church built by the Baptists and completed shortly before the town center was razed in 1895. In 1973 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but by that time it had fallen into a serious state of disrepair. With funds from both the DCR and the West Boylston Historical Society it was rebuilt in 1983. It can be seen today standing on the shore of the Wachusett Reservoir, a historical and scenic landmark that is much photographed.

### **Ongoing/Future Activities**

According to the "Land Management Plan: 2001 – 2010", the Division of Watershed Management (DWM) was created "...to assure the availability of pure water for future generations". Overall, the implementation of the goals of the Watershed Protection Plan combined with the Watershed Protection Act stipulations seems to have resulted in a noticeable upgrade to the Wachusett Reservoir's water quality between 1991 and 2000.

Reservoirs are continually tested for coliform bacteria because while disinfectants can eradicate it, the detection of high levels (over 20 colonies per 100 milliliters of water) is usually an indication of the presence of other dangerous pollutants. The EPA has established a threshold of 10% as the maximum number of water samples that can contain more than 20 colonies per milliliters. If this threshold is exceeded, filtration is deemed necessary. The June 1992 Watershed Protection Plan documented the results of water sampling performed at the Wachusett Reservoir from January 1991 through April 1992 using eleven cumulative 6-month averages. All 6-month averages exceeded the 10% threshold, ranging from 21% to 60%. The conclusion in the 1992 Plan was that the Wachusett Reservoir would require a filtration system be constructed within the next 8 to 10 years. However, as reported in the DCR's 2000 Water Quality Report, of samples taken during 2000, less than 1% exceeded the 20 colonies per 100-milliliter threshold. At this time the urgency for a filtration system no longer seems to exist. The DWM plans to continually assess water quality and develop management strategies so that the water quality continues to improve.

Source: Watershed Protection Plan -- Executive Summary June 1992

At the time the Land Management Plan was written (August 1, 2001) there was \$48 million remaining in the DCR authorization for land acquisition in the Quabbin Reservoir, Upper Ware River, and Wachusett Reservoir watersheds. The DCR plans to continue acquiring land until these funds are spent, which is projected for 2007. Land in the Wachusett watershed remains a high priority for acquisition due to its greater development density, lowest percentage of protected land, and its closer proximity to consumers.

The general belief seems to be that the relationship between the Town and the DCR has deteriorated over the last couple of years due to the difficulties of the sewer project, differences of opinion regarding land valuations for PILOT payments, and continuing land acquisitions of the DCR. However, the spirit of

cooperation and camaraderie that the DCR experienced with the community during the Rail Trail project offers hope for a more amicable working relationship with West Boylston in the future.

## **REGIONAL INFLUENCES**

### **Worcester County Jail and Surrounding Land**

In July 2002, a 100-bed structure was completed that is intended to ease overcrowding in the Worcester County Jail. However, funding for staff and equipment for this facility has been inadequate. The amount allotted in the state budget is \$822,000 less than the total amount the Sheriff feels is needed to pay officers' and social workers' salaries, as well as to purchase furniture. Since the facility is still over-crowded even with the new addition, it can be expected that more jail space will be needed in the future to ease overcrowding.

There have been discussions about establishing a regional lock-up facility at the jail for surrounding towns that do not have cells to house prisoners overnight. Such a facility would meet a regional need at a lower cost than if individual communities built their own lock-up facilities.

The state makes no payments to West Boylston in lieu of property taxes. The Town provides ambulance and fire protection services to the jail but does not provide snow plowing or trash removal. The jail is the largest customer of the Municipal Light Plant; between June 2001 and May 2002 the jail's average electric bill was \$55,900.

The jail operates a work release program where inmates near release provide free labor to area towns for odd jobs. West Boylston takes advantage of this service every 2 or 3 years for painting projects in municipal buildings.

In May 2002, the Legislature approved an act to allow the Town to purchase 61 acres of state-owned land adjacent to the jail at fair market value. The Town's Municipal Light Department intends to relocate to this site and operate on approximately 40 acres.

### **Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District**

The Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District (UBWPAD) was established to accommodate sewage treatment needs for 11 communities in Central Massachusetts, including Worcester, Auburn, and towns in the Wachusett Reservoir watershed. Since sewage treatment plants are not permitted in Class A (public drinking water) watersheds, West Boylston and other Wachusett communities were included within the district boundaries. The sewage treatment plant was constructed with excess capacity to meet the future needs of the entire district. In 2002, the plant treated an average daily flow of about 37 mgd and was designed for an average daily flow of 56 mgd. While West Boylston did not have sewerage at the time the district was established, the idea that such a facility might be needed in the future has served the Town well. With the construction of the sewer system in West Boylston, there has been sufficient capacity at the treatment plant to accept sewage flows from the Town. Worcester has permitted the flow from West Boylston to be carried through the City to the plant in Millbury, although there have been concerns with the capacity of sewer pipes in Worcester to carry the additional sewage without surcharging. Worcester is taking steps to upgrade its sewer mains where necessary, and Worcester and West Boylston have come to terms with the cost of transporting sewage through the City sewer system.

In 1999 the EPA and DEP revised the plant's discharge permit and mandated much stricter pollutant limits in an effort to advance the clean-up of the Blackstone River. The situation is somewhat unusual in that the UBWPAD plant is at the upper reaches of the River where flows are relatively low compared to the volume treated at the plant. During summer months, the plant's discharge is the principal contributor to the River's flow. Since the treated outfall makes up a significant portion of the River, the stricter discharge limits set by state and federal regulators will require expensive equipment upgrades to meet the new standards. The District (of which West Boylston is now a voting member) appealed this permit to the EPA and DEP that same year. A revised permit was issued in September 2001 that sets more stringent effluent limits for nitrogen and phosphorus than the plant was originally designed to treat. The plant must comply with the permit limits by August of 2009. Upon completion, the plant will meet advanced treatment standards.

The project will be undertaken in 4 phases and should be completed in 2014. The total construction cost for the upgrades is projected to be \$120 million. This work will be funded by low interest loans (2%) through

the Massachusetts Water Pollution Abatement Trust over a 20-year period. Operating costs of the upgraded facility are expected to be similar to the current costs; however, payback of the notes will increase the operating budget from \$9.3 million in 2002 to \$20 million in 2014. As a result, the Director of the plant expects that the costs to the individual member towns will increase three-fold between 2002 and 2014. Individual users will be expected to pay for the upgrades through higher rates.

### **Worcester Regional Transportation Authority (WRTA)**

West Boylston is a member of the WRTA and receives regular bus service (Route 30N) to Worcester primarily along Route 12 due to the concentration of residents and businesses in close proximity to the roadway. Chapter 6, Transportation, contains a discussion of the bus routes and ridership provided by the WRTA.

### **Regional Highway System**

#### **Roadway Improvement Projects**

Reconstruction with road widening on Maple Street is on the Transportation Improvement Program for 2004. MassHighway advertised for bids in the fall of 2003 and work is expected to commence in the spring of 2004.

Local officials recognize that Route 12 is in need of reconstruction. A meeting was held with MassHighway officials in 2000 to discuss issues of roadway improvements, sidewalks, burying underground utilities, landscaping, and other issues affecting the appearance and function of the Corridor. MassHighway expressed a willingness to work with the Town in its efforts to make Route 12 a pleasing gateway into the community. It was left to the Town to begin the design process and develop support for the project. If the Town does decide to move ahead with reconstructing Route 12, MassHighway would assume the lion's share of the cost for road improvements, with the Town paying for burying utility lines and other aesthetic enhancements.

#### **Major Highway Initiatives**

According to CMRPC's 2000 Regional Transportation Plan, no significant regional highway projects are planned that will affect West Boylston in the near future. Existing highways and their available capacity appear adequate to accommodate current traffic volumes and that likely to be generated from future growth in West Boylston and adjacent communities.

### **Other Regional Influences**

#### **Wachusett Greenways and North Subregion Trail**

The Wachusett Greenways is an association of volunteers from West Boylston and five surrounding towns that work toward the development of non-motorized recreational trails in the region. Wachusett Greenways has promoted the Mass Central Rail Trail, 1.5 miles of which extends through West Boylston along the Quinapoxet River between Thomas Street and the Holden/West Boylston line. It is located on the abandoned line of the Mass Central Railroad and opened in October of 1997. This stone dust packed trail is intended for walking, bicycling, wheel chair users, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. A new segment of the trail recently opened, extending the route across the Quinapoxet River to Route 31 in Holden. In 2003, a total of approximately 10 miles of trails have been constructed in Sterling, West Boylston, and Holden, and the plan is to include these trails in one linked 30-mile stretch from Sterling to Oakham. Recent work included placement of two bridges to span the Quag in Sterling that will soon connect the trail in West Boylston with Sterling Center. In addition, state funds in 2003 paid for a reconstruction of the Beaman Street (Route 140) bridge spanning the Thomas Basin with improved pedestrian access.

The North Subregion of CMRPC is the third of five sub-regions CMRPC has examined for the possibility of accommodating additional recreational trails. A local task force is investigating potential long distance trails to connect communities in a regional network. A short stretch at the northern tip of West Boylston has been identified as a viable location to construct a new trail. It would be about ¼ mile in distance along the Stillwater River and would connect to the existing rail trail in West Boylston. A team at CMRPC is in the process of doing the necessary field work and land title research for prospective trails throughout this sub-region.

## **Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA)**

Nashua River Watershed Association was established in 1970 with a mission of cleaning up the Nashua River and improving recreational activities on the River and major tributaries. The agency monitors land use activities in the watershed, promotes education and awareness of the River's resources, monitors potential threats to water quality, and serves as an advocate for change. Over the past three decades, the NRWA has helped the River recover from past pollution and neglect. NRWA activities have primarily focused on communities downstream of the Wachusett Reservoir since the Division of Watershed Management has thoroughly studied environmental conditions and implemented water quality safeguards in the Wachusett watershed. The following is a list of watershed objectives and activities within West Boylston that the NRWA has placed on its 5-year action plan.

- Assist communities to implement EPA's Phase II Stormwater Management Program.
- Continue protection of local water supply lands and support DCR-MWRA water supply protections.
- Support greenways to link communities via inter-municipal trails and open spaces (the Mass Central Rail Trail in particular).
- Improve gating of the Reservoir to control detrimental activities.
- Support the fish ladder installation at the Oakdale dam and provide educational materials onsite. (See below.)
- Promote water quality improvements at Gates and Scarlett Brooks.
- Protect and enhance flows of the Quinapoxet River.

## CHAPTER 3 LAND USE AND ZONING

### LAND USE

#### **Overview of Land Use Pattern**

West Boylston is predominantly a residential community that experienced rapid housing growth in the period following World War II. At first concentrated in areas adjacent to Worcester and along the Route 12 Corridor, more recent growth has occurred in outlying areas via frontage lots on existing roads and a few small subdivisions. Residential development has occurred at a fairly steady rate, with an average of 18 new housing unit building permits issued per year from 1988 through 2002. According to the 2002 *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, there have been only two subdivisions approved since 1990: Pinewood (4 lots) and Timberwood (6 lots). Several larger developments have occurred in recent years, including: Lancaster Commons, a 17-unit single-family development between Sterling and Lancaster Streets approved as a comprehensive permit project; Hillside Village, a 118-unit continuing care retirement community off Hartwell Street; and an expansion of 34 units at Briarwood, another continuing care retirement community. Lancaster Commons was authorized as a comprehensive permit under M.G.L. c. 40B, which provides for waivers from local zoning standards.

Due to the vital importance of the Wachusett Reservoir, a significant portion of the Town has been permanently preserved as open space for water quality protection. The DCR is the largest single landowner in West Boylston, owning 38% of the Town's area, including the Wachusett Reservoir and Thomas Basin. The 1990's witnessed major land acquisitions by the DCR in West Boylston for water supply protection. Although Worcester County dissolved in 1998, its assets were transferred to the Commonwealth, including 280 acres containing the Worcester County Jail and the former Worcester County Hospital.

Most of the Town's businesses are clustered along Route 12, from the Worcester border, north to the Wachusett Reservoir. There are also three small business districts with neighborhood type establishments, in Oakdale, Pinecroft, and Shrewsbury Street. The commercial pattern along Route 12 was firmly established in the 1950's and 60's to coincide with rapid residential growth. A handful of newer commercial projects have occurred along Route 12 since the late 1980s including:

- The Causeway Mall (1987)
- West Boylston Square (1989)
- Wachusett Plaza (1990)
- Wal-Mart renovation of the Fair Plaza (1995)
- Webster First Federal Credit Union (2003)

West Boylston has experienced a steady pace of industrial development in recent years. Industrial activity is centered in the southeast part of Town in the Hartwell Street/Shrewsbury Street area, and more recently in the Worcester Corporate Center adjacent to Worcester. The Hartwell Street industrial area has filled in significantly. Contract Marketing in 1997 (now EPT), and Mercantile/Image Press in 1999 are recent additions. Checkerboard, Ltd. renovated the former Wright Line building on Route 12 and purchased new equipment to produce its line of high-end stationery. The Worcester Corporate Center is an 87-acre, first-class light industrial park that is being developed in concert with Worcester and with the assistance of state and federal infrastructure grants. Since roads and utilities were constructed in 2001, three projects have been completed: Mass Materials Research and Federal Express occupy a total of 108,500 square feet, and the American Red Cross built a 25,000 sq. ft. office and training center that opened in 2004.

#### **Land Use Distribution Changes 1985 - 1999**

Aerial photography for the entire state of Massachusetts was performed (at 1:25,000) in 1971, 1985, and 1999. Photointerpretation and digitizing were completed by the UMASS-Amherst Department of Forestry Resource Mapping Project (RMP). RMP staff aggregated land uses into 21 categories and digitized the data into individual community coverages using Arc/INFO software. RMP staff did a visual comparison of the 1971 and 1985 photos, and the 1985 and 1999 photos, to identify changes in the land use distribution. Map 2 displays the land use pattern based upon this data.

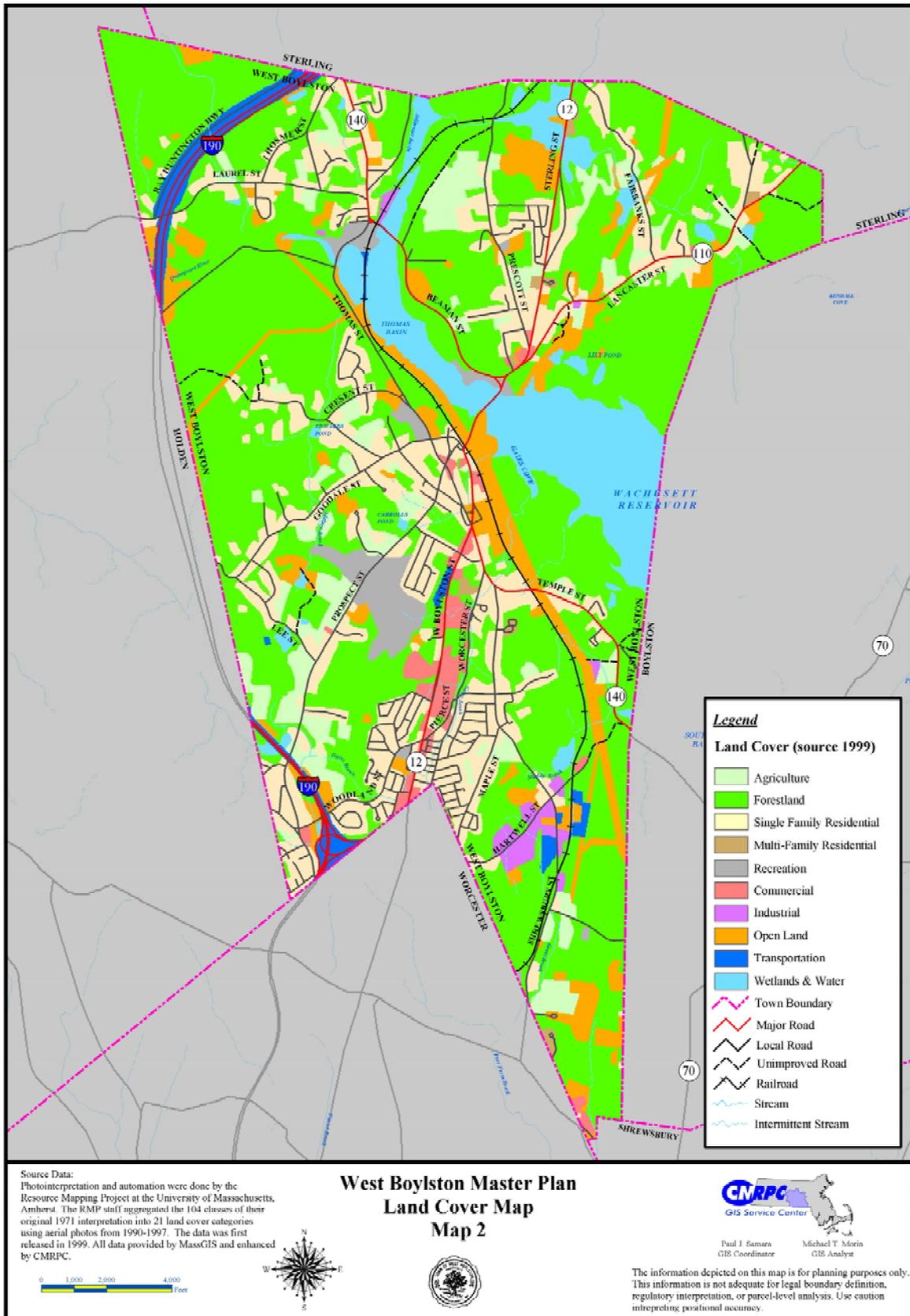


Table 3-1 summarizes the actual land use distribution in acres in West Boylston for the years 1985 and 1999. It also quantifies the changes in land use that occurred from 1985 to 1999, in acres and as a percentage of the total.

**Table 3-1  
West Boylston Land Use 1985-1999**

Code	Category	1985 Acres	1999 Acres	Change 1985-1999	% Change
1	Crop Land	453.8	342.8	-111.0	-24.4
2	Pasture	263.7	173.2	-90.5	-34.3
3	Forest Land	4,615.2	4,571.8	-43.4	-.9
4	Inland Wetland	41.1	120.8	79.7	193.6
5	Mining	88.1	42.7	-45.4	-51.5
6	Open Land/Abandoned Farmland	443.7	490.2	46.5	10.5
7	Participation Recreation (Golf, tennis, etc.)	179.5	182.7	3.2	1.7
8	Spectator Recreation (Stadiums, fairgrounds, etc.)	18.3	0	-18.3	-100
9	Water Based Recreation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
10	Multi-Family Residential	28.3	34.3	6.0	21.6
11	High Density Residential (Smaller than ¼ ac. lots)	371.2	348.3	-22.9	-6.2
12	Med. Density Residential (¼ acre – ½ ac. lots)	580.4	646.3	65.9	11.4
13	Low Density Residential (Larger than ½ ac. lots)	507.6	623.2	115.6	22.8
15	Commercial	112.8	151.2	38.4	34.0
16	Industrial	62.0	73.4	11.4	18.4
17	Urban – Open or Public (Cemeteries, commons, etc.)	161.2	169.6	8.4	5.1
18	Transportation	262.8	192.8	-70.0	-26.6
20	Water	640.6	659.6	19.0	3.0
21	Woody Perennial (Orchard, nursery)	6.0	13.5	7.5	125
	<b>Total</b>	8836.4	8836.4		

Source: MassGIS

The land use that gained the largest amount of acreage was low-density residential development (defined as lots larger than ½ acre) with an increase of 115.6 acres. Land used for medium-density residential (lots between ¼ and ½ acre) increased by 66 acres, and high-density residential use (lots less than ¼ acre) actually decreased by 23 acres. The lack of a Town sewer system as well as the fact that much of the soil in town is inadequate for on-site septic systems prevented additional high-density residential development from occurring. In addition, the minimum lot size requirements of the Town's two residential districts is 40,000 square feet, thereby prohibiting new single-family development of a high or medium density. Low-density residential development continues in West Boylston at a steady, slow pace.

The second largest gain in land use between 1985 and 1999 was inland wetland with an increase of 79.7 acres to 121 acres, almost triple the 41 acres detected in 1985. In checking the GIS coverages with an aerial photo backdrop, it appears that some wetlands were simply missed by the interpreter in 1985 and these were picked up with the 1999 interpretation. This may be partly due to the presence of color photography in 1999 while the 1985 process used black and white photographs. The largest areas are on either side of Route 12 before the Sterling town line and can be seen on Map 2.

The land uses that decreased the most during this period were crop and pasture land, with a reduction of 111 and 90.5 acres respectively. Land in the Transportation category, that includes land used for divided highways, freight storage, and railroads, experienced the third largest decrease with 70 less acres in 1999 than in 1985. Much of this occurred in the Hartwell St. industrial district as land was converted from freight related uses to industrial uses.

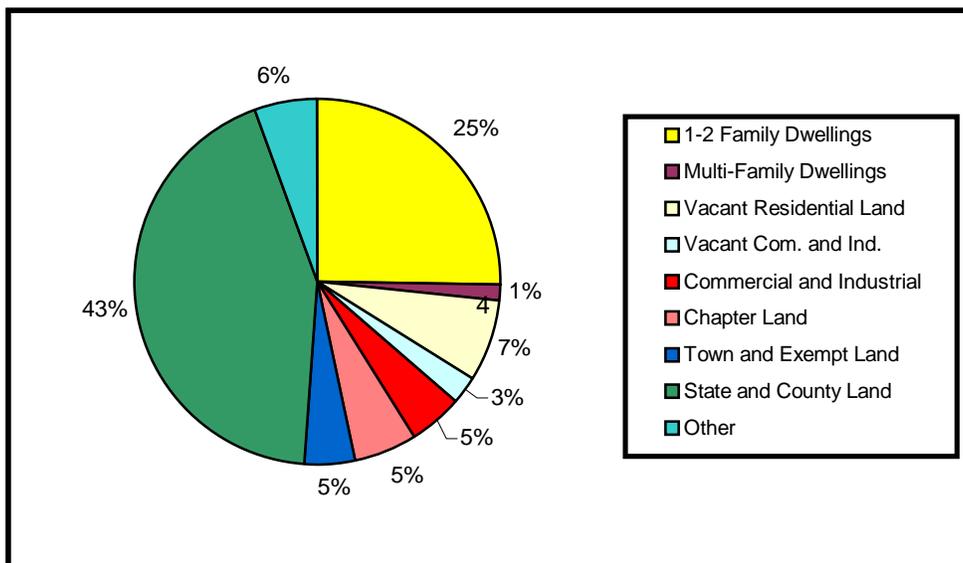
**Current Parcel-Based Land Use**

Figure 3-1 illustrates the breakdown of land use in the Town of West Boylston according to 2002 data residing in the Assessors’ parcel database. Each parcel is assigned a land use code in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue’s property classification codes. This type of land use identification is used to differentiate parcels for taxation purposes. This approach differs from the previous land use classification that uses aerial photography to capture development patterns as land is actually used. Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages for analysis purposes. Map 3 displays developed parcels from the Assessors’ codes, and Map 4 shows undeveloped land from that database.

According to the parcel data shown in Figure 3-1, the largest land use in the Town by far is land used by the state and county, which represents 42% of the total area. This includes 281 acres used by the Worcester County Jail and House of Corrections, and 3,331 acres owned by the DCR for water supply and watershed protection. The second largest land use is single-family housing, which includes detached houses and condominiums, at 25% of the total land area. All land use percentages are shown below:

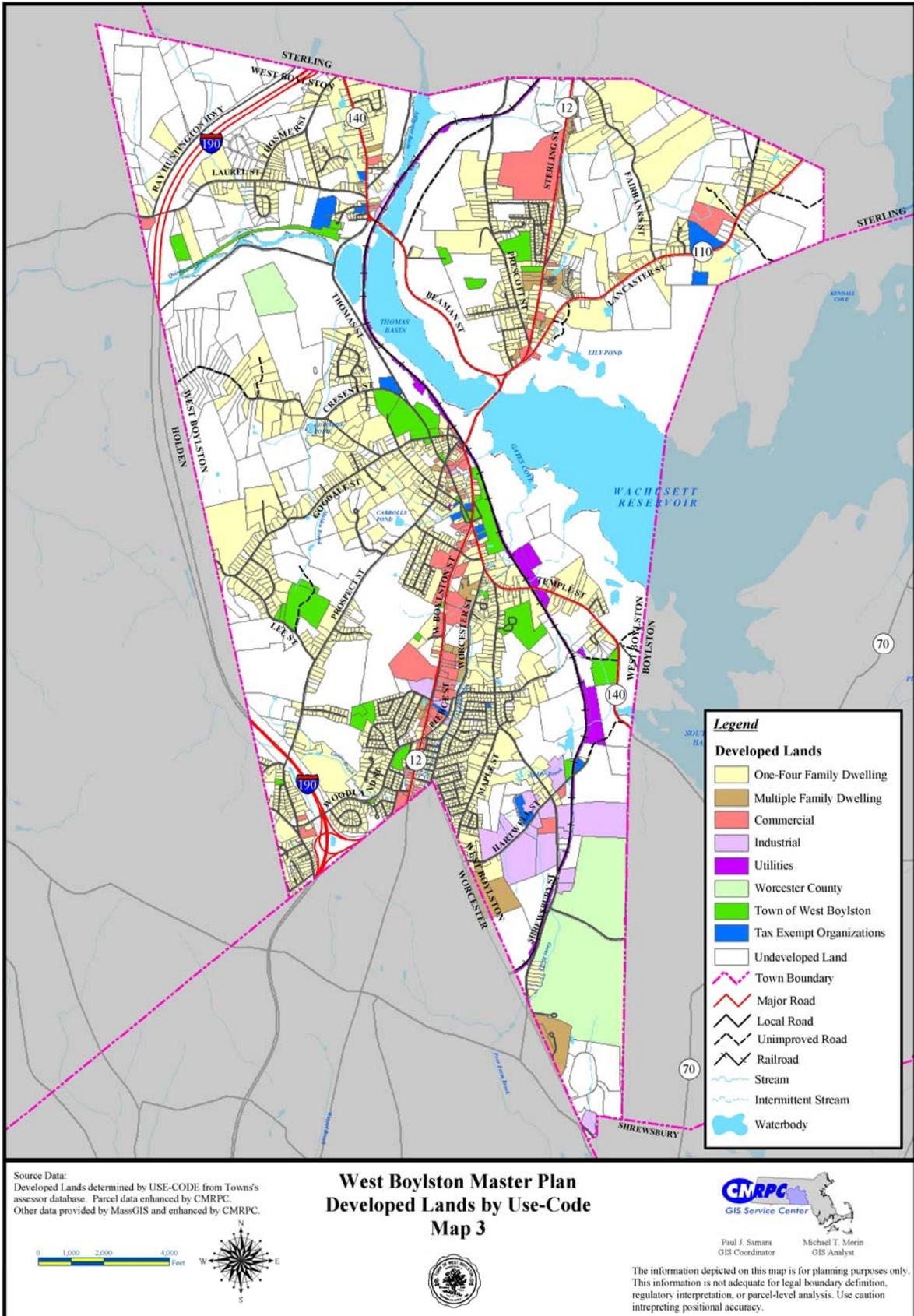
- 42.1% of the Town is State or County owned (including the Wachusett Reservoir).
- 24.6% is devoted to one and two family dwellings, (including condominiums).
- 7.6% is shared among municipal land (2.4%) and agriculture, forestry and outdoor recreation (5.2%)
- Commercial and industrial land combined accounts for 4.7% of the Town’s land area, while vacant commercial and industrial land accounts for 2.5%.

**Figure 3-1  
Parcel Land Use, 2002**



\*Other: includes utilities, roads, tax exempt, and small water bodies.

Source: West Boylston Assessors



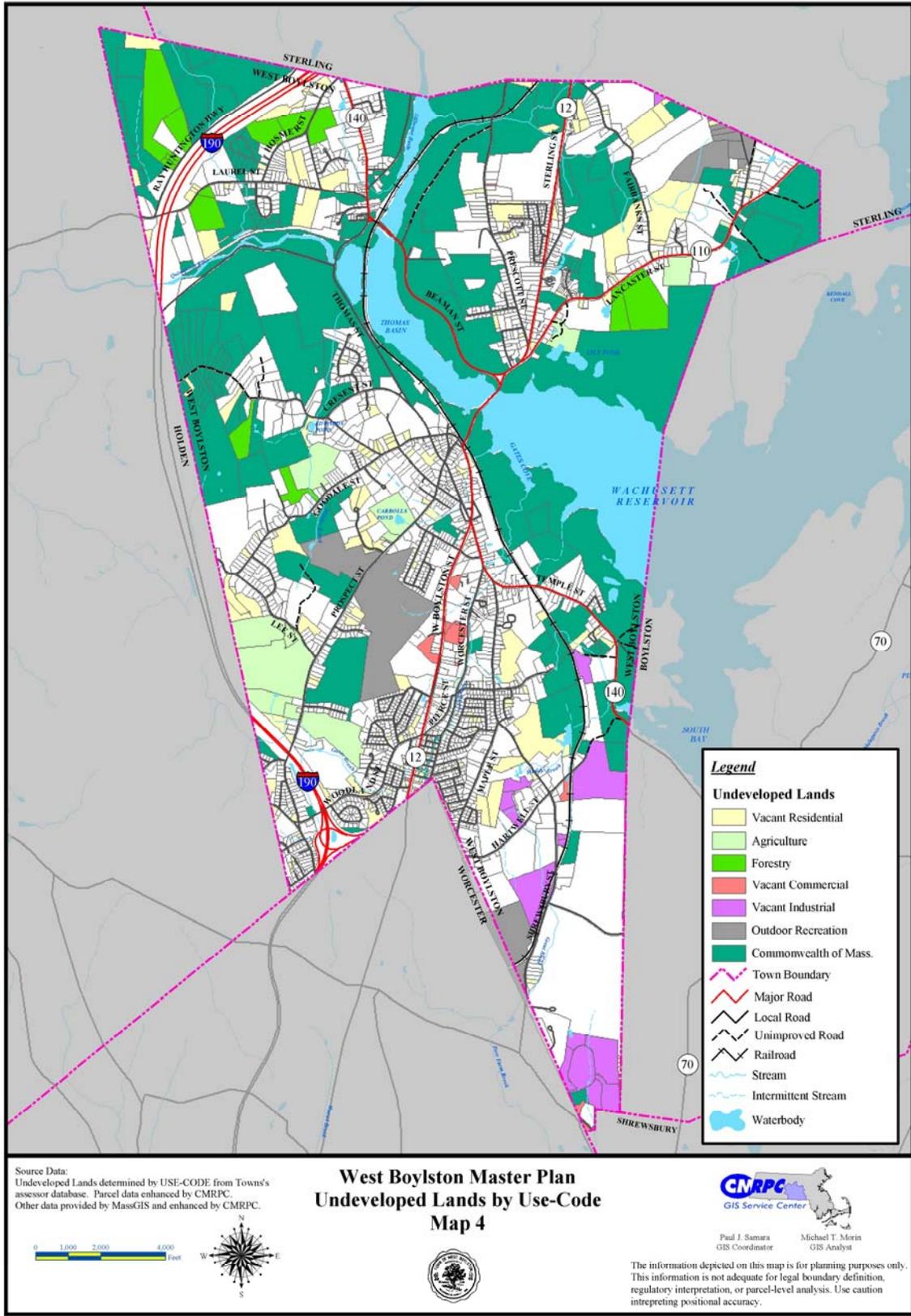


Table 3-3 shows a comparison of the number and type of residential lots in use based on Assessor's records for 1980 and 2002. According to this data, the number of residentially developed lots has increased by 497 during this period, with condominiums showing the greatest gain in number and percentage of lots. The number of parcels with two-family structures has actually decreased by 5, which may reflect conversions to single family use.

**Table 3-2  
1980 – 2002 Comparison of Lots in Residential Use**

Description	1980		2002		Change	
	# of lots	% of total	# of lots	% of total	# of lots	% of total
Single Family Detached	1,662	89.7%	1900	80.9%	238	14.3%
Condominium	89	4.8%	349	14.9%	260	292.1%
2-Family	71	3.8%	66	2.8%	-5	-7.0%
3-Family	10	.5%	10	.4%	0	-.1%
4-Family and more	20	1.1%	24	1.0%	4	20.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,852</b>		<b>2,349</b>		<b>497</b>	<b>26.8%</b>

Source: West Boylston Assessors

Single-family detached dwellings represent the predominant developed land use. The minimum lot size requirement today for a single-family home is 40,000 square feet in the Town's two residential zoning districts and 50,000 square feet in the aquifer protection overlay district. It is perhaps somewhat surprising to note that most lots developed with single-family homes do not comply with the minimum area requirements of the Zoning Bylaw. This data is shown in Table 3-4.

**Table 3-3  
Minimum Lot Sizes of Single-Family Dwellings, 2002**

Lot Sizes	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
< 10,000 sq. ft.	60	3.2%	3.2%
10,000 – 19,999 sq. ft.	848	44.8%	47.9%
20,000 – 29,999 sq. ft.	258	13.6%	61.6%
30,000 – 39,999 sq. ft.	214	11.3%	72.9%
40,000 – 49,999 sq. ft.	207	10.9%	83.8%
50,000 – 59,999 sq. ft.	64	3.4%	87.2%
> 60,000 sq. ft.	243	12.8%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1894</b>	<b>100%</b>	

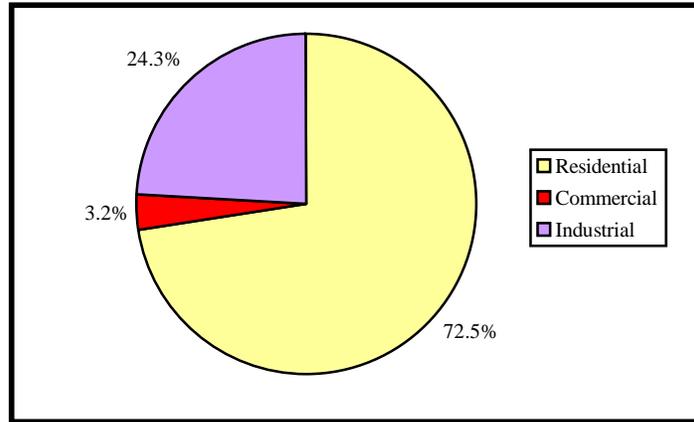
Source: West Boylston Assessors

Figure 3-2 presents the breakdown of vacant land by type according to the parcel data. Only 3.2% (26 ac.) of the total amount of vacant land is still available for commercial development. A 2002 comparison of tax assessments by class in West Boylston and its surrounding towns (See Chapter 5) shows that 10.26% of West Boylston's total tax revenue is derived from commercial land uses. This is twice the percentage of all but one of the surrounding towns. (Shrewsbury had 9.51%.) This fact takes on added significance since only 2.3% of the Town's land is used for commercial purposes. With the lack of an adequate supply of vacant commercial land, future growth in the commercial sector will have to come from re-development of existing properties at a higher intensity.

Figure 3-2 shows that vacant industrial land is more readily available, at 24.3% of all vacant land. About 30% of it, however, is deemed undevelopable in the Assessors' database, and 46 acres are owned by Shell Oil at the contaminated oil tank property. As noted earlier, industrial land exists only in the southeastern part of Town in the Hartwell Street industrial district and near the Worcester line. New growth has occurred in West Boylston's industrial areas over the last several years, and it is likely that the remaining land will be developed over the next 10 years.

Figure 3-2 shows that 72.5% of all vacant land is classified as residential by the Assessors.

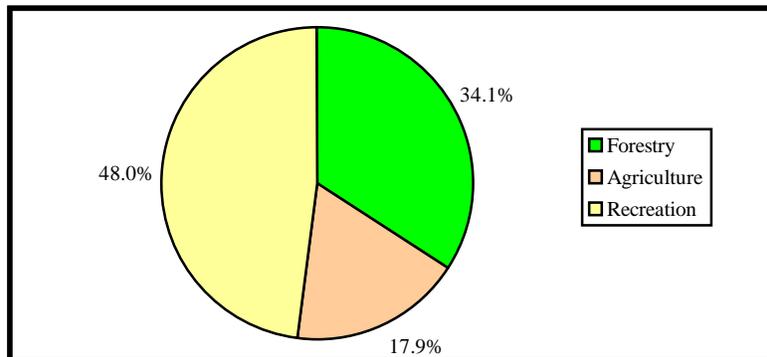
**Figure 3-2  
Vacant Land**



Source: West Boylston Assessors

A comparison of land in Town classified as open space for tax abatement purposes under Chapters 61 (forestry), 61A (agricultural) and 61B (recreational) is shown in Figure 3-3. Forestry (42.6%) and agriculture 47.8% comprise the largest components of such property. Land classified under Chapter 61B consists of property owned in West Boylston by the Worcester Country Club off Shrewsbury St. and the Wachusett Country Club on Prospect St.. Land devoted to agriculture has been slowly disappearing over the years due to West Boylston's prime residential market and purchases by the DCR for watershed protection.

**Figure 3-3  
Chapter Land Breakdown**



Source: West Boylston Assessors

## **Summary and Future Considerations**

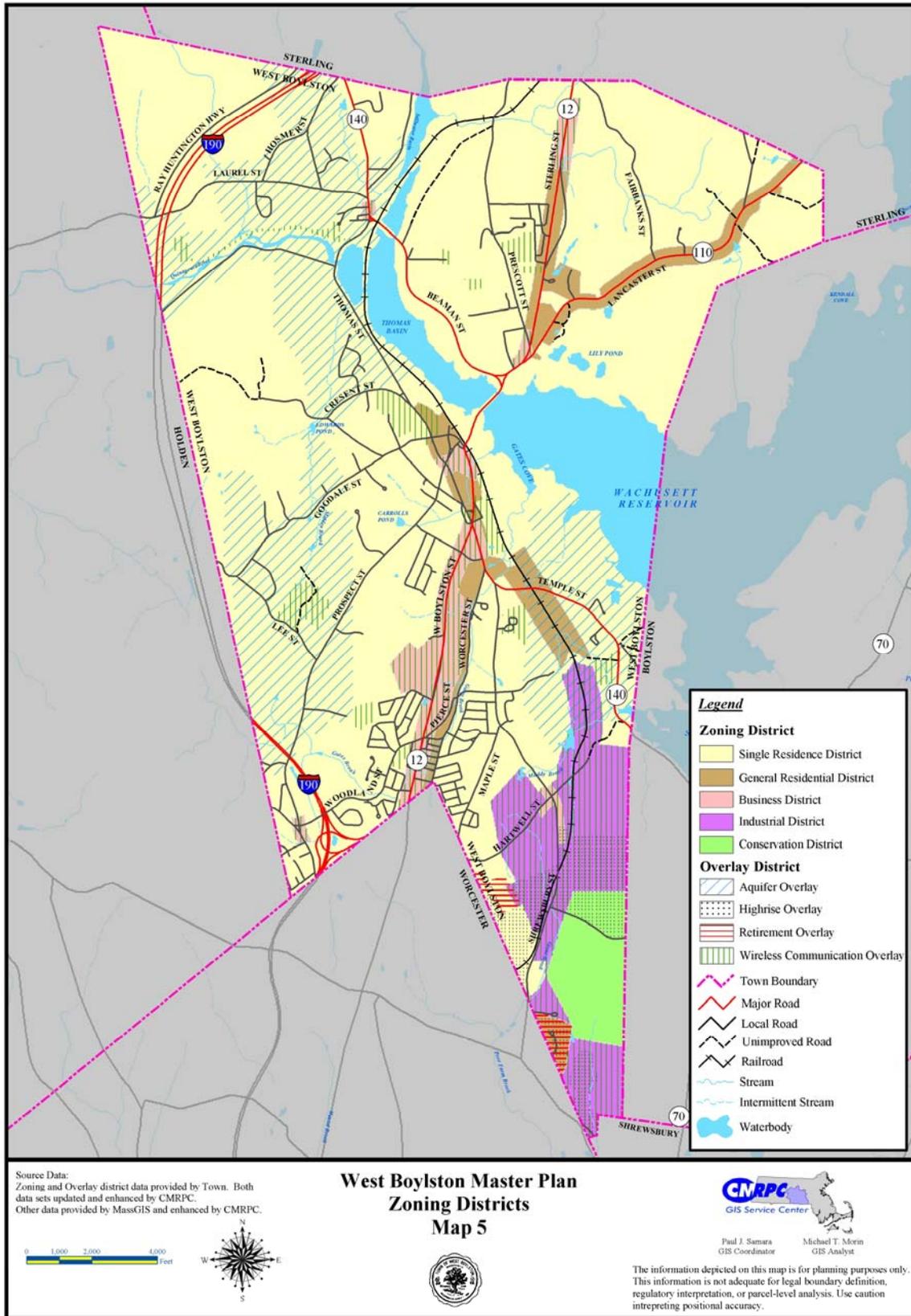
While the overall land use pattern in West Boylston is unlikely to change in the future, the completion of the Town sewer system (projected for the end of 2004), will likely increase the rate of development and change the type of development that occurs. In particular:

- The slow, steady pace of low-density residential development over the last 17 years may quicken as land previously restricted from development by slowly percolating soils is now able to connect to the public sewer system.
- High-density residential development may increase during the next few years, reversing the trend that occurred between 1985 and 1999, during which land used for this purpose decreased by 23 acres. With widespread availability of sewers, developers may take advantage of the strong housing market in West Boylston to propose multiple family developments using the Chapter 40B comprehensive permit process.
- The current influx of industrial companies to the Hartwell Street area may accelerate. With the economy recovering from a recession in the early years of the decade, West Boylston should be able to capture new industrial development attracted to the Region.
- The existence of a sewer system will allow companies with a process wastewater discharge to move into the Hartwell Street area. Without sewer, these types of operations were not feasible. The Worcester Corporate Center is connected to the Worcester sewer system and is likely to fully develop in the next several years.
- Commercial development will not be able to spread out at low densities since there is so little undeveloped commercial land remaining (3% of the total of undeveloped land). With most such development restricted to the Route 12 Corridor, the lack of available land and Cohen bill restrictions may make it economically attractive to replace older, low density commercial structures with a more compact and aesthetically attractive design.
- While the DCR will remain vigilant in protecting its watershed, land acquisitions over the next few years will likely slow down since most of the environmentally sensitive land that the DCR deemed necessary to protect the watershed has been already been purchased.

## **ZONING**

### **Zoning District Analysis**

Map 5 displays the zoning district configuration for West Boylston. The Town is divided into five conventional districts and four overlay districts. Table 3-4 displays the minimum lot size and frontage requirements as well as the percentage of land area devoted to each zoning category.



**Table 3-4  
Zoning District Summary**

<b>Zoning District</b>	<b>Minimum Lot Size (Sq. Ft.)</b>	<b>Minimum Frontage (Ft.)</b>	<b>% of Town</b>
Single Residence (SR)	40,000	120	83.3%
General Residence (GR)	40,000	120	4.9%
GR – Multi Family	20,000 per unit		
GR – CCRC	435,600(10 acres)		
Single Family Detached	5,500 per unit		
Multi Family (<5 Units)	5,500 per unit		
Multi Family (>4 Units)	4,000 per unit		
Business (B)	43,560 (1 Acre)	150	3.2%
Industrial (Ind)	217,800 (5 Acres)	150	6.3%
Conservation (Con)	NA	NA	2.3%
Aquifer Protection Overlay	50,000	150	24.7%

**Residential Districts**

By far, the largest land area in West Boylston is reserved principally for single family residential development, with about 83% of the Town zoned Single Residence (SR) with a minimum lot size of 40,000 sq. ft. The SR district is intended to provide comfortable neighborhoods for families, reflecting the Town’s desire to remain a low-density bedroom community. As dimensional requirements were increased since the original adoption of zoning controls, a number of lots in single family use are non-conforming. Throughout the district, no higher density residential uses are permitted, although bed and breakfasts and accessory apartments are allowed by special permit. Uses that are required to be allowed by state law are permitted in the district, including agriculture, churches, public utilities, and non-profit educational uses. Some uses that are compatible with single family use are permitted, including family day care homes, museums, golf courses, riding stables, and home occupations. Earth removal is permitted by right in this and other districts, excluding the Conservation district. A zoning amendment adopted in 2001 authorized continuing care retirement communities in a portion of the SR district near the Worcester line in order to allow Hillside Village to be constructed.

General Residence (GR) districts comprise about 5% of the Town. These districts are intended for higher density and multiple family housing. GR districts permit single, two, and three-family dwellings by right. Multiple family dwellings, including continuing care retirement communities, are allowed by special permit. Nursing homes, classified as a business use in the Use Schedule, are permitted by special permit, as are motor vehicle sales, but perhaps the latter should be excluded as not compatible with a residential environment. As shown on the Zoning Map, GR districts are primarily located in strip fashion along major thoroughfares, including Lancaster St. (Route 110), Sterling St. (Route 12 north of the Reservoir), and Worcester Street easterly of Route 12. GR districts are also in place the Town Center (Crescent Street/Central Street area) to acknowledge the mixed development pattern in place at the time zoning was adopted. Property along the border with Worcester was also re-zoned to allow Briarwood, a Continuing Care Retirement Community, to be developed in the two communities as a single entity. Table 3-5 presents the amount of land available for development in the two residential districts according to the Assessors data for land use codes and zoning districts. The table also includes land in the aquifer overlay district, but does not include land the Assessors recognize as not developable, generally due to some severe environmental limitations. Chapter land, or land enrolled in Chapter 61 and Chapter 61A tax abatement programs, is not included since no information is available on its development classification.

**Table 3-5  
Developable Residential Land**

	Developable		Potentially Developable		Total Developable	
	Lots	Ac.	Lots	Ac.	Lots	Ac.
SR	57	191.7	16	100.7	73	292.4
SR-Aquifer	16	75.8	8	89.3	24	165.1
SR Total	73	267.5	24	190.0	97	457.5
GR	9	9.2	3	0.8	12	10.0
GR-Aquifer	1	1.4			1	1.4
GR Total	10	10.6	3	0.8	13	11.4 <sup>1</sup>
Total	83	278.1	27	190.8	110	468.9

Source: Assessors' Database, 2002

1. A recent zoning amendment allows Continuing Care Retirement Communities as an overlay within portions of the SR and Industrial districts.

The data clearly indicates that there is only a limited supply of land left for residential development in West Boylston, 468.9 acres in total. This figure does not include Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B properties, nor does it account for large lots coded as developed but which could be subdivided to create additional lots. Nearly all of the available land occurs in the SR district, with a total 457.5 acres. Excluding land with environmental limitations, only 267.5 acres in the SR district are deemed developable. Even less land is available in the GR district. A total of 11.4 acres is available, but only 10.6 acres is considered fully developable. Including land enrolled in Chapter 61 (agriculture) and 61 B (forestry) adds approximately 240 acres to the supply of developable residential land. There is no assurance that such land will remain as open space unless the owner or a public entity decides to permanently protect it through deed restriction or ownership. Land enrolled in Chapter 61B (recreational land) includes the two golf courses. It is unlikely that these properties will convert solely to residential use; however, it is conceivable that residential communities will be proposed around the courses to cater to a more affluent buyer.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. With residential land in short supply, it can be expected that there will be concerted pressure to develop the remaining land in the near future. The 267.5 acres of developable land will likely be developed first, and landowners enrolled in Chapter 61, and 61A programs could also be subjected to pressure to sell for development. Land with some environmental constraints will become more attractive for development as land shortages drive up selling prices of approved lots sufficient to compensate for the added development costs. Housing needs may not be able to be satisfied by the land available for large lot single-family use under local zoning standards. To meet the housing needs, higher density housing will be required. With a shortage of land in the GR district to accommodate this need, developers will soon consider comprehensive permits under M.G.L. Chapter 40B as a relief valve to satisfy the demand.

As a result of these factors, residential development policy should be re-examined to determine the preferred type of housing for the community and to allow for the most efficient use of the land that remains. West Boylston could adopt an open space development bylaw (now feasible with widespread availability of sewers) in order to cluster lots closely together to preserve open space and keep development away from steep slopes and other sensitive resources. Additional land could be re-zoned GR to allow for multiple family housing. And new higher density options could be provided in the zoning bylaw, similar to

the continuing care retirement community provision, with adequate safeguards to insure new developments fit into the fabric of the community.

### Business Districts

Business districts occupy about 3% of the Town, with the largest by far occurring along Route 12 from the Worcester line to Route 140. The development potential of the Route 12 Corridor was analyzed in detail in 2000, and work is summarized in Chapter 5, Economic Development. There are six smaller business districts in West Boylston, including areas of Oakdale, Pinecroft, the Town Center, the intersection of Hartwell and Shrewsbury Streets, and two areas along Route 12 north of the Reservoir. There is only one category of Business zoning for the entire community. This “one-size fits all” approach does not allow for variation in character of each discrete area. Uses appropriate for a highway business district, such as Route 12, may not be appropriate for a neighborhood or village location. Creation of additional business categories would allow for prohibition of uses that may not be suitable for a small neighborhood district. West Boylston could then fine-tune zoning requirements, such as lot dimensions, signage, and parking provisions, to reflect each area’s individuality. More importantly, new development proposed in such districts would then be consistent with the prevailing lot pattern, uses, and scale of buildings.

The Business district is very inclusive of uses permitted either by right or special permit. Virtually all commercial uses are allowed, except for adult entertainment, which is restricted to Industrial districts. All residential uses are also permitted. One, two, and three family dwellings are permitted by right; accessory apartments and multiple family dwellings are allowed by special permit. Industrial uses are generally prohibited, with the exception of construction contractors, fuel suppliers, and earth removal activities.

Minor changes could be considered to the Schedule of Use Regulations to eliminate uses that may adversely affect commercial activity. For example, one, two and three family dwellings could be prohibited in order to eliminate conflicts between residents and business owners. In West Boylston, there are numerous residences fronting directly on Route 12, which is not a desirable location for family use due to high traffic volumes, noise, and lighting. Many of these residences will likely convert to commercial activity over time in any case. In addition, earth removal, fuel suppliers, and construction contractors should be prohibited from Business zones and relegated to industrial districts.

Route 12 provides numerous commercial activities that meet the needs of local residents. Few regional facilities exist, with the exception of the Wal-Mart plaza which attracts customers from neighboring towns as it is the only “big box” retailer close-by for those who do not wish to make an excursion to a regional mall. Retail and wholesale activities, restaurants, financial and real estate services, personal and consumer providers, professional offices, and automotive conveniences are all permitted uses and should continue to flourish here given the relatively high incomes of area residents.

The same uses, however, should not be allowed in other business districts that are much smaller in size and may contain, and are surrounded by, residential uses. A new zoning category should be implemented to restrict mercantile activity in order to maintain property values of near-by residents, while still providing an opportunity for small-scale commercial activity that meets local needs. For example, a new “village” district could be developed to permit modest commercial activity that is compatible with a small lot, mixed use pattern of development. Oakdale, Pinecroft and the Town Center should be re-zoned for such uses.

The two remaining Business zones on Sterling St. (Route 12) have little potential for new commercial activity. For the district near the Sterling town line, the land already devoted to condominiums, should be re-zoned to GR where such uses are permitted by special permit. Much of the remaining land is in DCR ownership and may not be developed. The remaining Business frontage is part of the 60+-acre Baldarelli Brothers mining operation. The future use of this land should be considered as a single entity, and could be appropriate for business activity. When the mining operation is completed, the owner and Planning Board should discuss the future use of the property for limited business use.

The Business district at the intersection of Sterling Street, Prescott Street, and Lancaster Street (Route 110) should be adjusted to reflect current land use. There is no vacant land available in the vicinity for business activity, and some of the property is used for residential use. Where there is little likelihood of future commercial development, property should be zoned GR to accommodate multi-family uses in the vicinity.

## Industrial Districts

West Boylston has zoned the southeastern part of Town for industrial use. Industrial and office uses permitted by right include research laboratories, manufacturing, warehousing, wholesalers, and business and professional offices. Rail freight yards, construction contractors, and public utility facilities are allowed by special permit. Industrial uses containing more than 10,000 square feet must obtain site plan approval from the Planning Board. A variety of commercial uses are also allowed in the district either by right or by special permit. These include restaurants, medical clinics, banks, and personal and business services. These kinds of activities detract from the intent of creating an area devoted to industrial activity without interference from incompatible land uses. Such uses should be eliminated from the Industrial district, which would insure they locate in the Route 12 Corridor and increase the viability of that area.

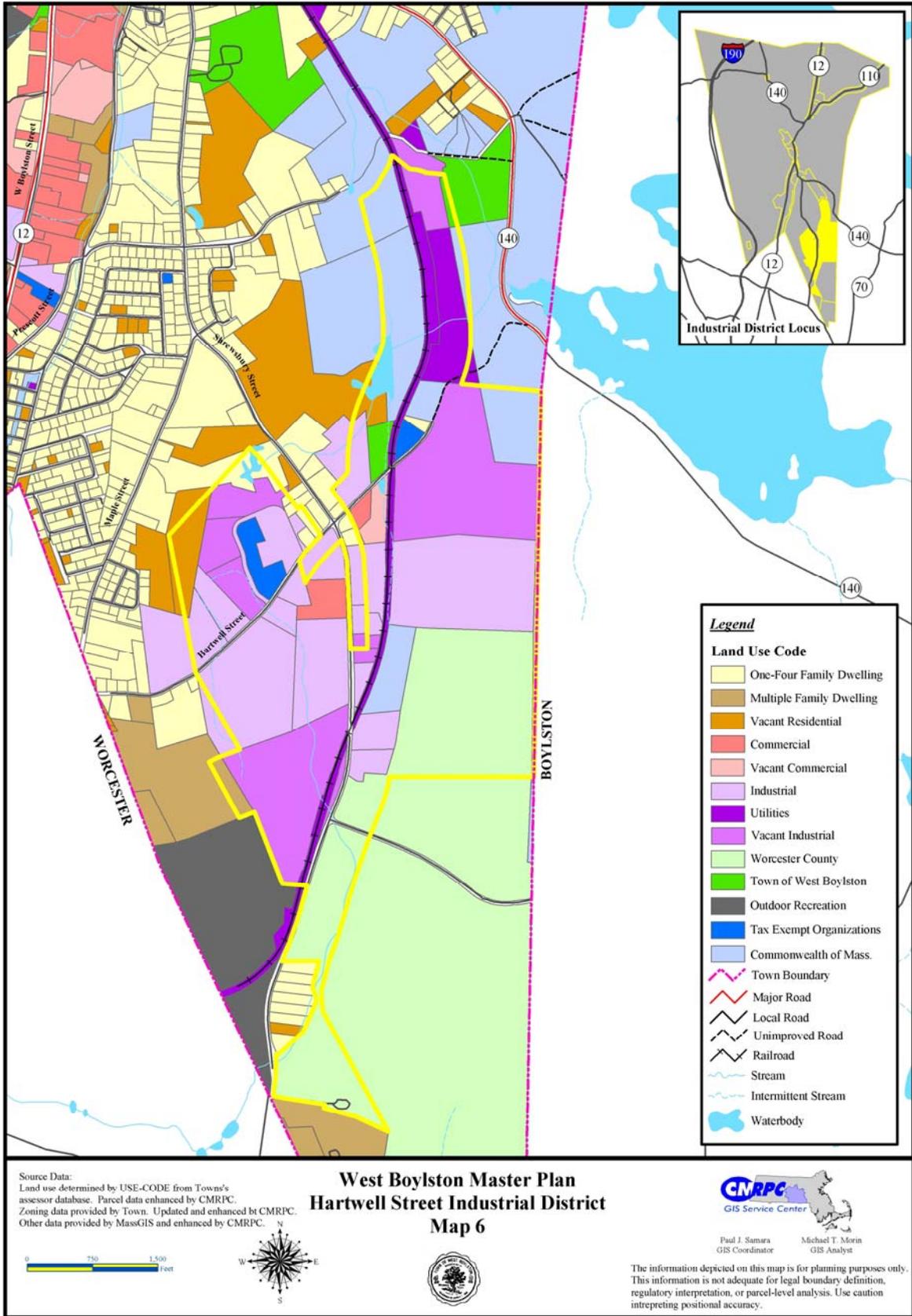
The Hartwell St./Shrewsbury St. area is appropriate for industry. Map 6 contains a close-up look at the land use pattern of the area. Water and sewer services are available through municipal systems. An active rail line traverses the district. The Jail is close by and lessens the area's desirability for residential activity. The Shell Oil tank property is a visual intrusion; when the soil contamination is cleaned up, the property may be able to be put back into industrial use. And the former municipal landfill is in the vicinity. Access to the district is only fair at best as vehicles along Hartwell St. must traverse through residential neighborhoods in Worcester, and there is not very good access to the highway system. Nevertheless, the area has developed industrially, and with the recent construction of sewers, the few remaining vacant lots will likely be spoken for when the economy improves. Worcester's plans to upgrade Briar Lane, which becomes Shrewsbury Street in West Boylston will help to improve the roadway access to the district.

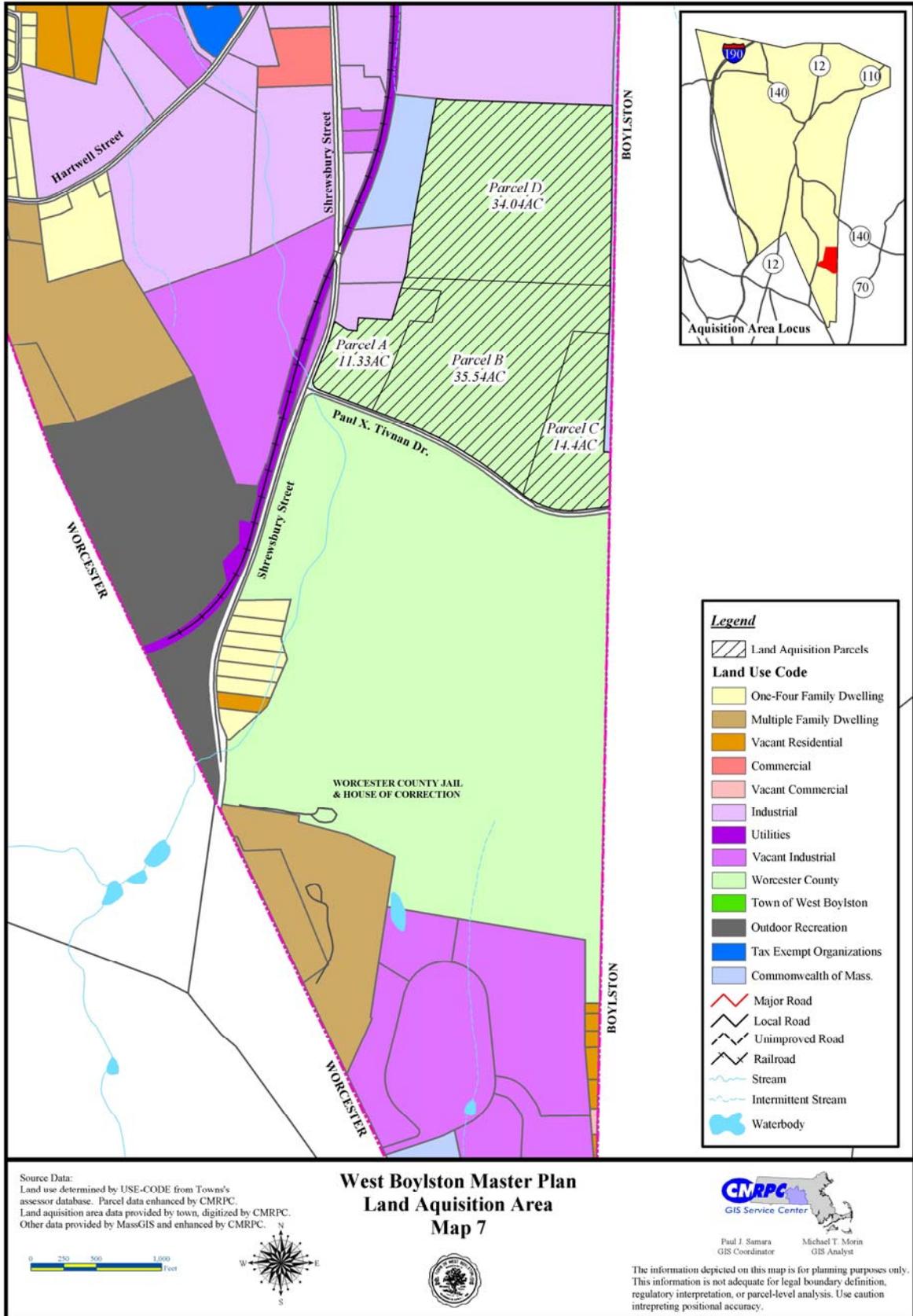
The Worcester Corporate Center is also zoned for Industry. As noted above, the Center is intended to be a first class office and research park. Several lots were quickly sold upon completion of the road and utility systems. Access is directly onto East Mountain Street in Worcester, which places vehicles onto a roadway that is able to handle the anticipated traffic volumes. Water and sewer services are available through the Worcester system. Fedex, a large package delivery company, Mass. Materials Research, a testing laboratory, and the American Red Cross have built new high value buildings in the Park. Only three lots remain.

## Conservation District

Land formerly owned by Worcester County, and the location of Worcester County Jail and House of Corrections, has been placed in a Conservation (C) District. The C district is intended to be very restrictive of development as residential, commercial and industrial uses are prohibited. Permitted uses include agriculture, riding stables, institutional uses that must be allowed by state law such as religious and non-profit educational uses, and public utility facilities. State and county agencies are exempt from local zoning requirements. Thus, it is unclear why a Conservation district was created solely for the County land. The district lies outside of the Wachusett Reservoir watershed, and there do not appear to be any outstanding environmental or natural resource values that deserve prohibition of market development. Most of the Town's industrial activity occurs in the general vicinity in any case.

Jail related uses occur southerly of Paul X. Tivnan Drive. It is very unlikely that the Jail would be discontinued given the shortage of prison cells throughout the state and the severe over-crowding at this facility. It is more probable that expansion will take place in the future to accommodate the actual number of inmates placed in the facility. A recent bill was approved by the Massachusetts legislature that allows the Town to buy 61 acres of land northerly of Hospital Drive for light department and other municipal purposes. (See Map 7.) Municipal uses are allowed in the C district by right; therefore, a zoning map amendment is not required to allow the Town to develop in this district. However, should the Town decide to proceed with development unrelated to municipal purposes, such as an affordable housing development, a re-zoning may be in order. It is also possible that other land more in keeping with the intent of the district could be placed in the C district in the future. Since it does not have a negative effect on any private landowners at the moment, it does not hurt to leave it in place for possible future use.





### Aquifer and Watershed Protection Overlay District

The Aquifer District is intended to safeguard the Town's municipal well fields from contamination. As an overlay district, underlying district regulations remain in place, but this district imposes additional restrictions on how land may be used. For example, the SR and GR districts require a minimum lot size of 40,000 sq. ft., but 50,000 sq. ft. is required for parcels that fall within the aquifer overlay district. The bylaw appears to comply with DEP's requirements for regulating land use in areas that contribute water to the wells. The bylaw sets forth the permitted and prohibited uses and specifies the performance standards that must be met in order for potentially threatening land uses to proceed. One provision that may impose a restriction on commercial and industrial development is a prohibition that no more than 15% of a lot may be rendered impervious. This provision is more restrictive than state regulations, which require a special permit for uses that will render impervious 2,500 sq. ft. or 15% of a lot. The impervious standard does not typically affect low-density residential development, but can affect non-residential development due to the need for paved parking lots and loading areas.

### Multi-Story Overlay District (MSOD)

The purpose of the MSOD is to allow certain buildings to exceed the normal height requirements of the underlying district, subject to a determination that taller buildings will not adversely affect the character of the immediate neighborhood. The designation applies to specific lots in the Hartwell Street industrial district. The MSOD allows for a greater intensity of development than would otherwise be allowed in industrial districts. Buildings may be up to 68' tall, parcels may have up to 70% coverage by impervious surfaces, and lots may have a floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.5. (FAR is a zoning concept that determines the amount of permissible building floor space as a fraction of the land area of a lot. For example, an FAR of 0.5 on a 50,000 sq. ft. lot allows a one-story building of 25,000 sq. ft., a two-story building of 12,500 sq. ft. per floor, etc.) These provisions may be authorized by special permit of the Planning Board after documentation that traffic flow will not be compromised, adequate fire protection is assured, and visual impacts are minimized. This is a creative approach to allowing a greater intensity of non-residential development, which is often forced to spread out laterally consuming more land than necessary. Since its adoption in 2001, no buildings have been proposed to take advantage of the relaxed standards.

### Land Use Recommendations

1. Adopt a new Zoning Map with Assessors parcels as the base. Currently, zoning boundaries are defined as offsets from roads and natural features, and often split lot lines into more than one district. Zoning boundaries should be adjusted to align with parcel boundaries.
2. Create Village zoning districts for Oakdale, Pincroft and the Town Center to insure future development is compatible with the village character of each area. For properties with historic significance, owners should be encouraged to seek designation on the National and State Registers of Historic Places to provide recognition of their importance and aid in their preservation.
3. The Schedule of Use Regulations should be revised to insure appropriate land uses are proposed in each district.
4. Adopt a cluster development bylaw to preserve open space, preserve natural resource functions, and allow for a more compact development form.
5. Increase the permitted density of multiple family developments in the GR district now that sewers have removed concerns about poor soil suitability for septic systems. The existing density of 20,000 sq. ft. of lot area per dwelling unit (2.2 units per acre) should be increased to 4 units per acre.
6. To re-develop Route 12 as the Gateway through West Boylston, a Master Plan should be prepared that not only includes roadway and traffic improvements but beautification elements as well, such as enhanced landscaping, pedestrian connections, and underground wiring.
7. The Planning Board should review its Subdivision Regulations to improve street connectivity. Requiring sidewalks and trails can encourage greater pedestrian and bicycling use and improve connections to adjacent subdivisions and commercial areas. Narrower street widths should also be

examined for low-density developments to minimize land disturbance and the amount of runoff from impervious surfaces.

8. Consider passing the Community Preservation Act. As a local option, a community can impose a surtax of between 1% - 3% to preserve open space, develop affordable housing and preserve historic properties.
9. Study the feasibility of allowing Mixed Use Development, where a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional land uses are authorized at a greater intensity in a carefully planned manner. This innovative technique minimizes the conversion of open space to low-density uses while providing a variety of services in close proximity that help to reduce automobile trips.
10. Prohibit single-family homes in Business districts to minimize conflicts between incompatible land uses and insure that new development utilizes the limited supply of such property for high value uses.
11. Encourage infill development on vacant lots in existing neighborhoods that are well served by roads and public water and sewer systems.
12. Develop a policy for utilities that restricts growth into areas that are not consistent with the Master Plan.
13. With the merger of the MDC into the new Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Town should keep abreast of changes to the agency's land use policies. For example, will DCR continue to buy land for watershed protection, and what can be done to facilitate use of key parcels for recreational use?
14. Reduce the minimum lot size in Industrial districts from 5 acres to 2 acres in order to reduce the cost of buildable lots for industrial uses.
15. Enforcing the terms of the Zoning Bylaw, and requiring strict adherence to conditions imposed by land use boards in approving development applications, are necessary to insure the Town's land use policies are implemented in accordance with the wishes of residents. The Board of Selectmen must work to insure adequate resources are allocated for zoning enforcement.
16. Upon adoption of the Master Plan, the Town should undertake a thorough revision of the Zoning Bylaw to insure that its requirements are fully consistent with the Plan.

## CHAPTER 4: POPULATION AND HOUSING

### POPULATION

#### Historical Population Pattern

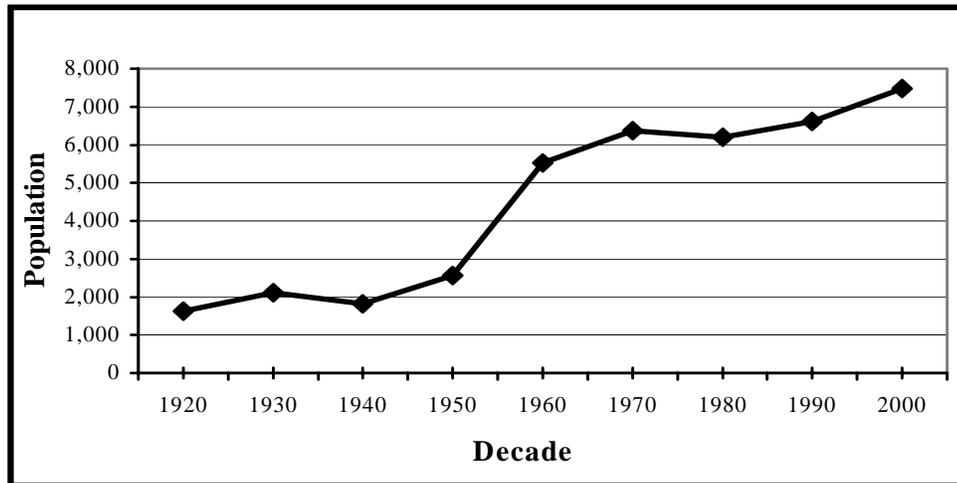
West Boylston's total population from the 2000 census was 7,481. This is an increase of 13.2% over the 1990 total and is the largest increase since the 15.3% growth that occurred between 1960 and 1970. The population density per square mile is 580. As Table 4-1 and Figure 4-1 below illustrate, the Town's population growth has been relatively slow with the exception of the thirty-year period between 1940 and 1970, during which the population increased by 2½ times its size. This mirrored the nation-wide trend of suburbanization at this time as automobile ownership became widespread and the new interstate highway system resulted in an out-migration of people from cities to the suburbs.

**Table 4-1  
Population Change: 1920 – 2000**

	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	2,114	1,822	2,570	5,526	6,369	6,204	6,611	7,481
Change from Previous Decade	490	-292	748	2,956	843	-165	407	870
Rate of Growth (%)	30.2	-13.8	41.1	115	15.3	-2.6	6.6	13.2

Source: U.S. Census

**Figure 4-1  
Population Change: 1920 - 2000**



Source: U.S. Census

**Group Quarter Population**

The Worcester County Jail and House of Corrections is located in census tract 7291, and it housed 1,220 inmates according to the 2000 Census. Refer to Map 8 for the location of Census Tracts in West Boylston. This is an increase of 80% over the 1990 jail population of 679. Since the current population exceeds the capacity of 778 by 442, severe overcrowding exists. A temporary modular facility that is planned to house 70 to 100 inmates is merely a stop-gap measure until a permanent facility for 400 individuals is constructed at a date yet to be determined.

The nursing home population did not change between 1990 and 2000. It stayed at approximately 78 persons. There is, however, a new 102-bed nursing home facility that will increase the group quarter population by 102, i.e. one person per bed.

West Boylston’s general population (excluding inmates) grew by only 329 people or 5.5%, between 1990 and 2000. In the Town’s other Census tract (7292) the population actually decreased by 57, or -2%. The table below shows detail of the population change within each tract.

**Table 4-2  
Population Change by Census Tract: 1990 - 2000**

Census Tract	Population 1990	Population 2000	Population Change 1990 – 2000	% Population Change 1990 – 2000
7291 (including jail)	3,799	4,726	927	24.4%
7291 (excluding jail)	3,120	3,506	386	12.4%
7292	2,812	2,755	-57	-2%

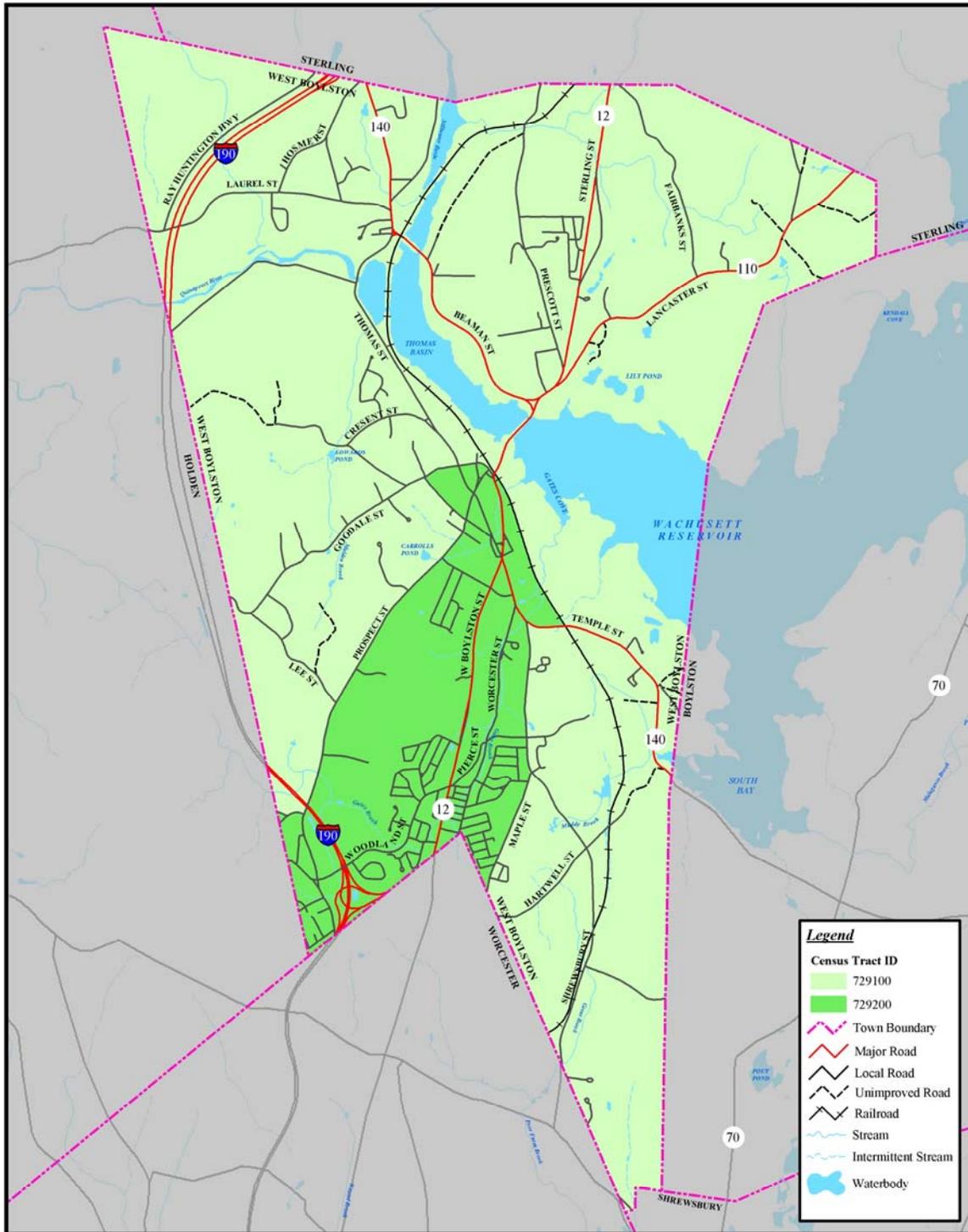
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

Excluding the jail population, West Boylston’s general population experienced slow growth during the past decade. As discussed below, there are several explanations for this result, including the aging of the population, smaller household sizes, slow pace of residential development, and acquisition of open space by state agencies. Prospects for the future, however, indicate a reversal of the Town’s slow rate of growth.

**Age**

Table 4-3 displays change in age of the Town’s population from 1990 to 2000. The number of very young children (under 5 years) declined by 8.4% during the decade, while children between 5 and 19 years of age showed substantial growth, 355 or 32.1%. The increase in the number of school age children is borne out by the growth in the Town’s school population. From 1990 to 2000 the enrollment increased by 22.2% for the elementary school and 88.7% for the high school. That growth seems to be slowing, however, with overall system enrollment increasing only 0.6% between 2000 and 2002. Including school choice students, the elementary level declined by 2.7%, while high school enrollment increased by 9.6%. Since a smaller number of children under 5 will soon enter school, it is likely that the Town’s school population will decline over the next five years, unless there is an unexpected increase in new housing growth, or a turnover in the existing housing stock to families with school-aged children.

The data also reveals that the largest population increase occurred among those aged 35-54, 667 persons or 36.9%. This may indicate that the Town is attractive to buyers of homes who must wait to enter their high wage-earning years before being able to afford a home in the community. This may help to explain the increase in children aged 5-19. Conversely, the population of young adults (20-34 years) declined by 17% during the decade. This is comparable to the 18% decline in this age cohort statewide, indicating that the state as a whole has difficulty retaining its young adults.



Source Data:  
 Census data provided by US Bureau of Census, enhanced by CMRPC.  
 Other data provided by MassGIS and enhanced by CMRPC.

### West Boylston Master Plan Census Tracts Map 8



The 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.

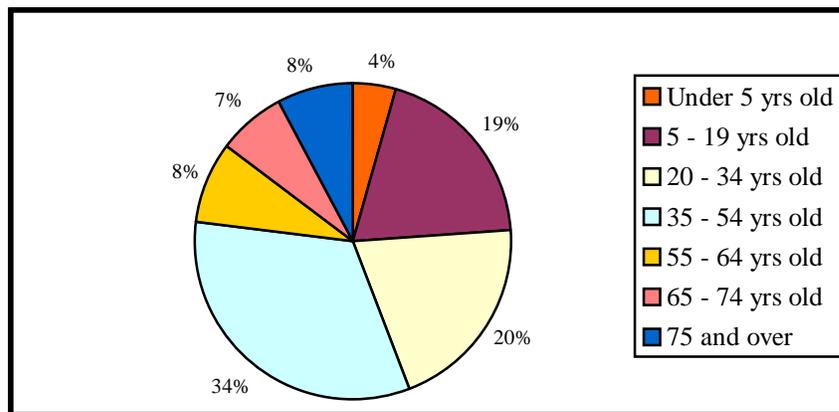
Older citizens (55 and over) witnessed little population change. Those residents aged 55-64 decreased by 1.4%, while those 65-74 decreased by 22.5%. This latter segment represents Depression era births, when the birth rate was low due to severe economic conditions. Absent new housing alternatives, one would not expect there to be a significant increase in the 75 and over population. But with additions to Briarwood and the new Hillside Village units, this age group will undoubtedly grow during the current decade. Surprisingly, individuals 75 and over experienced rapid growth between 1990 and 2000 (166 persons), for an increase of 39.1%. This may be partly explained by advances in health care, as residents are now living longer lives, and by the fact that there are now alternative living arrangements for the elderly to continue to live in West Boylston. Table 4-3 also shows the 2000 population excluding Block 4020 in Census Tract 7291 where the jail is located. As might be expected, the largest number of inmates falls in the 20-34 year age group.

**Table 4-3  
Population by Age Group**

	Under 5	5 – 19	20 – 34	35 – 54	55 – 64	65 – 74	75+
1990	368	1,106	1,615	1,806	633	658	425
2000	325	1,461	1,497	2,473	624	510	591
Change	-43	355	-118	667	-9	-148	166
% Change	-11.7	32.1	-7.3	36.9	-1.4	-22.5	39.1
Block 4020	0	98	675	425	21	3	30
2000 (w/o Block 4020)	325	1,363	822	2,048	603	507	561

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

**Figure 4-2  
Population by Age: 2000**



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

As shown in Table 4-4, the median age in West Boylston increased during the past decade by over one year, from 37.1 to 38.4. The Town's median age is also significantly higher than the State median age as a whole by nearly two years. As noted above, there were substantial gains in the 35-54 year and 75 and over age groups to help explain this departure from the state norm. The gap, however, narrowed during the past decade; at the time of the 1990 Census, the difference between the State and Town median ages was 3.5 years. The jail has the effect of lowering the median age of the Town as a whole. The median age of Block 4020, where the jail is located, was 31.4 years in 2000.

**Table 4-4  
Median Age**

	1980	1990	2000
West Boylston	33.8	37.1	38.4
Massachusetts	31.1	33.6	36.5

Source: U.S. Census

**Race and Hispanic Origin**

West Boylston remains a predominately White community, with 91.6 % of the population. However, the number of minorities in West Boylston has increased in the last decade. The largest gain occurred in the Black population, which now comprises 5.3% of the total. As Table 4-6 indicates, Block 4020 in Census Tract 7291, in which the jail is located, is responsible for this increase. In Block 4020, Whites account for 58.7% of the population, and Blacks comprise the largest minority at 31.0%. The composition of Tract 7291 excluding Block 4020 is quite similar to Tract 7292. There are few American Indians, Asians, or members of other races.

**Table 4-5  
Population by Race: 1980 - 2000**

	Total Population	White (#) (%)	Black (#) (%)	Amer. Indian (#) (%)	Asian (#) (%)	Other (#) (%)
1980	6,204	6,115 98.5	18 0.3	5 0.1	16 0.2	50 0.8
1990	6,611	6,310 95.4	88 1.3	5 0.1	43 0.7	165 2.5
2000	7,481	6,855 91.6	399 5.3	12 0.2	64 0.8	151 2.0*

\* Includes 103 persons of two or more races.

Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census (Data for 2000 tabulated differently than 1990)

**Table 4-6  
Census Tract Population by Race: 2000**

Census Tracts	Total Population	White (#) (%)	Black (#) (%)	Amer. Indian (#) (%)	Asian (#) (%)	Other Race* (#) (%)
7291	4,726	4,147 87.7	398 8.4	12 0.3	45 1.0	124 2.6
7292	2,755	2,708 98.3	1 0.04	0 0.0	19 0.6	27 1.0
Block 4020 (in Tract 7291)	1,252	735 58.7	388 31.0	10 0.8	19 1.5	100 8.0
7291 (w/o Block 4020)	3,474	3,412 98.2	10 0.3	2 .05	26 0.7	24 0.7

\* Other Race includes persons of two or more races.

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Similarly, there are relatively few residents of Hispanic Origin in West Boylston. However, there is a noticeable upward trend as the percentage has increased from 0.9% in 1980, to 4.7% in 2000. This is also due to the increase in the jail population as shown in Table 4-8. Block 4020 contains 308 of the total 357 Hispanics in West Boylston. 24.6% of Block 4020 is of Hispanic origin.

**Table 4-7  
Population by Hispanic Origin (Any Race)**

	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1980	6,204	56	.9
1990	6,611	185	2.8
2000	7,481	357	4.7

Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census

**Table 4-8  
Census Tract Population by Hispanic Origin (Any Race): 2000**

<b>Census Tract</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	
	<b>(#)</b>	<b>(%)</b>
7291	342	7.2
7292	15	.05
Block 4020 (in Tract 7291)	308	24.6
7291 (w/o Block 4020)	34	0.9

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

### **Population Projections**

The population of West Boylston is projected for 2005, 2010, and 2015 using historical building permit trends, known residential housing developments, and trends in births and deaths. Table 4-9 displays these projections. The projections assume household size multipliers from the 2000 Census remain unchanged for the forecast period. The methodology is described in the paragraphs below.

#### **New Residential Housing**

2000: Since the 2000 Census was taken during April of 2000, we allocated 75% of the total number of building permits approved in West Boylston during 2000 to project future population (15 out of 21 units). The bulk of the units from this year (18) were built at Briarwood, an elderly housing development. With an elderly household size of 1.5 persons per unit, 23 new residents were assumed to be added to the Town's population in 2000 from these 15 units.

2001: To project the population for 2001, the number of building permits authorized that year (7) was multiplied by 2.71 – the average size of an owner-occupied household in West Boylston (only single-family units were authorized in 2001). This accounted for a population increase of 19 for 2001.

2002 – 2005: To project the population beyond 2001, an assumption was made that the new sewer system will have a short-term effect of increasing the annual number of new single-family homes that are constructed in West Boylston over this 4-year period. It is likely that numerous vacant lots exist along the routes of the new sewer lines on which building could not occur because on-site sewage disposal was not viable. As landowners seek to avail themselves of this opportunity in the near-term, we assumed a 50% increase over the historical growth rate, or 30 single-family homes per year for the

period from 2002 to 2005. With an average household size of 2.71, this yields 81 new residents per year, and 325 residents for the four-year period.

Additionally, there are 118 housing units under construction in the Hillside Village senior condominium development, and 10 new units are expected at the existing Briarwood elderly housing development within the next 4 to 5 years. Using an average household size of 1.5 for the elderly units, a potential increase of 192 people will be added to the 2005 projection.

2006 – 2015: From 2006 to 2015, we assumed a return to the average yearly number of 19 housing units (rounded to 20) authorized by building permits from 1985 through 2001. The number of new homes was multiplied by the average size of an owner-occupied household (2.71 persons), which resulted in a projected increase of 54 new residents per year for the remaining 10 years.

Group Quarter Housing

Information gathered about plans for the County jail and the completion of a new nursing home was used to project the future Group Quarter population. According to the 2000 Census, the County jail housed 1220 inmates. Since the capacity of the existing structures is only 778, a permanent addition with a capacity of 400 is planned to handle only the overcrowding. An increase in the inmate population is not planned; therefore, zero growth in this segment is projected.

A 102-bed nursing home was recently completed with the expectation that it will be filled to capacity fairly quickly. The plan for additional nursing homes or assisted living housing is unknown at this time. A 102-person increase in this segment of the population is projected for 2005, which is the only projected increase in the group quarter population.

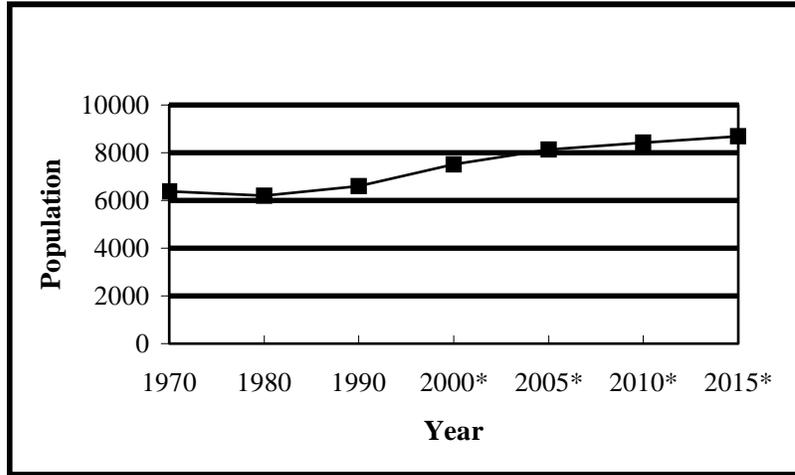
Natural Population Change

From 1990 to 2000 there were 22 more births than deaths, which represents a natural population *increase* of 22. In order to reveal more recent trends, the net of births and deaths was also reviewed for the years 1996 through 2000. During this period there were 16 more deaths than births, which represents a natural population *decrease* of 16. A rough average of the 2 periods was used, resulting in no net change due to births and deaths.

**Table 4-9  
West Boylston Population Projections**

	<b>2000 Census</b>	<b>2005 (Projected)</b>	<b>2010 (Projected)</b>	<b>2015 (Projected)</b>
Total Population	7,481	8,141	8,412	8,681
Change from 2000	---	660	931	1,202
% Change from 2000	---	8.8%	12.4%	16.1%

**Figure 4-2  
West Boylston Population: 1970 - 2015**



\*See projection assumptions

Assumptions Used in Population Projections

1. New Single-Family Housing Units

2000	15 units/year	1.50 persons/household
2001	7 units/year	2.71 persons/household
2002 – 2005	30 units/year	2.71 persons/household
2006 – 2015	20 units/year	2.71 persons/household

2. Additional Housing planned through 2005

10 elderly units	1.50 persons/household
118 condo units	1.50 persons/household (Hillside Village)

3. Group Quarter Housing

Jail	No change for 2005, 2010, 2015
Nursing Home	102 units for 2005

4. Natural Population Change

No change

## HOUSING

### Household Characteristics

As Table 4-10 shows, the number of households in West Boylston increased between 1980 and 2000 by almost 18%, for an average annual change of less than one percent. Household size decreased during the same period from 2.85 persons per household to 2.56, a decrease of 10%. The decrease in household size is seen in state and U.S population numbers and is the result of trends in more single person households, married couples having fewer children, and an increase in the number of elderly households.

As discussed above, the steep increase in the Group Quarter Population is almost completely related to the increase in the inmate population. In 1990, 400 cells were added to the prison facility, which allowed a corresponding increase in inmates. While there is no plan to increase the current inmate population of 1,220, the addition of another 400 cells is planned in order to eliminate the overcrowding that currently exists there.

The 33% increase in the percentage of households with people age 65 and over is primarily due to the 39.1% increase in those 75 and over. As explained in the Population section above, this may be partly explained by advances in health care and the addition of elderly housing in the town (36 units at Briarwood) during this period.

**Table 4-10  
Household Characteristics: 1980 - 2000**

	1980	1990	2000	Change 1980 – 2000	% Change 1980 - 2000	Annual Change 1980 – 2000
# of Households	2,048	2,214	2,413	365	17.8%	.89%
Avg. Household Size	2.85	2.61	2.56	-.29	-10%	-.5%
Household Population	5,840	5,770	6,174	334	5.7%	.28%
Group Quarter Population	364	841	1307	943	259%	13%
Households with Own Children Under 18	752	660	794	42	5.6%	.3%
Households with People 65 and Over	459	660	719	260	56.6%	2.8%

Source: U.S. Census

### Tenure

As shown in Table 4-11, the percentage of renter-occupied housing units in West Boylston decreased slightly between 1990 and 2000 from 19.5% of the total number of units to 18.6%. With the planned completion of 118 condominium units and a modest, yet steady pace of single-family homes, the percentage of single family units should rise over the next few years. However, the Village at Oakdale is a proposed 124-unit rental project submitted as a comprehensive permit application. If approved, the percentage of rental units would rise slightly. Of the 38 other towns in the CMRPD region (excluding Worcester), 24 communities have a higher percentage of renter-occupied housing than West Boylston.

**Table 4-11  
Housing Tenure: 1990 and 2000**

	Total Number of Housing Units	Number of Housing Units	% of Total Housing Units	Vacancy Rate
<b>1990</b>	2,214			
Owned-occupied		1,782	80.5	0.4%
Renter-occupied		432	19.5	2.9%
<b>2000</b>	2,413			
Owner-occupied		1,963	81.4	0.5%
Renter-occupied		450	18.6	2.2%

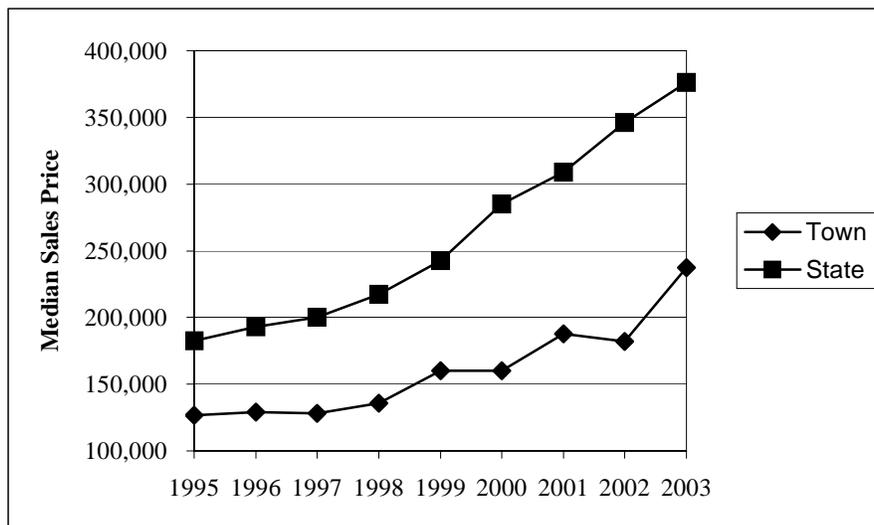
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

**Housing Sales**

The following two figures display trends in the sales prices of new single-family homes and condominiums since 1995. Data sources include the Warren Group for single-family homes and the Massachusetts Association of Realtors for condominiums. Overall, housing prices have been rising at unprecedented rates.

As shown in Figure 4-3 below, the median price for single-family homes in West Boylston rose 87.7% between 1995 and 2003. Prices increased from \$126,500 in 1995 to \$237,500 in 2003 for a net increase of \$111,000. The most dramatic rise occurred between 2002 and 2003 when the price went up by 30.5% in just one year. During this eight-year period, the statewide average increased at a faster pace than in West Boylston, 106%, as can be noted in the steeper slope of the line representing state sales data. For 2003, the average sales price for a single-family home in Massachusetts was \$376,360.

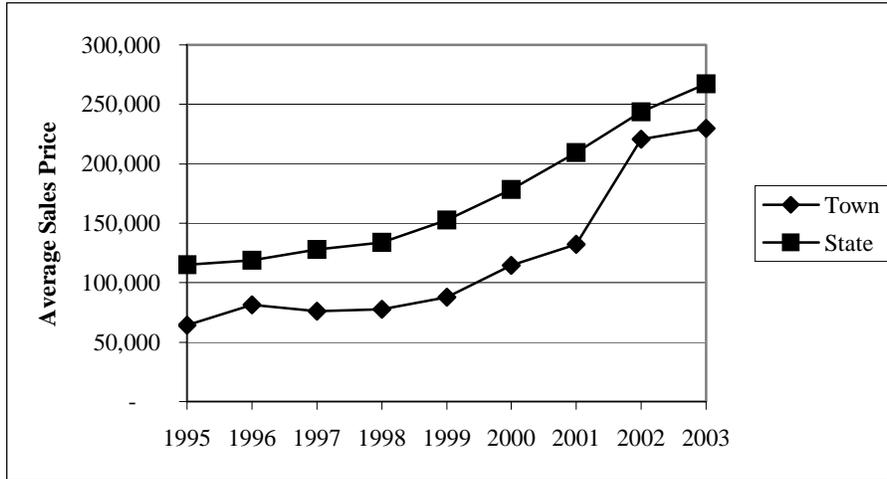
**Figure 4-3  
Median Single Family Home Sales: 1995-2003**



Source: The Warren Group

The median sales price of condominiums increased at an even greater pace during this period, although prices still remain below single-family homes. In West Boylston, condo sales increased \$165,400 (256%), rising from \$64,500 in 1995 to \$229,900 in 2003. The Town increase outpaced that of the state as a whole during this period: condominium sale prices statewide increased \$151,871 (131.6%). The most dramatic one-year increase in West Boylston occurred between 2001 and 2002 when prices rose 66.4%.

**Figure 4-4  
Median Condominium Sales: 1995 – 2003**



Source: Mass. Association of Realtors

In order to put the increase of the median housing sales prices above in perspective, the change in the Boston area Consumer Price Index (a leading inflation indicator) should be taken into consideration for the same period. The CPI rose from 158.5 in 1995 to 203.5 in 2003 for an increase of 45 points (28.4%) for the 8-year period as shown in Table 4-12. It can be easily noted that sale prices for single-family homes and condominiums are increasing at a much faster rate than the overall CPI for the region.

**Table 4-12  
Comparison of the Boston Area CPI to  
West Boylston’s Median Sales Price:  
1995 - 2003**

CPI Change (Inflation Rate)	Single-Family Median Sales Price % Change	Condominium Median Sales Price % Change
28.4%	87.7%	256.4%

Source: US Department of Labor

The number of sales of single-family homes and condominiums from 1995 to 2003 is shown in Table 4-13 below. The level of activity in single-family sales has remained at a steady pace between 1996 and 2003, ranging from 69 to 86, with the last three years showing a slight rise in activity. On the other hand, the number of condominium sales for this period has shown a marked increase. The highest number of sales prior to 2002 was 16 in 1998, while in 2002 and 2003, the numbers increased to 25 and 34 respectively. This is most likely due to the construction of units in the Hillside Village condominium project.

**Table 4-13**  
**Number of Residential Sales in West Boylston:**  
**1995 - 2003**

	Single Family Home Sales	Condominium Sales	All Sales
1995	53	5	95
1996	74	9	109
1997	69	15	115
1998	72	16	109
1999	72	12	110
2000	69	14	109
2001	86	11	121
2002	78	25	137
2003	81	34	142

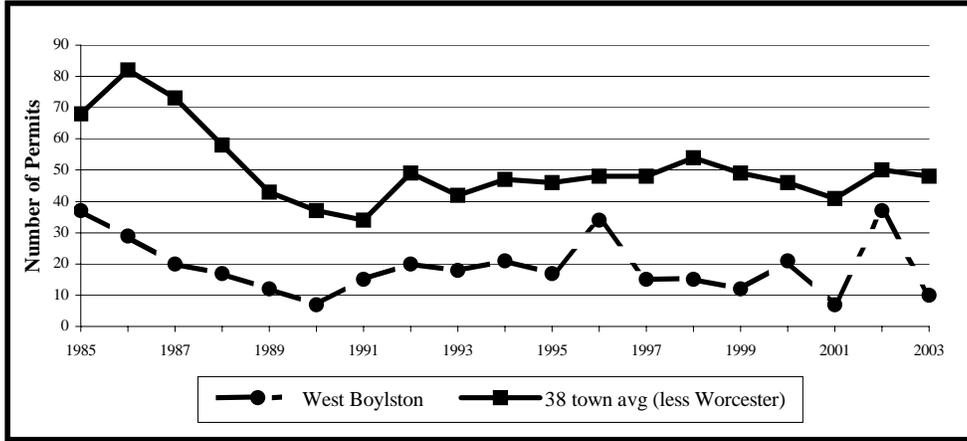
Source: The Warren Group

**New Housing**

The largest number of building permits issued for new housing units in West Boylston during the past 19 years was in 1985 (37), 2002 (37) and 1996 (34). As shown in Figure 4-5, typically these peaks are followed by a year in which there is a sharp decline in issued permits. The historical trend in the average number of building permits issued for the other 38 towns of the CMRPD (excluding Worcester) follows a similar path as the Town of West Boylston. The number of permits issued started dropping in the mid-80s and continued to drop until the early 90s at which time the number leveled off through much of the decade. The spike in 1996 for West Boylston was caused by the 16 units constructed at the Briarwood Elderly Housing Complex, and in 2002, for the Hillside Village Condominiums. While the path of the 2 trend-lines is similar, the combined average for the other towns is 2 to 4 times greater than the number of permits issued in West Boylston.

The average rate of issuance of building permits since 1985 is 19 units per year, and for the 38 other towns in the CMRPD, the average rate is 51 units per year. Part of this difference may be due to the small land area available for new housing due to the presence of a large amount of publicly owned land.

**Figure 4-5  
Building Permits for New Housing Units: 1985 –2003**

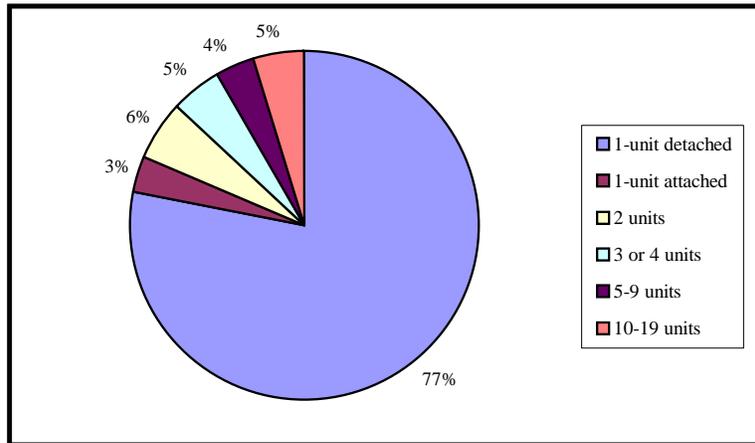


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Types of Structures**

According to the 2000 Census, detached single-family housing units dominate the local housing market as shown in Figure 4-6, with 77% of the total number of units in this category. There are no structures with 20 or more units in the town, nor are there any mobile homes. Single-family attached units (i.e. townhouses) represent 3% of the total number of units, the smallest percentage of the types shown. Thus single family attached and detached units comprise the bulk of the housing units in West Boylston (80%) About 11% of the units are in 2, 3, and 4 unit structures, and about 9% are in buildings containing 5 or more units.

**Figure 4-6  
West Boylston Unit Types**



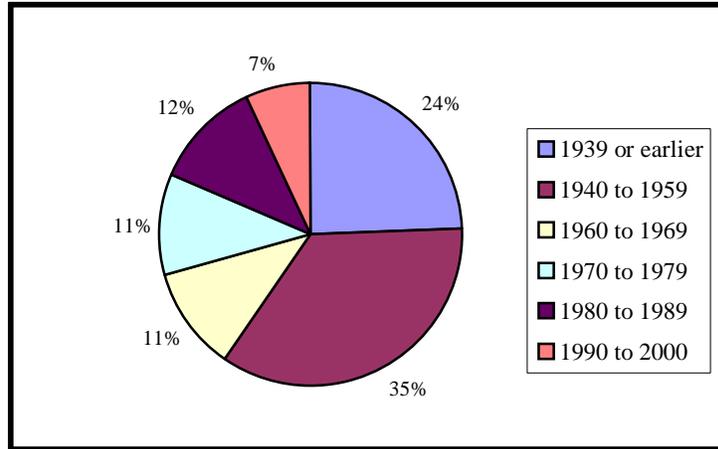
Source: U.S. Census

**Age of Structures**

As shown in Figure 4-7, the largest percentage of existing housing stock in West Boylston was constructed between 1940 and 1959 (35%) Structures built in 1939 or earlier (24%) represent the second largest percentage of housing in the town. 33.7% of the housing stock has a construction date that is spread out evenly (11-12%) across the '60s, '70s, and '80s. Housing construction has been slowest during the 1990's

with only 7% of the housing stock built during this decade. The increase in DCR land acquisition and the dwindling supply of good buildable land for housing purposes probably contributed to this slowdown.

**Figure 4-7**  
**Age of Housing Stock**



Source: U.S. Census

**Household Income**

To determine if the real earning power of West Boylston residents increased during the 1990's, Table 4-14 below adjusts income data from the 1990 Census to 1999 dollars in order to allow an “apples to apples” comparison. Because the jail population distorts the median household income statistics, this analysis uses median family income, which is more representative of West Boylston residents and excludes the inmate population. During the decade, median family income increased \$6,042 in 1999 dollars for a change of 9.6%. The Town ranked 128<sup>th</sup> out of the Commonwealth's 351 communities. West Boylston's income is somewhat below that of its neighbors except for Clinton, whose income was well below that of comparison communities. Princeton, Shrewsbury, and Sterling all experienced double-digit percentage increases during the decade. Real growth in income is desirable as it allows for more disposable income to be spent in the local economy, and is probably indicative of the change in the Town's work force to higher paying professional occupations.

**Table 4-14**  
**Median Family Income 1999: Comparison with Area Towns**

	Median Family Income In 1989 (1999 Dollars)	Median Family Income In 1999 (1999 Dollars)	\$ Change	% Change	State Rank 1999
West Boylston	63,058	69,100	6,042	9.6	128
Boylston	73,487	77,604	4,117	5.6	81
Clinton	52,100	53,308	1,208	2.3	276
Holden	72,072	73,614	1,542	2.1	99
Princeton	71,568	84,300	12,732	17.8	59
Shrewsbury	69,057	77,674	8,617	12.5	79
Sterling	69,264	76,943	7,709	11.1	82

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census

## **Housing Affordability**

A key component of housing analysis is the cost of shelter for local residents. “Affordability” is generally defined to mean that households should spend no more than 30% of their monthly income on housing expenses. Households that pay more than 30% of their income are deemed to be “housing cost burdened”. For renters, housing costs include rent and utilities. For homeowners, housing costs include mortgage principal and interest, taxes, mortgage insurance, and hazard insurance. The 2000 Census provides information on the percentage income homeowners and renters spend on housing. In West Boylston, Table 4-15 shows that 24% of all households have a high cost burden: 21% of households in owner-occupied units, and 36% of households in renter-occupied units spend more than 30% of their household income on housing.

**Table 4-15  
Housing Cost Burden**

% of Income Spent on Housing Cost	Homeowners		Renters		Total	
	# of Units	% of Total Units	# of Units	% of Total Units	# of Units	% of Total Units
Under 15%	623	35.5%	107	23.8%	730	33.1%
15.0% - 19.9%	329	18.8%	40	8.9%	369	16.7%
20.0% - 24.9%	265	15.1%	50	11.1%	315	14.3%
25.0% - 29.9%	170	9.7%	70	15.6%	240	10.9%
30.0% - 34.9%	113	6.4%	31	6.9%	144	6.5%
35.0% and above	254	14.5%	130	28.9%	384	17.4%
Total Households with High Cost Burden	367	20.9%	161	35.8%	528	24.0%
Not Computed	---	---	22	4.9%	22	1.0%

Source: 2000 Census

## **Rental Housing**

As noted in Table 4-15 above, in 1999 161 renting households (35.8%) were paying more than 30% of their income for heat and rent. Furthermore, 20.4% of renters pay more than 50% of household income for rent. In order to afford the median rent in West Boylston of \$612 per month, a household must have an annual income of \$24,480. In 2000, 247 households, or 21.4% of all households, reported incomes of less than \$25,000. Table 4-16 below demonstrates the ability of low and moderate-income households to afford a unit renting for the median rent. Low-income households earning less than 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) are required to pay more than 30% of their income for rent. In 2000, only 81 units were available for under \$500, indicating a shortage of affordable units for low-income households. On the other hand, moderate-income households earning 80% of the AMI are able to afford a unit renting for the median rent. Thus, there is clearly a problem for those of low income to be able to find a unit that is affordable at their income level.

**Table 4-16  
Low and Moderate-Income Rental Affordability**

	# of Households	2-Person Household Monthly Income	Median Rent	% of Monthly Income	Affordable Rent
Low Income (50% of AMI)	271	\$1,812.50	\$612	33.8%	\$544
Moderate Income (80% of AMI)	553	\$2,900.00	\$612	21.1%	\$870

Source: 2000 Census

West Boylston’s median rent of \$612 is generally affordable for two-person moderate-income households. However, there is a substantial low-income population in West Boylston that is housing cost burdened and must pay a greater percentage of their income for rental housing than is considered acceptable.

**Ownership Housing**

An affordability analysis for ownership housing allows for a comparison of the cost of housing using and the ability of a typical household to afford those costs. Housing sales data is collected on a regular basis, and analysis of data for 2003, the most recent year available, provides an understanding of the ability of buyers of different incomes to afford to purchase a home in West Boylston. This analysis uses the 2003 Area Median Income (AMI) for the Worcester Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area of \$68,000.

Table 4-17 displays mortgage payments (principal and interest) under assumptions of buyers purchasing a home with a 5% down payment, an interest rate of 6.5% and a 30-year term. To create a realistic monthly payment, the analysis includes taxes (at the tax rate of \$15.29 per thousand in effect in 2003), and insurance costs, including hazard insurance and private mortgage insurance. Because saving for a down payment can be an obstacle for first-time buyers, the lowest acceptable percentage (5%) is used here. Mortgage insurance is also generally required when mortgage lenders provide more than 80% of the value of the home.

As can be seen in Table 4-17, the median sale price of a single-family detached home in West Boylston in 2003 was \$237,500. Assuming a 5% down payment and 6.5% rate of interest, total monthly payments for principal, interest, taxes, insurance and association fees would amount to \$1,974 per month for a single family home and \$2,011 for a condominium. The greater expense of a condominium is somewhat unusual but may reflect the sales of brand new units at Hillside Village, while the single-family home sales contains a greater mix of older properties. In each instance, the median sales price of a new unit requires a household earning the median income to spend more than 30% of the gross monthly income on housing.

**Table 4-17**  
**Mortgage Payments for Median Income Households**

	<b>Single Family Detached</b>	<b>Condominium</b>
2003 Median Sales Price	\$237,500	\$229,900
5% Down Payment	11,875	11,495
Mortgage Amount	225,625	218,405
Mortgage Payment	1,426	1,380
Taxes	303	293
Insurance	246	238
Association Fee	--	100
Total Monthly Payment	\$1,974	\$2,011
% of Monthly Income	34.8%	35.5%

Table 4-18 displays the affordability of ownership housing in West Boylston for moderate-income households (earning 80% of the median income) and low-income households (earning 50% of the median). Again, using assumptions of a 5% down payment, 6.5% interest, and a 30-year term, it is possible to determine the price of a home these families can afford by spending 30% of their income on housing costs. A household earning 80% of the median income (\$54,400) can afford a home selling for \$163,700. Since it requires an income of \$79,000 to afford a home in West Boylston selling for the median price of \$237,500, there is an income deficit of \$25,400. A household earning 50% of the median would have an even greater income deficit of \$45,000.

The cost of housing is rising at a faster rate than incomes, serving to widen the gap of housing affordability for first-time homebuyers. Between 2000 and 2003, median single family home prices increased by 48%, while the median income of the Worcester PMSA increased by 25% during this span. Even condominiums, often a lower cost option for homeownership, have become increasingly expensive and are nearly as expensive as single-family homes in West Boylston. In just these four years, the median price of a condominium doubled in value (100% increase). Thus, homeownership is becoming more elusive for people of modest means.

**Table 4-18**  
**Comparison of Income to Mortgage Payments**

	<b>80% of Median</b>	<b>50% of Median</b>
Household Income	\$54,400	\$34,000
30% of Monthly Income	1,360	850
Maximum Affordable Price (1)	163,700	102,100
Median Sales Price of a Single-Family Home in 2003	237,500	237,500
Income Required to Afford a Home Selling for the Median	79,000	79,000
Income Gap (2)	\$25,400	\$45,000
% of Monthly Income	43.6%	69.7%

1. The maximum affordable price is based on the household paying 30% of its gross monthly income on principal, interest, taxes and insurance.

2. Income Gap is the difference in yearly income between what the buyer can afford and the income required to buy a unit selling at the median income.

**Supply of Subsidized Housing**

In 1969, Massachusetts enacted M.G.L. Chapter 40B with the goal of increasing the amount of affordable housing in communities throughout the Commonwealth. It contains two major components that are meant to assist developers to build housing that meets the affordable housing criteria specified in the law. First developers may apply for a Comprehensive Permit, in which several local permits 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. Secondly, developers have 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 community’s year-round housing units. To be counted as affordable, a unit must have received some form of public subsidy and be restricted for occupancy by low and moderate-income individuals. For a new development to meet the criteria for affordable housing, 25% of the proposed units project must be affordable to households who earn no more than 80% of the AMI.

As Table 4-19 illustrates, West Boylston’s percentage of 40B housing units in 2004 amounts to 2.85%, well below the state’s goal of 10%. Since the number of 40B units has not change since 1990, and the number of year round units increased, the percentage of affordable units decreased. Table 4-20 shows the locations and types of the 70 affordable units. All of the rental units are owned and managed by the Housing Authority. According to the Director of the Authority, there is an extensive waiting list: about 25 for the elderly units, of which 15 are West Boylston residents, and 300 for the 2 and 3-bedroom family units, of which only 2 are local residents. Because of the shortage of such units statewide, eligible families apply to numerous housing authorities in hopes of filling any vacancy. Despite this demand there are no plans to build additional affordable rental units in town. According to Rural Housing Improvement Inc., the regional administering agency for the Section 8 program for Worcester County, there are two Section 8 vouchers currently in use in West Boylston.

Quantifying the demand for special needs housing in West Boylston has proven to be difficult. Various state agencies that provide residential services were contacted including the Department of Public Health, Division of Youth Services, Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health (DMH), and Department of Mental Retardation (DMR). The Town Wide Planning Committee also met with representatives from DMR and DMH concerning housing availability for those with special needs. Agency contacts stated that the demand in Central Massachusetts greatly surpasses the supply, but it is not possible to quantify how many individuals are West Boylston residents. It is clear that there is a regional need for scattered site housing, and structures that can accommodate 4-8 individuals with live-in assistants is the preferred housing model today. As noted in Table 4-20 there is only one dwelling providing housing for special needs clients. This facility makes no unusual demands on town services nor does it cause negative impacts on the neighborhood. Such uses are exempt from local zoning requirements, but state agencies usually inform communities before opening a new facility. Because of the shortage of beds in the region, West Boylston officials will be open to working with state agencies to address the need.

**Table 4-19  
Supply Of Subsidized Housing**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Year-Round Housing Units</b>	<b>Total Chapter 40B Units</b>	<b>40B Units % of Total</b>
1990	2,264	70	3.09
2004	2,454	70	2.85

Source: U.S. Census and Mass. DHCD

**Table 4-20  
40B Housing Units in 2004**

<b>Address</b>	<b>Total Units</b>	<b>Chapter 40B Units</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
Maple Street	36	34 2	Elderly Handicapped	Rental
Foster Street	8	8	Special Needs	Rental
Maple Street	18	16 2	Family Handicapped	Rental
109 Lancaster Street	32	8	Family	Owner
Total	94	70		

Source: Mass. DHCD

### SUMMARY OF HOUSING CONDITIONS IN WEST BOYLSTON

A distinct need for more subsidized housing in West Boylston is apparent as evidenced by the extensive waiting list for public housing in town. According to the Housing Authority, there are no current plans to build any additional public housing. Based on the current waiting list for affordable family and elderly rental units managed by the Housing Authority, 90 more units would quickly be occupied to meet the demand. With the absence of direct state funding for Housing Authority projects, other means should be employed to increase the stock of affordable housing. West Boylston's Housing Partnership Committee has worked on comprehensive permit applications with private developers under the state's Local Initiative Program (LIP), but so far has been unable to successfully conclude a project. With the strong need demonstrated above for alternatives to expensive single family homes, the Housing Partnership should continue to work with prospective developers to secure good projects. The Town may also need to offer incentives to bring about new affordable housing, such as making Town-owned land available, or offering density bonuses.

With a 2003 median sales price of \$237,500 for a single-family home in West Boylston, it has become increasingly difficult for young families to purchase a home in the community. While newer homes are beyond the reach of typical buyers, the Town's older housing stock still offers affordable units. Fortunately, a drop in interest rates in recent years has increased the ability first time homebuyers to afford a mortgage, but this has been offset by a rapid escalation in housing prices in 2002 and 2003. Banks have attempted to tailor products to meet the needs of those entering the ownership market, but obtaining funds for a down payment and earning sufficient income to afford a mortgage is still a difficult problem for most young families. West Boylston is more likely to attract buyers purchasing their second home after having gained equity from selling a prior home. Even condominiums, which previously were much more affordable than single-family homes, have risen significantly in value to now be unaffordable by low and moderate-income households. With a 2003 median sales price in West Boylston of \$229,900, households earning 80% of AMI would be required to spend 44% of their monthly income on housing payments..

The decrease in population in the 20-34 age group between 1990 and 2000 probably reflects the fact that young families cannot afford the cost of housing in West Boylston. The decrease in the under 5-year age group may be partially reflective of this as well. During the same time period, West Boylston's elderly population (75 and over) grew more than any other age group (39%). This may indicate that there is a need for additional elderly housing, and alternative living arrangements to meet the needs of lower income elderly. As older individuals sell the home they have lived in for many years, their homes become affordable for first-time homebuyers.

The small number of rental units in the Town, only 18.6 % of the year-round housing stock, has the effect of limiting age and cultural diversity in the community. It makes it very difficult for recent college graduates, public servants, and young professionals to find affordable units in West Boylston.

## HOUSING GOALS

1. By the year 2020, West Boylston should have ten percent of its year-round housing stock determined to be affordable units as defined under MGL Chapter 40B.

As shown in Table 4-17, West Boylston has 2.85% of its year-round housing stock qualifying under Chapter 40B, i.e. units that are subsidized and restricted to low and moderate-income households. There were no new units added to the inventory during the previous decade. Assuming West Boylston will have approximately 3,000 units by the year 2020, at that time the Town should have a total of 300 affordable units, and would have to add 230 units to reach the goal. In order to judge whether or not the Town is on a pace to meet this goal, interim milestones should be achieved. By 2010, West Boylston should add 100 units, and by 2015 an additional 65 units. Compliance with the Chapter 40B goal will offer the Town protection from comprehensive permit developments that do not meet the needs of local residents.

2. West Boylston should seek to provide housing for a broad range of incomes. This would include ownership and rental housing for elderly, disabled and civil servants as defined by the Town's housing needs which may vary from time to time.

Because of the increased cost of new construction, it has become increasingly difficult for first time homebuyers to afford to buy a new home in West Boylston. Most homes built in the Town today are not affordable by those who work for the Town or young adults who grew up in West Boylston and are seeking to purchase a home. The Town should develop mechanisms for production of new housing and maintenance of existing housing units that are affordable to middle-income households, i.e. those earning up to 120% of the area median income.

3. West Boylston should encourage housing developments that result in a diverse population and offers alternatives to meet the needs of residents of differing ages, economic status, and household characteristics. All proposed developments should be built in harmony with the environment and be mindful of neighborhood character.

In recent years there has been an increased awareness among residents that there is a need for a variety of housing options to meet local needs. For example, Town Meeting approved a zoning overlay district to allow a continuing care retirement community. With the cost of new single-family homes beyond the reach of most residents, Town policies should promote a variety of housing types to create greater opportunity to live in West Boylston.

4. Seek to amend MGL c. 40B to count the many market-rate units that are already affordable, even without a state or federal subsidy, as units that qualify toward a community's goal of having 10% of its year-round housing stock affordable.

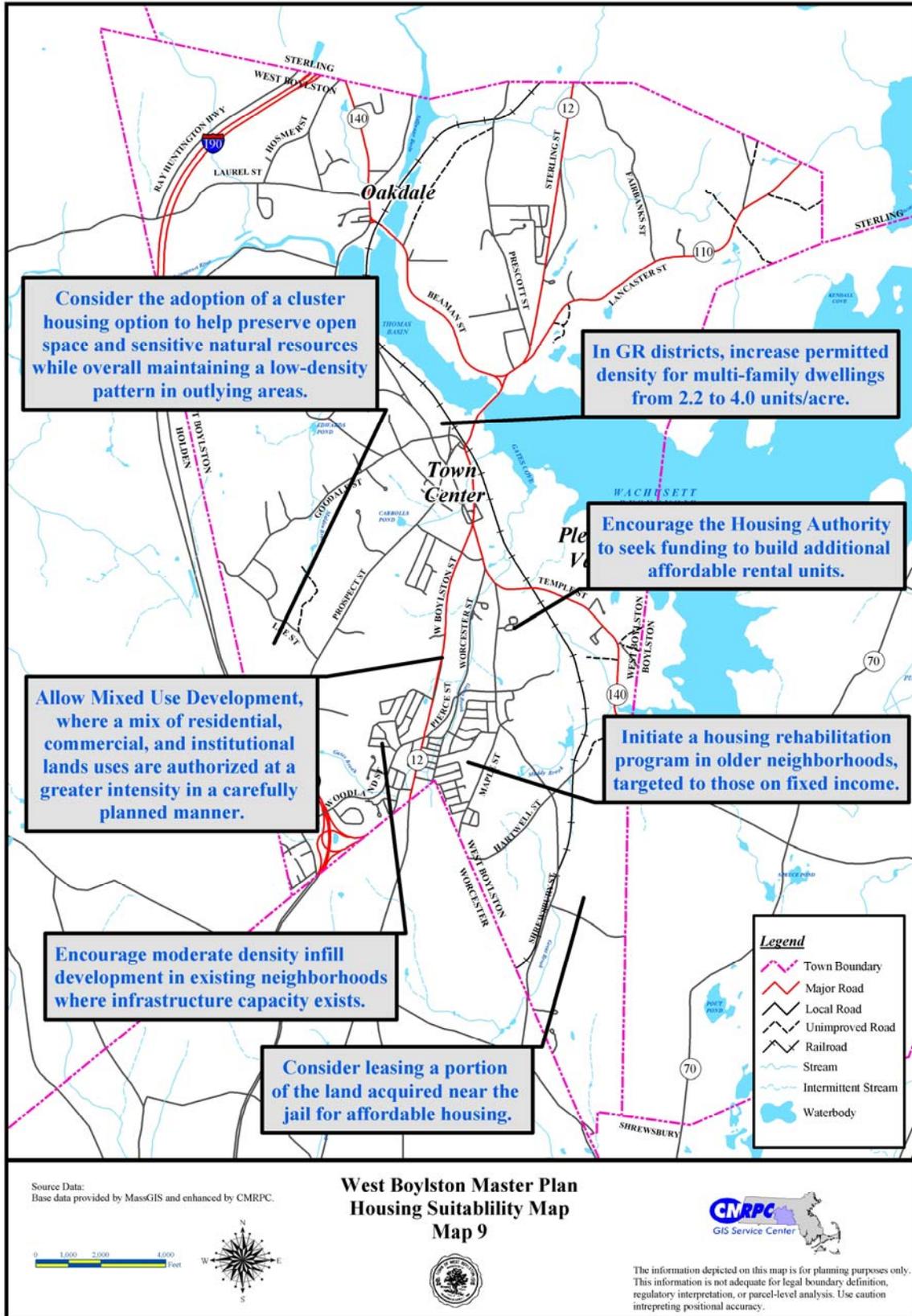
West Boylston has a large supply of older housing units that are small in size and located on small lots that are affordable for many young families and first-time homebuyers. However, since these units were not built with a state or federal subsidy, they cannot be counted toward meeting the 10% goal of Chapter 40B. The Town-Wide Planning Committee recognizes the importance of providing affordable housing and believes such units fully meet the intent of Chapter 40B to provide a broad range of housing choices for households of all incomes. Thus, the Committee will seek to amend the law so that such units can be counted since they truly provide affordable options for those who wish to live in the Town.

### **Strategies to Meet the Goals**

1. If the Town purchases land at the jail, consider leasing a portion of the site for affordable housing.
2. The Housing Authority should seek funding to build additional rental units.
3. Form collaborative relationships with the Housing Authority or the regional administering agency, RCAP Solutions, to increase the use of section 8 certificates and vouchers. These may be project based, i.e. vouchers or certificates that remain with specific units in West Boylston.
4. Promote additional Local Initiative Projects (LIP). The LIP program affords the Town the opportunity to work closely with a developer on all aspects of a project. Even if no financial subsidy is provided,

the technical assistance provided by the state is deemed a subsidy and units count towards the Chapter 40B goal.

5. Create a new non-profit housing trust, or reactivate WORTH (West Boylston Offers Resources to the Handicapped), to raise funds for affordable housing activities. Such an entity offers flexibility in creating affordable housing since it can accept gifts of land or money and can borrow funds to build housing.
6. A Housing Partnership should be empowered to implement a housing agenda to address the needs of the community. Affordable housing development is a complex task that requires committed local leaders and experienced developers. WORTH or the Partnership could work with an experienced non-profit housing developer to bring in expertise in affordable housing development not otherwise available to the Town. RCAP Solutions is one such agency that has expressed a willingness to work with the Town on affordable housing production.
7. Adopt an inclusionary or incentive zoning bylaw to have developers provide housing for low and moderate income families. Under the incentive approach, a developer may opt to seek a bonus, through issuance of a special permit, to increase density if a percentage of the units are permanently restricted to low and moderate-income households. An inclusionary approach requires that a fixed percentage of the units in a development be made available for such households.
8. The Housing Partnership should convene a forum on housing issues in West Boylston.
9. The Town should participate in the soft second mortgage program. First-time homebuyers obtain a second mortgage of 20% of the purchase price, which carries a lower rate and deferral of principal for 10 years to increase one's buying power.
10. Identify land in tax delinquency that may be suitable for housing. Continue with the tax title process for promising sites and offer such properties to developers or first-time homebuyers who will agree to long-term affordability restrictions.
11. Consider re-zoning additional land for higher density housing, especially land near bus routes and with access to water and sewer services. Zoning bylaw requirements for multi-family housing should be revised to include standards to achieve high quality design, neighborhood compatibility, and environmental protection.
12. Evaluate the existing building stock in West Boylston to identify opportunities to rehabilitate structures for affordable housing. Possibilities could include single-family conversions, and older apartment buildings that are in need of renovation.
13. Promote the use of the existing accessory apartment provision of the zoning bylaw to create units reserved for low and moderate-income renters. Determine if the Town can offer incentives that would encourage greater use of this technique.
14. Apply for CDBG funds to start a housing rehabilitation program. This will enable elderly and low and moderate-income households to make needed repairs to their property and to continue to live in their home.
15. Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Under the CPA a real estate surcharge of 1%-3% is applied to all property to raise revenue for affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space acquisition.
16. Use the tool of "limited development" to create some affordable units. Limited development entails selling a percentage of land acquired as open space for new housing. The proceeds from the land sale help to defray the Town's cost of acquiring the site. Rather than seek the highest sale price, the land could be sold at below market value to lower overall housing costs for qualified applicants. Deed restrictions insure the property remains affordable for future buyers.



## CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### ECONOMIC PROFILE

#### Employment

Employment pertains to the number and type of jobs present in a community. As shown in Table 5-1, between 1990 and 2000 West Boylston experienced some changes in the make-up of its employment base:

- Significant gains in total employment occurred from 1990 to 2000, as 883 new jobs were added in West Boylston, increasing the Town's employment base by 32.5%.
- Wholesale and retail trade continues to be the major employer in West Boylston, with over 200 new jobs created during the decade.
- Service jobs were also up sharply, more than doubling in the 10-year period. The service sector is now the third largest employer in the community.
- Government jobs increased sharply as well, increasing by 449 and now total 1,077 jobs. This is largely due to the increased need for prison staff as a result of the growth of the inmate population at the Worcester County Jail from 679 to 1,220 during the past decade.
- Not all sectors fared as well. Manufacturing lost over 200 jobs, declining by about 40%. Only 300 manufacturing jobs remained in West Boylston in 2000.
- Jobs in the construction industry declined by 11.6%, but only 24 jobs were lost. Construction jobs tend to mirror changes in the national economy, and this decline may not represent a major change in the Town's economic make-up.

**Table 5-1  
Employment by Industry in West Boylston**

	Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing	Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation, & Communication, & Public Utilities.	Wholesale & Retail Trade	Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	Services	Government	Total Employment
1990	14	207	511	48	897	42	368	628	2,715
2000	12	183	305	90	1,118	57	756	1,077	3,598
Change	-2	-24	-206	42	221	15	388	449	883
% Change	-14.3	-11.6	-40.3	87.5	24.6	35.7	105.4	71.5	32.5

Source: Mass. D.E.T.

While Table 5-1 shows the make-up of the employment in West Boylston, Table 5-2 shows the composition of the Town's labor force, that is, how West Boylston residents are employed. Data is obtained from the 2000 Census long form. The industry categories that were used changed from 1990 to 2000; therefore, a meaningful comparison of the data cannot be made during the decade. The greatest percentage of residents (26.5%) work in the Education, Health, and Social Services fields, and the Wholesale and Retail Trade category has the second largest percentage with 15.2% of the workers. Categories with less than 100 workers include: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (14); Information (68); and Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities (98).

**Table 5-2  
Industry of West Boylston's Employed Residents: 2000**

	Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing	Construction	Manufacturing Transportation, warehousing & Utilities	Wholesale & Retail Trade Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, & Rental & Leasing	Information Professional, Management, Administration Services Education, Health, & Social Services	Recreation, Accommodations, & Food Services, etc.	Other Services	Public Administration	Total				
Number	14	175	412	98	470	307	68	258	822	187	156	132	3,099
%	0.5	5.6	13.3	3.2	15.2	9.9	2.2	8.3	26.5	6.0	5.0	4.3	

Source: 2000 Census

### **Unemployment Rates**

Compared to state and national trends, West Boylston residents have fared very well in staying employed. As shown in Table 5-3, the Town's unemployment rate for the years 1985 through 1998 consistently averaged about a full point lower than the state rate. In 1999 and 2000 the two rates were apart by only a few tenths of a point. Over this time period the unemployment trend in West Boylston has generally followed that of the state. In 11 of the 17 years, the Town's unemployment rate fell below 4%, the generally accepted mark for a well-utilized labor force. When the unemployment rate falls to two or three percent, employers may have difficulty finding not only skilled technicians and professionals, but also laborers and unskilled workers for retail and service jobs. In order for expansion to occur, it is imperative that West Boylston employers have access to a steady supply of skilled and unskilled workers throughout the region to meet their needs.

**Table 5-3  
Annual Unemployment Rates**

Year	U.S.	Mass.	West Boylston	Year	U.S.	Mass.	West Boylston
1985	7.2	3.9	2.8	1994	6.1	6.0	4.8
1986	7.0	3.8	2.8	1995	5.6	5.4	4.4
1987	6.2	3.2	2.2	1996	5.4	4.3	2.9
1988	5.5	3.3	1.9	1997	4.9	4.0	3.0
1989	5.3	4.0	3.4	1998	4.5	3.3	2.3
1990	5.5	6.0	5.2	1999	4.2	3.2	3.0
1991	6.7	9.1	8.1	2000	4.0	2.6	2.3
1992	7.4	8.6	7.9	2001	4.8	3.7	2.8
1993	6.9	6.9	5.9	2002	5.8	5.3	4.6

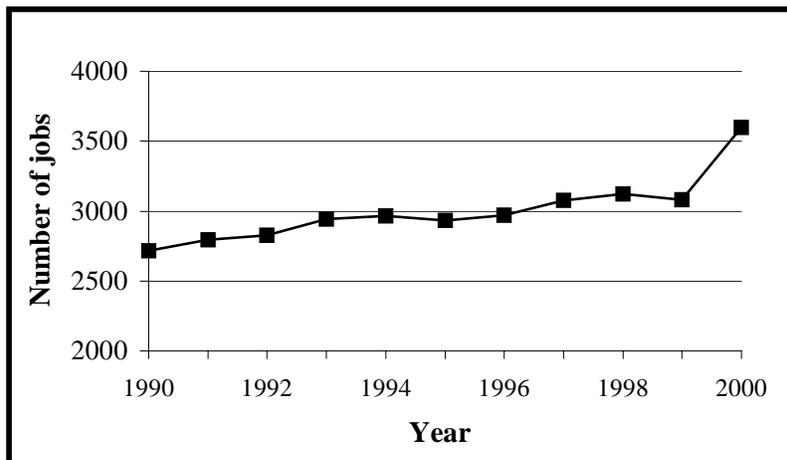
Source: Mass. D.E.T.

**Total Employment and Annual Wages**

The number of jobs in West Boylston grew steadily during the last decade, with a low of 2,731 in 1990, and by 2000, employment reached a high of 3,619 jobs. See Figure 5-1 below.

The average annual wage in West Boylston climbed 35% from \$21,079 in 1990 to \$28,519 in 2000. This wage increase was slightly ahead of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index, which increased 33% during that same period.

**Figure 5-1  
Number of Jobs in West Boylston: 1990 – 2000**



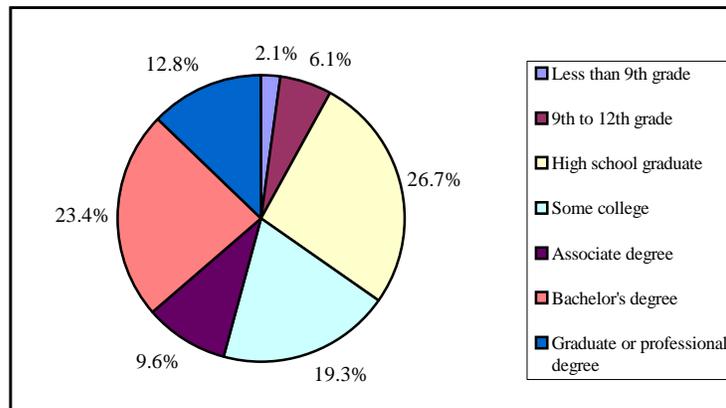
Source: Mass. D.E.T.

**Education**

The Educational Attainment of West Boylston residents is shown in Figure 5-2. Because jail inmates are not truly residents of the Town, the chart contains data with Block Group 4 of Census Tract 7291 removed from the analysis. Residents with a high school diploma, but no higher education, represent the largest segment of the Town’s population (26.7%). The second largest group has a Bachelor’s Degree (23.4%), followed by residents with some college course work (19.3%) Those with an Associates Degree or higher comprise 45.8% of the Town’s population. About 8.1% dropped out before graduating from high school.

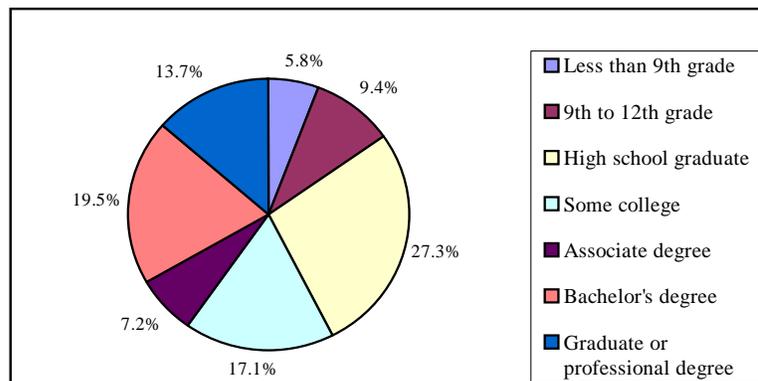
Figure 5-3 reveals how West Boylston residents compare to the state population. As in West Boylston, the largest segment has a high school diploma, but no higher education (27.3%). The second largest group has a Bachelor’s Degree (19.5%) followed by those with some college courses (17.1%). These percentages are similar to West Boylston’s. As would be expected, the state data shows a higher number at the lower end of the spectrum: 5.8% of the state’s population has less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education – more than twice the rate of West Boylston (2.1%), West Boylston has a higher percentage than the state of residents with a Bachelor’s Degree (23.4% v. 19.5%) and nearly as high a rate as the state of residents with graduate or professional degrees (12.8% v. 13.7%). Massachusetts is a leader in the field of higher education and boasts one of the highest number of persons with advanced degrees in the U.S. West Boylston is certainly comparable to the state as a whole in terms of its educational attainment.

**Figure 5-2**  
**West Boylston Educational Attainment**



Source: 2000 Census

**Figure 5-3**  
**Massachusetts Educational Attainment**

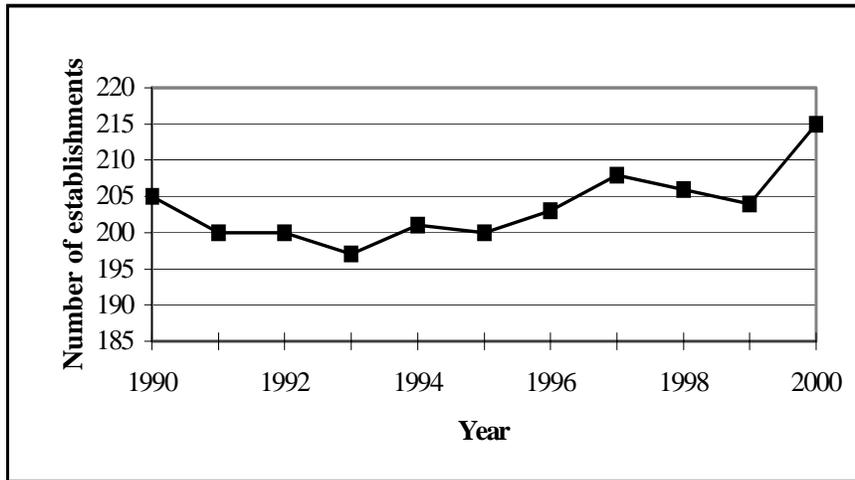


Source: 2000 Census

**Business and Industrial Establishments in West Boylston**

The number of establishments in West Boylston has not changed significantly over the last 10 years as shown in Figure 5-3. The decade started with 205 and ended with a high of 215. It dipped to a low of 197 in 1993. One can infer that business activity in town is fairly stable without wide fluctuations in the number of establishments or employment.

**Figure 5-4  
West Boylston Establishments: 1990 - 2000**



Source: Mass. DET

A breakdown of the types of establishments that existed in West Boylston as of 1999 is shown in Table 5-4 below. Retail trade had the largest number of establishments with 37, followed by the Other Services category with 27, and Construction with 21.

**Table 5-4  
West Boylston Establishments by Industry: 1999**

Sector	Construction	Manufacturing	Wholesale Trade	Retail Trade	Finance & Insurance	Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	Administration, Support, Waste Management, & Remediation Services	Health Care & Social Assistance	Accommodation & Food Services	Other Services	Miscellaneous
Establishments	21	10	13	37	8	9	15	9	17	14	27	19

Source: Bureau of the Census, Business Patterns by Zip Code, 1999

### Commercial/Industrial Expansion

Based upon data from the Building Department, commercial and industrial expansion in West Boylston had been slow until recently. As shown in Table 5-5, from 1997 to 2000 there were only 3 projects with a significant commercial development component, all in the Hartwell St. industrial district: Luxtec, an industrial renovation of 30,000 sq. ft. in 2000; Mercantile/Image Press, a new printing facility with 59,000 square feet in 1999; and a new warehouse/office building with 30,000 square feet in 1997 originally for Contract Marketing, now EPT, Inc. During 2001, however, four new commercial buildings were constructed and two additions were built, expanding the Town's commercial space by 122,664 square feet. Two of the new buildings added in 2001 are in the Worcester Corporate Center industrial park. FedEx built a new distribution facility, and Mass Materials Research relocated from Route 12 for larger office and laboratory space. The other projects entail commercial expansions in the Route 12 business district. The largest of these was the renovation of the former Wright Line building by Checkerboard, Inc. to house its stationery production operation. The Route 12 projects demonstrate the continued economic viability of the Town's principal commercial corridor. The commercial/industrial expansion that occurred between 1997 and 2001 (as shown in Table 5-5) generated \$155,834.28 in tax revenues for the Town in 2002 based on the 2002 assessments and 2002 tax rate of \$16.20 per thousand.

**Table 5-5  
West Boylston Commercial/Industrial Expansion: 1997 - 2003**

Year	Name	Address	Proposed Use	Type	Size (Sq. Ft.)	2002 Assessment
1997	Contract Marketing (Current owner EPT, Inc. as of 2001)	150 Hartwell St.	Warehouse and office	New	30,000	\$1,612,900
1999	Mercantile/Image Press	70 Hartwell St.	Office and offset printing	New	59,000	\$1,542,500
2000	Clinton Savings Bank	231 W. Boylston St.	Bank	Renova.	950	\$272,100
2000	Luxtec (formerly Checkerboard)	99 Hartwell St.	Industrial	Renova.	30,000	\$1,272,000 (building)
2001	Checkerboard	216 W. Boylston St.	Graphic arts	Renova.	60,000	\$2,063,000 (building)
2001	Mass Materials Research	Century Dr.	Office space, laboratory, machine shop	New	20,000	\$395,400
2001	The Bagel Inn	26 W. Boylston St.	Eat-in & take-out restaurant	New	1,800	\$405,400
2001	Federal Express	300 Century Dr.	Distribution	New	88,514	\$953,900
2001	Shell Car Wash	257 W. Boylston St.	Car wash and utility room	New+ addition	1,185	\$325,500
2001	Manor Restaurant	39 Franklin St.	Restaurant and banquet facility	Addition	11,165	\$776,700 (existing structure)
2003	Webster First Federal Credit Union	149 W. Boylston	Financial	New		
2004	American Red Cross	Century Drive	Office/Training	New		

Source: West Boylston Building Department

**Comparison of Assessed Values with Neighboring Towns**

Table 5-6 below shows the Fiscal 2002 total assessed value of all property in West Boylston and the tax levy percentages of commercial, industrial and residential classes. These figures are also shown for six surrounding towns in order to provide a comparison of West Boylston with its neighbors. Interestingly, West Boylston has the highest percentage of commercial/industrial total assessed value among all of these communities. This is very likely due to the high volume of businesses clustered along Route 12 and the development of industrial and commercial properties that has occurred within the last few years described above.

**Table 5-6  
FY 2002 West Boylston Tax Levy\* vs. Surrounding Towns**

Town	Total Assessment	Commercial	Industrial	Commercial & Industrial	Residential
West Boylston	\$ 512,808,273	10.26%	6.11%	16.37%	80.49%
Boylston	\$ 425,314,620	6.22%	2.82%	9.04%	89.52%
Clinton	\$ 631,328,434	5.91%	7.70%	13.61%	84.43%
Holden	\$ 1,103,110,600	4.39%	1.92%	6.31%	92.23%
Princeton	\$ 303,545,093	2.01%	.42%	2.43%	96.41%
Shrewsbury	\$ 2,655,446,563	9.51%	4.57%	14.08%	83.62%
Sterling	\$ 586,990,147	4.78%	5.52%	10.30%	87.29%

Source: Mass. Department of Revenue

\*Not shown: Open Space and Personal Property

**ROUTE 12 CORRIDOR STUDY**

CMRPC completed a study of the Rte 12 Corridor in late 2000 and presented its findings at a public forum in February 2001. This is the primary business district in West Boylston and contains most of the Town’s commercial properties. The study contained a Buildout analysis to demonstrate potential future growth given current zoning regulations and environmental constraints. Specific recommendations were made to insure the continued economic viability of the corridor, including the ability of traffic to flow smoothly, the aesthetic appearance of existing and future development on the Town’s character, and ways to increase the intensity of development. CMRPC’s findings and the recommendations that resulted from the forum in these areas are outlined below.

**Findings**

- A breakdown of the land use in the study area reveals:
  1. 55 commercial properties on 28.7 acres (10.6% of study area)
  2. 5 industrial properties on 1.3 acres (0.5% of study area)
  3. 154 residential properties on 231.1 acres (85.4% of study area)
  4. 13 Tax exempt properties on 9.5 acres (3.5% of study area)
  5. 1 other property on 6.6 acres (2.4% of study area)
- Business expansion potential:
  1. Few vacant lots exist and only 4 of them exceed the district’s minimum lot size.
  2. The expansion potential for existing built lots is restricted due to their small size and/or Cohen Bill\* stipulations. Site drainage will have to be improved on many of these sites if their owners

want to expand. Of the corridor's 88 lots, the Cohen Bill affects 71.6% or 63 properties. Of the 154 acres in the corridor, the bill affects 45.4% or 70 acres.

\*The Cohen Bill, also known as the Watershed Protection Act of 1992, is a state law that authorizes the Department of Conservation and Recreation to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting public drinking water supplies in the Quabbin, Wachusett, and Ware River watersheds. It stipulates the following:

- ❑ **Primary Protection Zone** -- Building or alteration of land in any way within 400 feet of a reservoir and 200 feet of tributaries to the Wachusett Reservoir and surface waters is prohibited.
- ❑ **Secondary Protection Zone** – On land between 200' and 400' feet of tributaries and surface waters, within floodplains, over moderate to high yield aquifers, and within bordering vegetated wetlands certain activities are prohibited, such as storage, disposal or use of toxic or hazardous materials, operation of junk and salvage yards, and rendering impervious more than 10% of any lot or 2,500 square feet, whichever is greater.

CMRPC conducted a build-out analysis of the amount of commercial space potentially available in the corridor, given zoning requirements and environmental constraints. As shown in Table 5-7, the analysis revealed that 581,719 additional square feet of commercial space could be created through lateral expansion, and 687,563 could be created if both lateral and vertical expansion opportunities were pursued. With one-story buildings the norm, there is a potential increase of 70% over the existing floor area if all properties are built to their maximum potential. However, such an increase would have the effect of adding significant traffic loads to Route 12 as indicated in Table 5-8, on the order of 5,000 new trips per day.

**Table 5-7  
Route 12 Potential Floor Area Expansion**

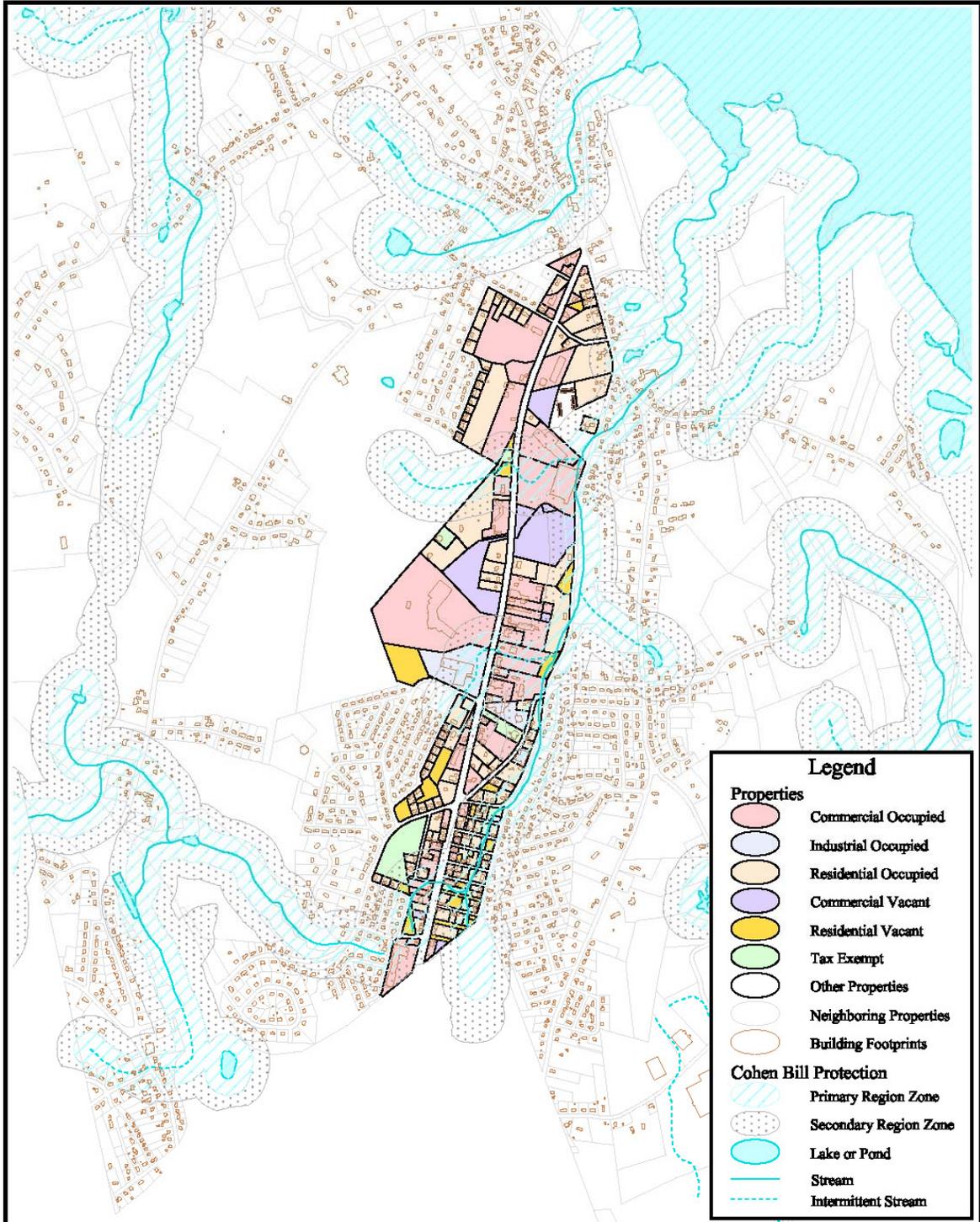
Land Use	Total Properties	Existing Floor Area	Expansion Properties	Additional Floor Area One Story	Additional Floor Area: Multi-Story
Commercial	47	710,344	11	333,404	401,951
Vacant Commercial	8	0	4	149,543	186,840
Industrial	5	105,526	0	0	0
Tax Exempt	1	15,037	0	0	0
Residential	27	NA	5	98,772	98,772
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>830,907</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>581,719</b>	<b>687,563</b>

Source: CMRPC

**Table 5-8  
Route 12 Vehicles Per Day – Trip Generation Based on Build-Out**

	Existing Traffic (vehicles per day)	Added Traffic (vehicles per day)	Percent Increase
One Story Expansion	14,636 – 18,350	4,849	26-33%
Multi-Story Expansion	14,636 – 18,350	5,731	31-39%

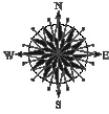
Source: CMRPC



Source data:  
Parcel and building footprints from the Town of West Boylston, Cohen Bill regulated areas from the Metropolitan District Commission. Hydrography are 1:25,000 from MassGIS as derived from USGS.

Scale: 0 500 1000 Feet

Data note:  
Map was originally prepared in Spring 2000 based on parcel data available at that time.



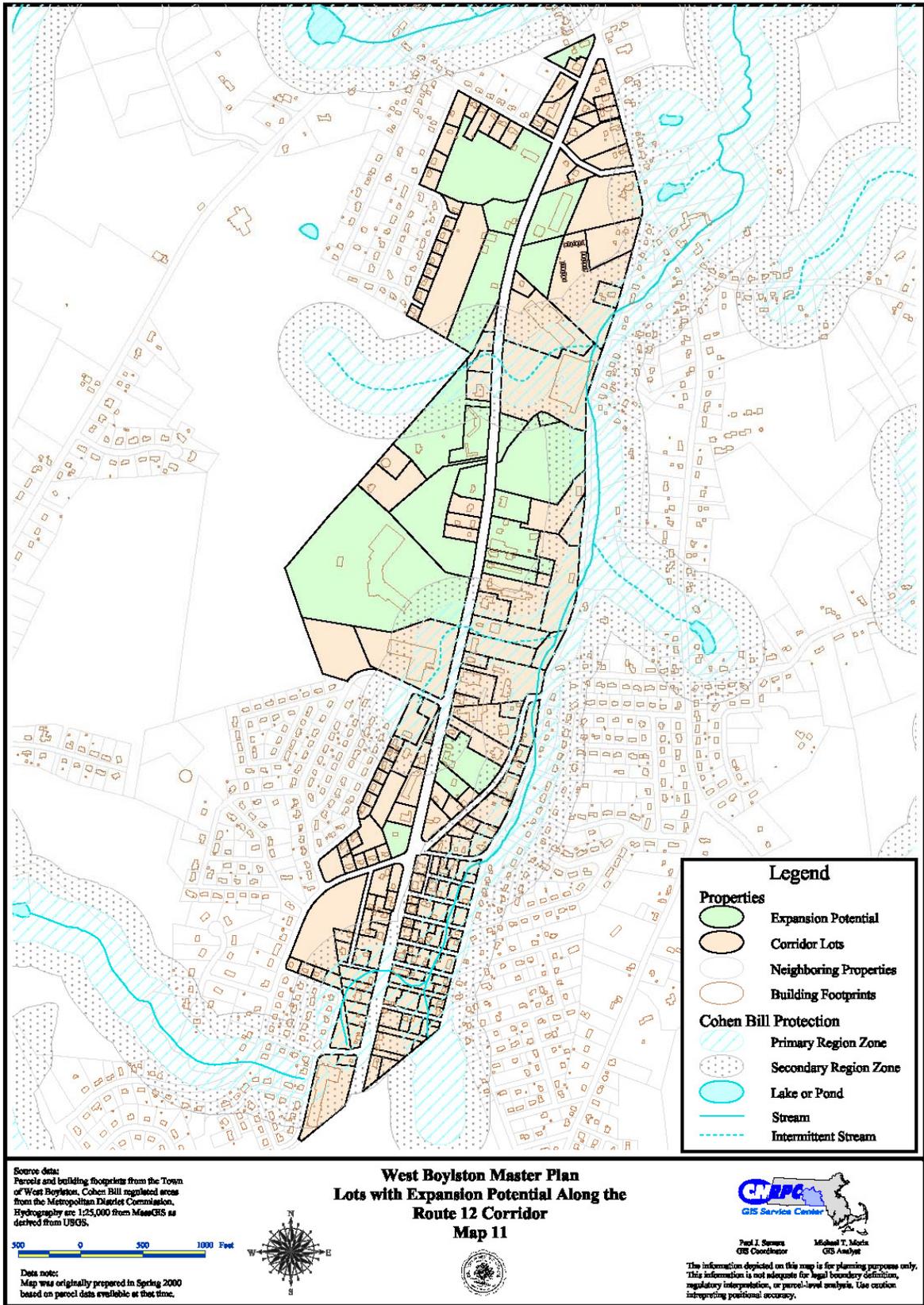
**West Boylston Master Plan  
Route 12 Corridor  
Map 10**



Paul J. Serrano  
GIS Coordinator

Michael T. Martin  
GIS Analyst

The 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.



## **Route 12 Corridor Recommendations**

The resulting recommendations from this study focused on measures that would attract new businesses by streamlining the approval process and making the corridor more aesthetically pleasing. Environmental and traffic flow considerations were also included in these recommendations.

Based upon these recommendations, the Planning Board proposed a package of zoning amendments that were adopted by Town Meeting in 2002. These include:

- New design standards and submission requirements to improve the site planning process for new or re-developed properties.
- Increase building height in the Business District from 35' to 50'.
- Reduce the minimum front yard setback from 25 to 10 feet.
- Measures to improve traffic flow.
  1. Reduce the number of required parking spaces per business when 2 or more businesses agree to share parking and a combined entrance.
  2. Limit each property to one entrance and one exit per street.
  3. Encourage one combined entrance/exit for businesses separated by a traffic island that is clearly labeled.
- Improve Stormwater Management by requiring all site plan applicants to submit drainage calculations in accordance with DEP's Stormwater Guidelines.
- Improve commercial lighting by adopting standards to ensure lighting is aesthetically pleasing and does not create glare that extends beyond property lines.

In addition to regulatory changes, the study recommended that West Boylston undertake a full reconstruction of Route 12 due to its deteriorated condition and poor aesthetic quality. This work is estimated to cost approximately \$8 million. The design cost, which the Town will be responsible for, is estimated at \$800,000. The following items should be addressed during the reconstruction:

- Consolidate curb cuts to enable traffic to flow more smoothly and reduce the number of accidents.
- Add sidewalks to allow for easier pedestrian access to businesses.
- Bury utility lines underground to enhance the visual experience of driving through this corridor.

## **SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN WEST BOYLSTON**

- The Town's economic base is composed primarily of small businesses. There is no one large employer that makes a high property tax payment to fund local services. The jail (tax-exempt) is the largest employer in the Town.
- Two near-by interchanges with I-190 provide a ready access to the interstate highway system.
- Bordering Worcester, there exists a strong regional economic market that West Boylston can draw upon. With Fitchburg and Leominster to the north, the Town is well situated to provide services to a large area.
- Many small retailers find the Route 12 Corridor attractive. There appears to be a wide diversity of offerings, with a concentration in antique shops and miscellaneous retail uses. Retail trade makes up the largest concentration of economic activity in the Town, and most of these shops have few employees.
- The Route 12 Buildout Analysis demonstrated that only a few large commercial lots exist in the Corridor that can accommodate new growth. Because of the age and condition of many of the buildings, it is likely that renovation and expansion will be the primary vehicle for growth in the Corridor. The expansion of the Manor Restaurant is an example of what to expect in the future.
- The Town's labor force is well educated and the Region possesses enormous resources of knowledge and expertise with its many schools of higher education.
- Because of the small, stable population in town, business growth will be dependent upon the ability of existing firms to attract customers from beyond the Town's boundaries to sample what the Town has to offer. A marketing strategy keyed upon local assets is essential to draw regional residents to the Town, and provision of diverse activities will draw them back again.
- The sewer construction project will bring the benefits of a public sewer system to most of the Town's commercial and industrial districts. Development had been limited by soil conditions to accommodate on-site septic systems. Higher intensity development will now be possible, up to the floor area permitted by zoning.
- The Business Survey results indicate that most business people feel West Boylston is a good place to run a business, but feel that Town officials do not support their needs.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

1. Improve communication between the Town and business community to resolve differences and develop a closer working relationship.
2. Increase the capacity of the local government to promote economic development by insuring adequate resources are devoted to the task.
3. Seek to broaden the tax base by promoting new economic development in designated business and industrial zones where neighborhood impacts can be minimized.
4. Promote small-scale retail and tourist oriented outlets that build upon existing strengths and are compatible with the skills of the local workforce.
5. Implement a Marketing Strategy that highlights the Town's natural resource assets, convenient location and proximity to Worcester, regional economic strengths, and service-oriented government.
5. Seek to retain local companies wherever possible by offering consistent practices, efficient services, and a supportive environment for running a business.
6. Provide quality physical infrastructure to meet the needs business and industry, including an adequate supply of clean water, sewage treatment, and congestion-free roads in good condition.

## **Economic Development Strategies**

The economic profile for West Boylston provides the foundation upon which to build an economic development strategy. Building on the Region's strengths can identify areas where local efforts can yield positive results in attracting the type of growth most suitable for the Town. Presented below is an outline of major initiatives that should be pursued in order to capture new growth for the community.

### *1. Create Economic Development Commission or Task Force*

Currently there is no public entity charged with promoting economic development. The Route 12 merchants have a loose affiliation and come together to advocate for changes that support their needs. However, the Town itself does not have an active program in place to support economic growth. If a formal entity is desired, a Town Meeting article could establish an Economic Development Commission (EDC) pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40 §8A, with a clear charge and specific goals to guide its actions. An EDC is intended to promote economic growth in a community in accordance with long-range planning objectives. Under §8A, an EDC "shall conduct researches into industrial conditions, investigate and assist in the establishment of educational or commercial projects, including projects involving private enterprise, for the purpose of expanding or strengthening the local economy, and shall seek to co-ordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for said purposes ..." The EDC should have a modest budget to enable it to engage in promotional and recruitment activities in order to carry out its mission. A second, less formal option is for the Board of Selectmen to establish an ad hoc Economic Development Task Force that would have public and private sector representatives. This entity would advise the Selectmen on economic and tax policy, promote high quality development, encourage diversity of businesses, and advocate for changes to make it easier for companies to operate successfully in West Boylston.

In either case, such an entity would serve as a vehicle for communication, where the public and private sectors can debate appropriate economic development policy for the Town, seek to develop a consensus, and work to promote economic growth. An EDC would foster a better business climate by increasing communication between the business community and town government. The EDC can interact with land use boards whose decisions have a direct impact on the desirability of the Town for business development. The EDC would advocate for changes in policy, seek economic development grants, encourage the entire community to support local businesses, and seek to attract new businesses to West Boylston. The EDC would also act as a liaison with state economic officials and be alert for new programs and opportunities that the Town may wish to take advantage of. State officials would also welcome the ability to have a designated board to contact when companies are seeking sites in the region, or when new programs are available that may be suited to West Boylston companies. Upon adoption of the Master Plan, the EDC would be charged with implementing recommendations pertaining to economic development.

### *2. Play to the Strengths of Non-Residential Districts*

The strengths of commercial and industrial areas can be used to advantage and marketed to promote each area's assets.

- The Hartwell Street industrial district should be focused on traditional industrial activities to generate tax revenue, provide jobs for West Boylston residents, and complement regional economic strengths. Access should be improved to minimize traffic impacts on residential neighborhoods.
- The Worcester Corporate Center provides opportunity for high value office, R&D, and light industrial uses. This industrial park has pad-ready sites and a prestigious location to attract a major technology company.
- The Route 12 commercial district should be reserved for restaurants, multi-tenant buildings, retail stores and service businesses that provide conveniences for West Boylston residents and draws outside shoppers from the larger region. Substantial public investment in the highway and adjacent land is needed to enhance economic growth along the highway.

- Oakdale should be preserved as a traditional New England village with small-scale commercial activity that respects the character of the area and is in scale with existing buildings.
- The Town Center area should be reserved for high-end retail shops and small professional offices, such as doctors, lawyers, dentists, etc. The area has potential to become a pedestrian-oriented shopping district and zoning should be revised to promote this concept.

### 3. *Encourage Small Business Development*

A wide variety of shops and services exist that meet local needs. These form the largest segment of the local economy and include professional offices, personal services, small retail shops, and a supermarket. In addition, a few businesses cater to outside customers, such as the West Boylston Cinema, the Manor Restaurant, Classic Suites and Inns, and Wal-Mart. But it is unlikely that West Boylston will ever be a regional shopping destination with malls, “big box” retailers, and large strip commercial power centers. 74% of all business has fewer than 10 employees. Since smaller companies make up the backbone of the economic base, it is important for the Town to do what it can to insure the public sector provides a safe and healthy environment within which to operate such a business. Local government can offer incentives to re-locate or expand here, eliminate barriers that discourage growth, improve communication among local boards, process routine applications more efficiently, and make improvements to the public infrastructure including the road network, pedestrian connections, and water, sewer, and drainage systems.

### 4. *Improve Communication Among Municipal Boards and Departments*

The review and approval process established for permitting a business expansion or relocation should allow for a careful evaluation of impacts and an opportunity to address issues of concern to the community. In return, applicants are entitled to a fair hearing and reasonable period of time for local officials to render a decision. Volunteer members of land use boards depend upon the advice and expertise of technical staff and public utility providers. To help these permitting bodies render prompt and technically sound decisions, all boards and departments need to work closely together to insure that the wide variety of municipal concerns any development project raises are addressed at the plan approval stage. This will insure fairness to applicants, reduce unnecessary delays or costly re-design of plans, and promote new economic development in the community.

### 5. *Act in Concert with Regional Economic Strengths*

West Boylston is part of the greater Worcester economic market, and strategies that complement regional strengths can yield positive benefits. The region is particularly strong in the areas of medicine, medical instruments, biotechnology, software development, computer equipment, insurance, telecommunications, and fiberoptics. Recruitment efforts directed to companies in these clusters are more likely to yield successes than attempting to attract companies in sectors without a foothold in Central Massachusetts. Because of the concentration of existing firms, there exists a strong employment base for similar companies to draw upon. Central Massachusetts is also home to 12 colleges and universities that combined possess an abundance of skilled faculty, educated students, and community outreach programs that provide technical assistance. This regional strength can be used to advantage when companies seeking to re-locate have need to draw upon the excellent research capabilities and large pool of skilled graduates available in the Region.

West Boylston’s convenient location in the region’s core makes it attractive to businesses that make up these industry clusters. Developing linkages between these sectors and associated professional services, suppliers, software developers, etc. offer opportunities to fill gaps and expand economic potential. West Boylston should seek to be a location where support services for such industries can be located. For example, financial offices, professional services, distribution facilities, and the like can be encouraged as a means of complementing the region’s economic strengths.

### 6. *Become Active in Regional and State Economic Development Planning*

Many aspects of economic development require cooperation on a regional level, and communities working together can insure that the region receives its fair share of state and federal economic development assistance. As one small member community in a larger economic region, West Boylston would not be expected to take a lead role in directing economic development efforts, but the Town can

and should become a more active player in regional economic affairs. The Town's economy cannot be viewed in isolation from that of the Region. It therefore behooves the Town to cooperate in regional initiatives to insure that the region's economy stays strong and responds to fluctuations in the state and national economies.

There are a number of regional programs that the Town would benefit from if it became an active participant. These include the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Worcester Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (CEDS), the Manufacturing Advancement Center (MAC), and the area's Workforce Investment Board. Benefits of participation include networking with other members, learning of potential economic opportunities, lending the Town's voice for initiatives of a regional nature to insure its needs are recognized, helping to formulate regional economic policy, learning of state and federal programs and funding opportunities, and keeping the Town and Region eligible for state and federal grants. Private and public sector officials pulling together can insure that a united front is maintained to bring private investment to the area.

The power of partnering with existing state and regional entities should not be underestimated. It is difficult for any one community or agency to have all of the expertise that is needed to sustain and grow the Central Massachusetts economy. Maintaining close communication with a wide variety of related organizations, and relying upon the expertise of other professionals can stretch limited resources to their fullest extent.

7. *Become a Member of an Economic Target Area (ETA)*

Many surrounding communities are members of a state designated Economic Target Area. Such a designation offers important incentives to attract new business to a community. Foremost among these is a 5% state investment tax credit that provides relief of state taxes when a company relocates or expands its business. Because West Boylston is not a member of an ETA, it is at a disadvantage when companies are making expansion or re-location decisions. As part of the process, individual proposals must come before Town Meeting for action on a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) request. A TIF is a negotiated agreement whereby a town agrees to abate property taxes for a specified period of time, up to 20 years; in return, the business agrees to expand or re-locate and create a specified number of new jobs. Once local approval is obtained, the company can apply for the state 5% investment tax credit, which is commonly more important for the company than the TIF.

Community members within an ETA need not be contiguous. The most logical possibility for West Boylston is to seek membership in the Northern Worcester County ETA, which includes Rutland, Clinton, Leominster, Fitchburg and several other north county communities. To become a member, the Town must obtain permission of the existing members in the ETA, and prepare documentation of economic conditions so that if the Town is given permission to join, indicators of economic distress for the ETA as a whole do not exceed certain minimum requirements.

8. *Develop a Marketing Program*

The EDC should develop a marketing strategy in order to promote West Boylston as a desirable community to locate a small business. The marketing strategy should be geared to the economic strengths of the Town and its likely target business audience. The principal sectors that offer economic opportunity include small retail specialty shops along the Route 12 corridor, small to medium size industries in the Hartwell Street industrial district, and light industrial and distribution uses in the Worcester Corporate Center. Included among the marketing tools the Town should pursue are:

- Develop the Town's web site to highlight advantages of doing business in West Boylston.
- Maintain an inventory of available land and vacant building space. Develop a database of existing commercial and industrial properties with utilities available and building characteristics. Place this information in site search databases of other entities, especially the Mass. Alliance for Economic Development (MAED) and the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.
- Harness the existing rail line as a resource for industry.

- Promote quality of life issues that make the community special, such as the Wachusett Greenways trail initiatives, the open space views of the Wachusett Reservoir, the community school system, etc.
- Prepare a glossy brochure that can be distributed when inquiries are made by site seekers that highlights the strengths of West Boylston and the region of which it is a part.
- Highlight the Town's low, one-class tax rate.

#### 9. *Improve Route 12 Corridor*

The physical appearance of the Route 12 Corridor is an impediment to expanding business opportunity. With its rough pavement, broken curbs, cracked sidewalks, numerous electric poles, overhead power lines, and poorly marked travel lanes, the strip offers little to attract outside investment. The Corridor serves an important economic function by providing an array of goods and services for local residents. Most residents have become used to its appearance and take it for granted. But a reconstruction of the roadway, locating power lines underground, clearly identifying travel and turning lanes, eliminating confusing and unneeded curb cuts, adding street trees and planting strips, and providing safe pedestrian access via new sidewalks will promote additional private investment. Its current condition reflects poorly upon the character of the Town.

A facelift of the public infrastructure will encourage private owners to also invest in their buildings, parking lots and signs to promote a more attractive appearance and create a climate more conducive to retail activity and small scale services. Route 12 can become a shopping destination for adjacent communities, and visitors to the Town's outdoor attractions will be tempted to partake of the Corridor's offerings. In addition, there is a captive market of moderately dense residential development adjacent to Route 12, but poor pedestrian linkage to businesses discourages residents from walking to near-by shops. Improving sidewalks, planting landscaping, and making street crossings safer will enhance the shopping experience of residents and visitors alike.

In preliminary discussions with MassHighway officials, a process is envisioned that shares responsibility for the work between the Town and State. MassHighway would pay for road improvements, traffic signals, turning lanes, sidewalks, curbing, drainage, and other physical improvements within the right-of-way. This would be the lion's share of the cost. The Town would be responsible for preparing the design and construction drawings and the burying underground utility lines. Town Meeting would likely have to approve funds to pay for the design, while the Light Department would cover expenses related to the power line work. The Department could pay for its share through long-term debt, passing capital costs on to its customers through an increase of utility bills.

A task force of local business people, property owners, Town officials, and Town staff should be established to study the matter in greater detail. Since the cost of the project is unknown at this time, the Town should conduct a feasibility study to identify project components, prepare alternatives and cost estimates, and determine the effect the work would have on the tax rate and utility fees. A multi-disciplinary engineering firm will need to examine the construction issues relating to the project, but careful consideration will also need to be given to incorporating design aspects that will enhance the value of the project to the community. In order to convince voters of the need for the work, an economic analysis should be prepared which identifies the costs and benefits to the Town in terms of potential private investment, tax revenue, and job creation. Finally, the task force should research state and federal grants that can lower the Town's contribution to the undertaking.

#### 10. *Develop Tourism as an Economic Engine*

With the presence of the Wachusett Reservoir, many anglers are attracted to the Town to fish along the shore. The Wachusett Country Club golf course attracts numerous visitors throughout the warm weather season. The recently opened Wachusett Greenways bike trail is now attracting numerous outdoor enthusiasts, including families with young children and older adults since the trail offers easy terrain and beautiful scenery. Typically these folks are residents of the immediate region who visit the town only for the day. While here, many will make the time to browse among local shops and may make impulse purchases as part of their outing. Local businesses should cater to these tourists. Eating

establishments come to mind, as well as outdoor supplies, and a variety of interesting gift and craft shops. The Route 12 Corridor and Oakdale section already have several antiques shops that make for interesting browsing for adults spending a few hours in Town. Promotional materials should highlight what there is to do in West Boylston for day-trippers.

Neighboring communities share similar outdoor assets. An initiative with surrounding communities to promote tourism may benefit all. Wachusett Greenways has developed brochures to highlight the trail development effort in order to accomplish fund raising objectives. In a similar fashion, a regional economic identity of Wachusett communities would help promote the area as a good place to establish a business and to attract the public to visit the area to enjoy its shops, restaurants, and outdoor amenities. Closer ties could also be forged between outdoor activists and local businesses. For example, trail maps could provide room for advertising by local companies, providing the organization with a source of revenue and targeting a business's key message to a select audience.

#### *11. Hold Community Fairs and Special Events*

Community celebrations offer a positive way for residents to come together and celebrate the Town's heritage and its current community spirit. Businesses are usually active participants in such events and offer special sales, sponsor group activities or sporting contests, and collaborate on promotional materials. Residents from outside the community can be welcomed and perhaps spend some cash while visiting the Town. The gazebo offers a beautiful setting for music festivals, band concerts, summer stock theater and the like. Or with the Reservoir as a backdrop, a beautiful setting could lend a nice touch to the festivities.

#### *12. Education / School to Work*

Workforce development is one instance where the Town alone cannot solve a larger regional problem; nonetheless, each community can and should do its part to insure that there is an adequate supply of educated and trained workers to meet the needs of business and industry. All employers need access to a skilled and enterprising labor force. Even with the state's superior higher education system, the specialization of many highly technical industries in Central Massachusetts requires that the workforce be educated to meet diverse needs. Training programs are coordinated through Workforce Central, the region's Workforce Investment Board, which provides a "one-stop" access point to employment and training information. Active participation by local officials in such affairs can make members aware of training opportunities that may be invaluable for local companies.

The Mass. Department of Employment and Training currently manages the Workforce Training Fund, which offers grants to employers for worker training. Grants of up to \$250,000, with a dollar for dollar match, are awarded to small and medium-sized companies to provide training in a wide variety of areas. Manufacturing firms are particularly targeted to provide training on the operation of new, high tech equipment intended to improve manufacturing efficiencies. Financed entirely by Mass. employers, \$18 million is available each year, with several funding rounds held annually. Technical assistance grants are also available to industry associations, labor organizations, colleges, and other entities with technical expertise to assist employers. The EDC can help make local employers aware of this and similar resources to assist companies in staying profitable in a highly competitive environment.

#### *13. Provide Lending Sources and Technical Assistance to Small Businesses*

Small businesses often have difficulty financing improvements from conventional lending sources. Start-up companies without a proven track record may have difficulty in obtaining loans. With West Boylston's heavy reliance on small businesses, such difficulties may deter new business creation and prevent innovative retail and service companies from coming to the community. A variety of services can be considered to make it possible for such businesses to find a home here. For example, banks with branch offices in West Boylston can provide a commitment to funding local businesses that wish to expand or start a new business here. Banks may offer preferred rates as a service to the community. Other lending sources are available in the region, such as Small Business Administration (SBA) loans, but lack of information about such matters may discourage wider use.

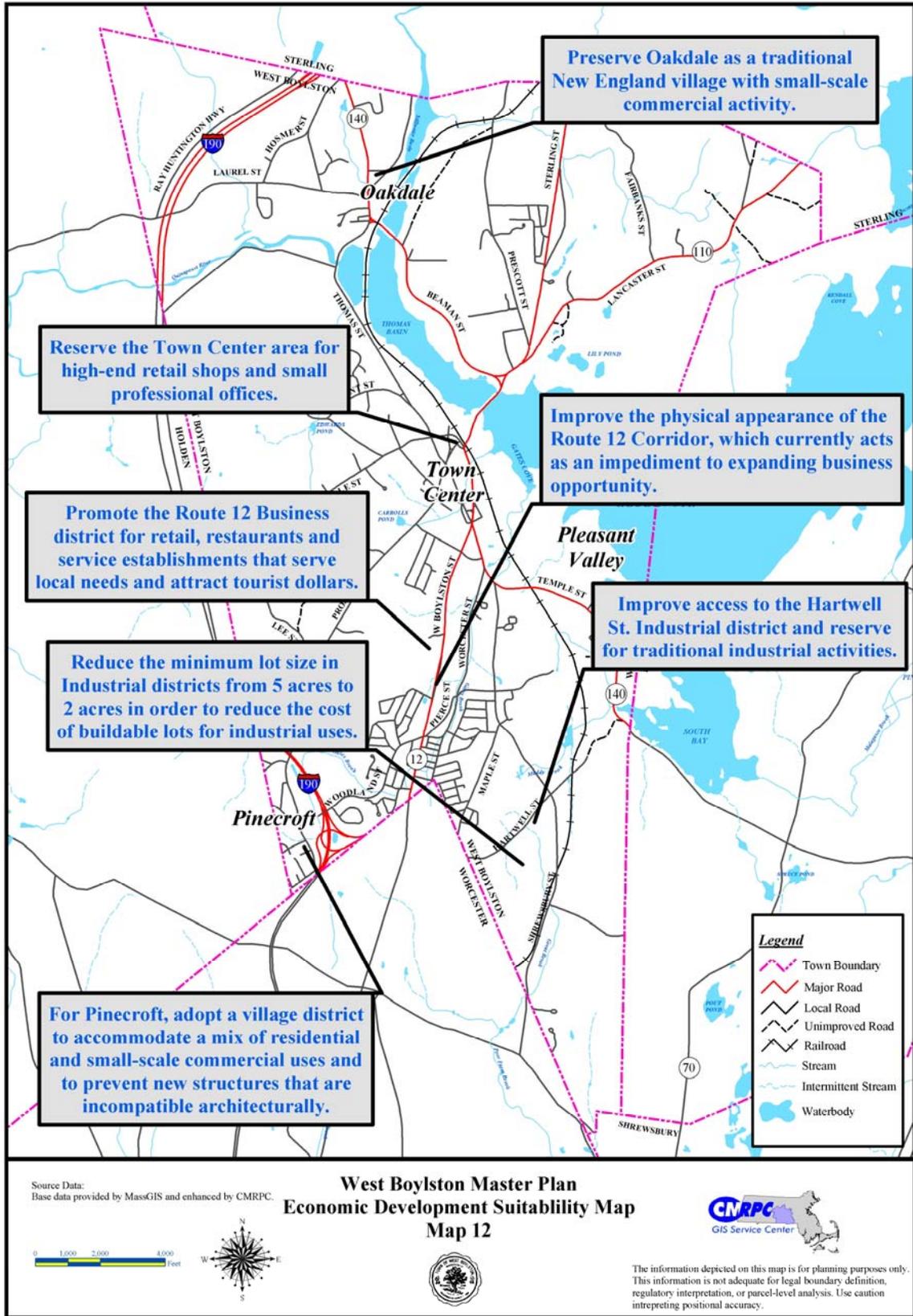
For small amounts below the minimum lenders will provide, a revolving loan program can be established. In this case, existing businesses initially capitalize a pool that offers small loans, typically

in the \$500 to \$5,000 range. Prospective borrowers approach the managers of the fund with their proposal, and may be required to adjust their strategy based upon the recommendations of the experienced members. Repayments are made as in a conventional loan, and if difficulties are encountered, the fund's expertise can help the owner overcome difficulties. A non-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic development can also be given the responsibility of overseeing the revolving loan pool. (See below.)

In addition to actual cash, startup companies may lack the business savvy needed to jump the many hurdles of creating a business. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Clark University Graduate School of Management is a valuable resource with expertise in all matters related to growing small businesses. The SBDC offers a wide range of technical assistance in areas such as creating a business plan, marketing strategies, obtaining financing, cash flow management, etc. The SBDC provides individual consultations at no cost, and offers training programs on a wide variety of business management topics.

#### *14. Create Non-Profit Economic Development Alliance*

As a small community, West Boylston may not be able to support a concentrated economic development program on its own. However, surrounding communities may be willing to forge closer ties through creation of a non-profit corporation dedicated to promoting economic development. One example is the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation, a non-profit entity devoted to promoting economic and housing assistance to communities in western Worcester County and eastern Hampshire County. As a Community Development Corporation, it maintains IRS 501(c)(3) status, and is therefore eligible to receive state and federal funds to operate its programs. The QVCDC receives funding from a variety of public and private sources. It operates lending programs, provides training services to local businesses, offers technical assistance in business planning, works on development and redevelopment opportunities, and writes grants. Similarly, communities in the Wachusett region could work together on regional economic development initiatives such as tourism, regional marketing, workforce development, and business recruitment.



## **CHAPTER 6 TRANSPORTATION NETWORK**

### **ROADWAY SYSTEM**

#### **Roadway Network**

West Boylston has very good access to the regional highway network. Interstate 190 traverses north/south along West Boylston's western border (See Map 13 for location of Major Roads in West Boylston). Two interchanges serve the Town: interchange #4 at the southern boundary with Worcester, and interchange #5 just north of the West Boylston/Sterling town line. South on I-190 is a short distance to Worcester and I-290, with direct access to the Mass. Turnpike to the south and I-495 to the east. North on I-190 provides access to Fitchburg/Leominster, Route 2 and northern Worcester County. This convenient access to employment centers makes West Boylston an attractive bedroom community and will undoubtedly attract additional economic development. I-190 has also diverted significant traffic volumes off Route 12 that would otherwise carry heavy volumes from Sterling and points north.

Movement in a north/south direction is quite good, but direct east/west movement is difficult, restricted by the Wachusett Reservoir and topographic constraints. State Route 12 runs north/south through the middle of town and provides local access to Worcester to the south and Sterling to the north. State Route 140 winds its way in a northwest/southeast direction from the Boylston border below the Wachusett Reservoir to Sterling. Travelers on Route 140 can access I-290 in Shrewsbury, connect with Route 12 for access to local business services, or continue northerly to the I-190 interchange #5 in Sterling. A third state numbered route, Route 110, runs northeast/southwest from the intersection of Routes 12 and 140 in the center of West Boylston providing access to Clinton.

MassHighway is responsible for maintaining Routes 12, 110, 140 and Interstate 190. All other roads in West Boylston are considered "local" and the West Boylston Streets and Parks Department is responsible for their maintenance.

#### **State Roads/Bridges - Planning for Improvements**

In most cases, major transportation projects are planned at the regional level. The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the decision-making body responsible for planning and recommending federal-aid transportation projects in this region. The regional MPO is made up of representatives from four organizations: MassHighway, the Executive Office of Transportation & Construction (EOTC), the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), and the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA). CMRPC's transportation staff does the planning for the MPO. The MPO prepares an annual update to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the region. The current annual TIP lists projects for 2004 and four years into the future, to 2008. The improvement projects included in the TIP are paid for through federal-aid funds provided to MassHighway by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Projects slated for non federal-aid, or state funding, are also included in the TIP listing.

It should be noted that transportation projects take a long time to come to fruition in Massachusetts. It is not uncommon for a decade to pass from the idea for a transportation project to its actual implementation. From formulating the idea, to getting the project listed on the region's TIP, to the design stage, to securing funding, to bidding out the construction work, to the actual construction, transportation projects take years to unfold. Due to the long lead-time to get projects started, initial cost estimates are almost always revised upwards as the project moves closer to construction.

The most recent MPO endorsed TIP (years 2004-2004) lists one transportation improvement project for West Boylston: the Maple Street Reconstruction Project. Design is complete, and the project was advertised for bids in the fall of 2003. Construction is expected to commence in the spring of 2004.

The proposed Maple Street Reconstruction Project begins approximately 492 feet south of the Worcester/West Boylston municipal boundary, proceeds north and terminates at the intersection of Shrewsbury Street (See Map 13 for the location of the Maple Street Project in West Boylston). Maple Street is 0.8 miles long and serves as a primary access to several residential areas, and secondary access

between Worcester and West Boylston. The project was deemed necessary due to deteriorated condition of the pavement, inadequate drainage, and safety concerns. Proposed work includes reconstruction, road widening, and replacement of drainage structures. It is estimated that the project could commence in the spring of 2004 and be completed in the fall of 2004.

According to CMRPC's 2000 Regional Transportation Plan, no significant regional highway projects are planned that will affect West Boylston in the near future. Existing highways and their available capacity appear adequate to accommodate current traffic volumes and that likely to be generated from future growth in West Boylston and adjacent communities.

One minor improvement to the local transportation system that should be pursued is establishing a new connection between Shrewsbury Street/Maple Street to Temple Street (Route 140) in the southeast part of Town. Access to the Hartwell Street industrial district is generally acknowledged to be only fair, with one access taking vehicles through a rather rough stretch of road to Burncoat Street in Worcester. Alternatively, vehicles may travel via Shrewsbury Street to East Mountain Street to eventually reach I-290. Perhaps Hartwell Street could be extended to the east. While the distance to Temple Street is not long, there are several obstacles to overcome, including rail and power easements, and a portion of the land is owned by the DCR. An alternative path to Route 140 in this area would provide much better access to the industrial district and would divert some truck traffic from residential areas.

### **New I-190 Interchange**

Looking further into the future, there may be a request to provide additional access to I-190 between interchanges 4 and 5. The most likely possibility is at Malden Street in Holden, which turns into Lee Street in West Boylston a short distance away. Such a possibility would require careful analysis and years of study before it could be deemed feasible. A new interchange would likely have a significant impact on West Boylston and would not appear to benefit the Town sufficiently to garner the support of its citizens.

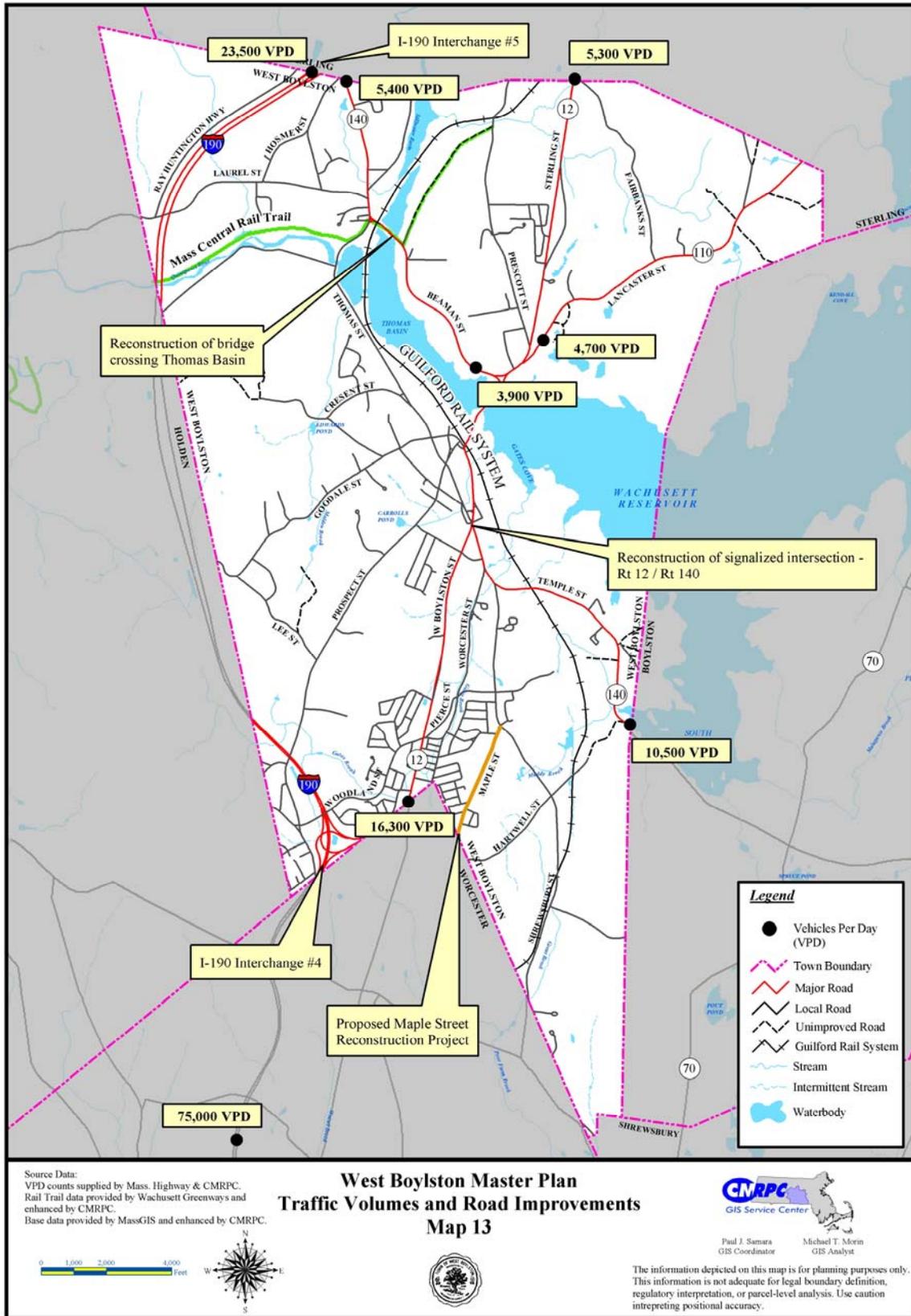
From a regional perspective, there are some benefits. Residents of Holden and towns to the north on Route 122A (Rutland, Oakham, Barre) would likely use the new interchange to access the interstate system to reach employment centers along I-290, I-495, and Route 146. Traffic would be diverted from Main Street (Route 122A) in Holden, minimizing congestion in the peak commuting hours along that busy thoroughfare. Traffic could also be lessened on some of the collector streets that provide access from nearby towns into Worcester. In addition, there could be significant economic development benefits to Holden as a new interchange would certainly make adjoining land much more valuable for office and light industrial uses.

The traffic impact on West Boylston would presumably be negative. The new interchange would attract additional traffic because of its improved access to the highway system. Local streets on the west side of town would bear the brunt of this increase in volume as motorists find their way to the highway. There is no clear-cut benefit to West Boylston since the Town is well served by the existing interchanges on either end of town. There are no opportunities for promoting economic development in West Boylston as a result of the interchange, and this Plan does not recommend such a policy in this area. Some local traffic from West Boylston's west side would perhaps use the new interchange if it were built to save travel time, but most residents would still find it more convenient to use one of the other two interchanges. This could perhaps lower traffic volumes somewhat along Route 12, but the local roads that would serve as feeders to the interchange, Lee Street, Prospect Street, and Goodale Street, are not in a condition to accommodate higher traffic flows.

For these reasons, West Boylston is opposed to the interchange. It would need to be shown that the regional benefits of improved traffic flow would not unduly impact West Boylston residents or alter the character of local streets. Furthermore, the environmental impacts of the interchange, particularly on the water quality of the Wachusett Reservoir, as well as the Town's own water supply aquifers, would need to be fully documented and measures implemented to assure the purity of these water supplies.

### **Bridges**

According to MassHighway, there are 653 bridges in the CMRPC region. All of the bridges have been evaluated for structural integrity according to standards set forth by the American Association of State



Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). According to the bridge evaluations, there are 61 bridges in the that have been identified as Structurally Deficient. West Boylston's one Structurally Deficient Bridge, Route 140 (Beaman Street) crossing the Thomas Basin, was reconstructed in 2003 and is no longer a danger to public safety: (See Map 13)

The bridge evaluations also identify those bridges considered to be Functionally Obsolete, that is, those bridges in need of modernization. There are 142 bridges that have been identified as functionally obsolete within the CMRPC region and none are located in West Boylston.

### **Traffic Volumes**

According to the most recent traffic counts maintained at CMRPC, Interstate 190 north of Exit #1 in Worcester carries almost 75,000 vehicles per day (2001 count) through northern Worcester (See Map 14 for traffic counts). By the time it leaves the CMRPC region just before Exit #5 at the West Boylston/Sterling town line (at the Route 140 interchange) the volume drops to 23,500 vehicles per day (2001 count).

The traffic volume on the southern portion of Route 12 at the Worcester City line is about 16,300 vehicles per day (8/21/00 count). At the Sterling town line, Route 12 traffic decreases to approximately 5,300 vehicles per day (8/16/01 count).

Traffic counts were conducted along Route 140 on August 16, 2001. Slightly more than 10,500 vehicles travel along the section of Route 140 just west of the West Boylston/Boylston line per day; however, the volume decreases northerly through West Boylston. The volume drops to just over 3,900 vehicles per day after it diverges from Route 12 on Beaman Street north of the Reservoir. At the Sterling town line, traffic volume increases to 5,400 vehicles per day.

Route 110 starts at Route 12 in the northern part of town and carries traffic that has been measured at about 4,700 vehicles per day (8/16/01 count).

### **Projected Traffic Volumes**

West Boylston's roadways are projected to have moderate traffic increases over the next twenty years, but growing at a faster rate than the region as a whole. CMRPC has developed a Regional Traffic Demand Forecast Model (RTDFM) that projects travel demand through the year 2020. Although the model is intended to forecast traffic volume at the regional level, CMRPC staff made a few modifications and ran the model for West Boylston traffic only. According to the model, West Boylston's roadways will experience a town-wide traffic volume increase of 16.1% over the next decade, as compared to the CMRPC region as a whole which is expected see its traffic volume increase by as much as 14.8% during the same time period.

The anticipated rate of traffic volume increase for the following decade (2010-2020) is projected at 10.4% for West Boylston, and 10.0% for the CMRPC region as a whole. It should be noted that the projections are less accurate the further out in time they are made. CMRPC will adjust the RTDFM on a periodic basis.

### **Transportation Conditions along Route 12**

CMRPC conducted an in-depth analysis of Route 12 through West Boylston in its January 1999 report entitled Preliminary Route 12 Traffic Study. The purpose of the study was to address existing and future traffic conditions along a focus segment of Route 12 between the Worcester city line and the Route 140 intersection (approximately 1.7 miles), locally known as West Boylston Street. Utilizing CMRPC's regional traffic simulation model, the study also planned for the traffic growth likely to occur as a result of future development that was anticipated. Due to the Holden-West Boylston sewer project, and other growth in the region, traffic volumes are expected to increase along this section of the Route 12 corridor.

Route 12 is becoming increasingly congested during peak hour commutes. In the 1999 study, traffic volumes were measured at key locations. Table 6-1 indicates that the daily traffic volumes along Route 12 range from 18,350 vehicles per day at the Worcester line to 14,636 vehicles per day just south of Route 140. During the AM peak hour, two-way volumes on Route 12 range from 813 to 952 vehicles, representing 4.6 to 5.6 percent of the total daily traffic volume. During the PM peak hour, two-way flows range from approximately 1,270 to 1,510 vehicles, or 8.0 to 8.7 percent of the daily total. Traffic volume

ranged from approximately 1,750 to 3,600 vehicles per day along Franklin Street and Woodland Street. The report indicated that the daily traffic volumes carried by both Franklin and Woodland Streets are typical for local roadways.

**Table 6-1  
Preliminary Route 12 Traffic Study:  
Daily and Peak Hour Traffic Volumes\***

<b>Location</b>	<b>Daily Traffic</b>	<b>AM Peak Hour</b>	<b>% of Daily</b>	<b>PM Peak Hour</b>	<b>% of Daily</b>
Route 12 at the Worcester City Line	18,350	952	5.2	1,514	8.3
Route 12 North of Woodland Street	17,254	797	4.6	1,389	8.1
Route 12 South of Wal-Mart Site Drive	17,852	853	4.8	1,435	8.0
Route 12 North of Wal-Mart Site Drive	15,929	838	5.3	1,283	8.1
Route 12 South of Route 140	14,636	813	5.6	1,272	8.7
Franklin Street West of Route 12	2,685	197	7.3	252	9.4
Franklin Street East of Route 12	3,592	191	5.3	337	9.4
Woodland Street West of Route 12	3,357	159	4.7	296	8.8
Pierce Street East of Route 12	1,746	109	6.2	134	7.7

\* Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) Counts, Conducted by CMRPC during May and June 1998. All volumes are two-way.

Vehicle crash data between April 1995 and April 1998 was also collected from the West Boylston Police Department and analyzed. During that three-year time span, a total of 137 vehicle crashes were reported along the 1.7-mile segment of Route 12. The vehicle crash history at five (5) critical intersections where a total of 70 vehicle crashes occurred is summarized as follows:

- Route 12 and Woodland Street: Twenty three (23) vehicle crashes
- Route 12 and Price Chopper Drive: Six (6) vehicle crashes
- Route 12 and Wal-Mart Drive: Nine (9) vehicle crashes
- Route 12 and Franklin Street: Nineteen (19) vehicle crashes
- Route 12, Route 140 and Central Street: Twenty-three (23) vehicle crashes

Fifty-seven vehicle crashes occurred at locations other than the five study intersections. Eleven crashes in total were reported at Danielian Drive and across the street at the site drives to Steve's Pizza, most during the evening peak travel period. The neck-down of Route 12 from four to two lanes immediately north of the I-190 ramps at the town line appeared to contribute to the crash history in this vicinity. Other notable crash locations included the Post Office Plaza site drive and the Friendly's Restaurant site drive.

Based upon CMRPC's regional traffic simulation model, traffic growth along the Route 12 corridor through West Boylston was projected to grow by approximately 10.5 percent between 1998 and 2010.

Several short-term, medium-term, and long-term recommendations were made for improvements that addressed both existing and future identified deficiencies along the Route 12 focus segment. Major recommendations included consolidating curb cuts (98 curb cuts were counted), clearing vegetation in front of traffic control signs, and improving traffic control signage.

Since Route 12 in West Boylston is a State maintained roadway, MassHighway is responsible for making improvements, while the locally maintained intersecting side streets are the Town's responsibility. Due to

the amount of time required to implement transportation improvements coupled with municipal and state budget cuts, many of the recommendations included in the report have not yet been acted upon.

A recently completed improvement along Route 12 included new signalization, lane configuration, channelization, sidewalks, crosswalks, ramps for the disabled and paving at the Route 12/Route 140 intersection. This is expected to result in improved intersection operations in terms of improving traffic flow, reducing delays and queues, as well as enhancing safety and aesthetics.

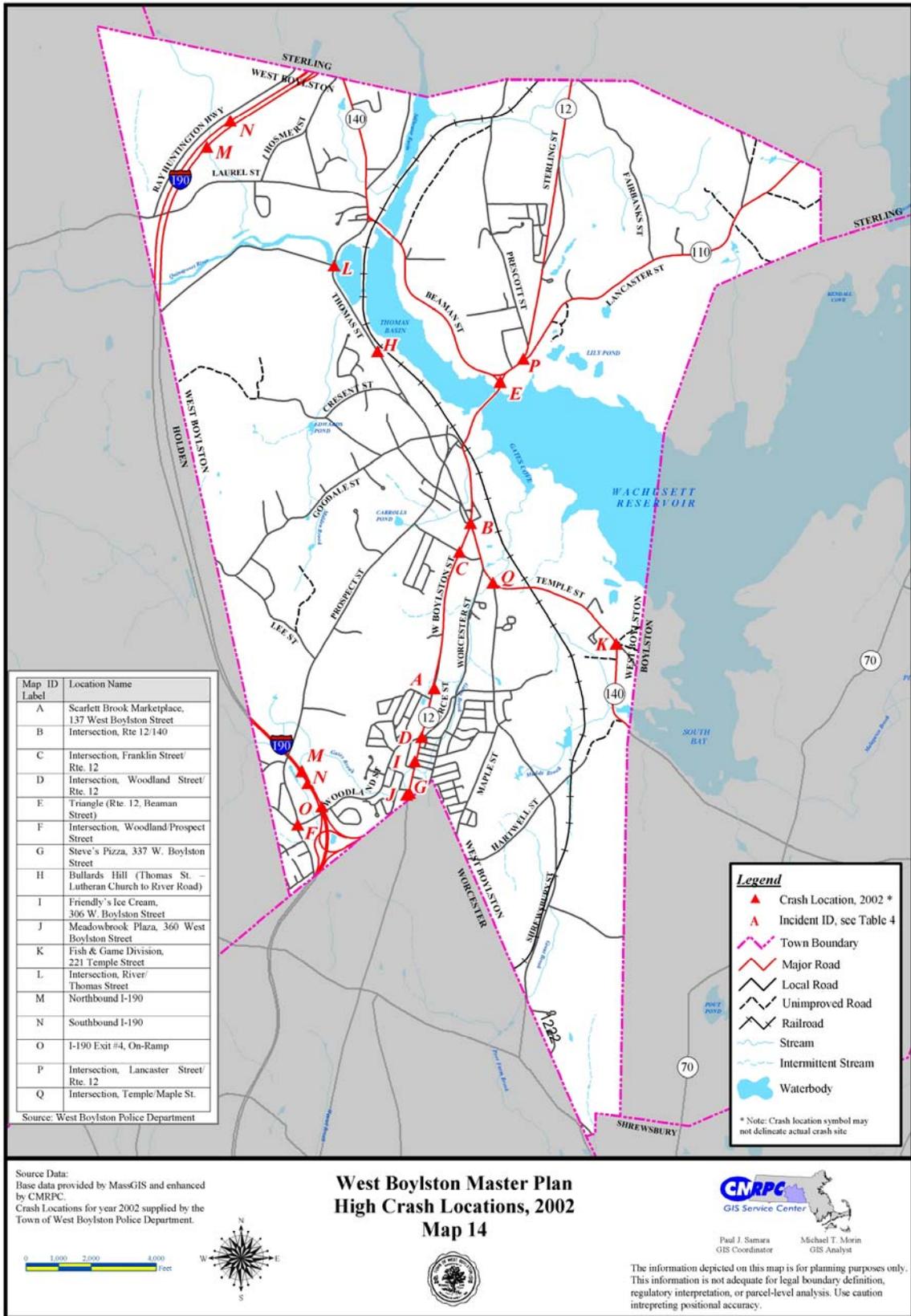
### **Traffic Safety and High Crash Locations**

The West Boylston Police Department instituted a computerized tracking system for traffic crashes in 1994. Table 6-2 lists the top “problem locations” in West Boylston where the highest number of crashes occurred in 2002. Problem locations are also labeled on Map 14. The available data indicates that locations along the Route 12 corridor are the most hazardous in town and are the most prone to traffic crashes. For example, 27 crashes were reported at the Scarlett Brook Marketplace (includes crashes both in the parking lot and the Route 12 intersection), 20 crashes at the Route 12/140 intersection, 14 crashes at the Route 12/Franklin Street intersection, 12 crashes at the Route 12/Woodland Street/Pierce Street intersection, and 7 crashes at the “Triangle” - Route 12/Route 140 (Beaman Street) intersection.

**Table 6-2  
High Crash Locations, 2002**

Map ID	Location Name	12 Midnight to 8 AM	8 AM to 4 PM	4 PM to 12 Midnight	Total Crashes
A	Scarlett Brook Marketplace, 137 West Boylston Street	0	19	8	27
B	Intersection, Rt. 12 / 140	2	10	8	20
C	Intersection, Franklin Street / Rt. 12	0	13	1	14
D	Intersection, Woodland Street / Rt. 12	0	8	4	12
E	Triangle (Rt. 12, Beaman Street)	0	5	2	7
F	Intersection, Woodland/Prospect Sts.	2	3	1	6
G	Steve’s Pizza, 337 W. Boylston St.	0	4	1	5
H	Bullards Hill (Thomas St. – Lutheran Church to River Road)	2	3	0	5
I	Friendly’s Ice Cream, 306 W. Boylston Street	0	2	2	4
J	Meadowbrook Plaza, 360 West Boylston Street	0	2	2	4
K	Mass. Fish & Game, 221 Temple St.	2	2	0	4
L	Intersection, River/Thomas St.	1	1	2	4
M	Northbound I-190	1	3	0	4
N	Southbound I-190	1	1	2	4
O	I-190 Exit #4, On-Ramp	1	2	1	4
P	Intersection, Lancaster St./Rt. 12	1	0	3	4
Q	Intersection, Temple/Maple St.	0	3	1	4

Source: West Boylston Police Department



The Police Department's vehicle crash data for the past nine years indicate a steady increase in reported crashes town-wide (See Table 6-3). In 2002, there were a total of 323 crashes compared to 1994 when there were just 221 crashes, representing a 46% increase. This increase in vehicle crashes may be due in part to heavier traffic volume and more business start-ups along Route 12. The sewer construction project may have also contributed to the increase, due to winding detours through less traveled roads. Of the vehicle crashes reported over the past nine years, most occurred between the hours of 8 AM and 4 PM. The vast majority involved no personal injuries.

**Table 6-3  
Total Number of all Reported Crashes, 1994 - 2002**

Year	Midnight to 8 AM	8 AM to 4 PM	4 PM to Midnight	Total Crashes
1994	26	104	91	221
1995	17	109	83	209
1996	16	136	84	236
1997	29	148	94	271
1998	23	147	85	255
1999	23	181	99	303
2000	17	154	86	257
2001	34	162	107	303
2002	33	178	112	323

Source: West Boylston Police Department

### **New Subdivision Roads**

MassHighway does not recommend a definitive road width standard for local roads, and each community is permitted to set its own road width standards. Section VI.B of the West Boylston Subdivision Regulations requires a minimum width of 26 feet for both Local Residential Streets (serving up to nine residences) and Residential Feeders, 36 feet for Primary Industrial Streets, and 30 feet for Secondary Industrial Streets. The Planning Board has the authority to waive these requirements based on individual circumstances.

Several nationwide transportation planning organizations promote variable road width standards where the required width is dependent upon the amount of traffic volume expected and the characteristics of the area. For example, the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) in *Guidelines for Residential Subdivision Street Design*, states that a short cul-de-sac will have such low volume that a 20-foot road width with shoulders would probably suffice, except in rolling or hilly terrain. A number of other sources also advocate for varying pavement widths. These include *Residential Streets* by the American Society of Civil Engineers, National Association of Home Builders, the Urban Land Institute, and the *Subdivision and Site Plan Handbook* by David Listokin and Carole Walker. The intention of varying road widths is to reduce paving where it is not necessary for a variety of reasons, including:

- Excessive road widths increase maintenance costs.
- Wide roads encourage speeding and can endanger public safety.
- A greater paved width with a closed drainage system lowers groundwater recharge and creates a high volume of storm water runoff that must be accommodated by down-gradient drainage structures.
- Laying down large swaths of pavement is expensive for developers and adds to the cost of development (which in turn adds to the cost of housing).

- A narrower paved width with an overhead tree canopy creates a sense of neighborhood cohesiveness.

The Planning Board's Subdivision Regulations on the whole are reasonable for street width requirements. Since local residential streets may only serve up to 9 residences, it is possible to reduce street width here to 20' or 22'. Assuming an average of ten trips per single family home, such a street would only carry about 90 vehicles per day. With such light traffic volumes, a narrower street width could certainly be justified without creating conflicts. This allows two 10-foot travel lanes and at slow speeds will pose no difficulty for two cars in opposite directions to pass. Even if a vehicle is parked on the street, it takes only a moment for one vehicle to allow a second vehicle traveling in the opposite direction to pass. This width also provides plenty of room for fire engines, garbage trucks, snowplows, and moving vans to perform their occasional services without difficulty. In addition, the Board can consider waivers for road widths for other street categories on a case-by-case basis to account for individual factors such as the lay of the land, the number of dwelling units served, and the expected traffic volume on each road.

### **Street Connectivity**

The Planning Board's Subdivision Regulations contain a standard that proposed subdivision streets should provide for future extension in adjacent undeveloped lands to form "a convenient system for safe travel". (§VI. B.1) This principle is not further elucidated with specific requirements, but forms the basis for adopting measures to promote connectivity. This term refers to providing a network of subdivision streets that connect at multiple points to insure local trips have alternate routes to desired locations and through trips remain on arterial streets. This helps to minimize the use of arterials for short distance trips thereby reducing congestion on the Town's major roadways. Public safety officials generally support a connectivity program since it provides greater emergency vehicle access and reduced response time. Other benefits of connectivity include improving utility connections, enabling more efficient trash collection, and providing multiple access routes for residents during emergencies and disasters.

Connectivity requirements are typically stated as maximum block length or intersection spacing to create an inter-connecting grid. This controls the spacing of local streets and results in an evenly distributed street network. Typically, block lengths for local streets are in the 500' – 1,000' range, while greater distances are called for on arterials, which may be in the 1,200' - 1,400' range. It is important to account for variation in topography, natural resource features such as steep slopes, wetlands, and wildlife habitats, and other developed land uses that may dictate greater intersection spacing.

In addition, connections are required to existing streets in adjacent subdivisions, and street stubs are platted for connection to adjoining land that may be subdivided in the future. Rather than providing a traditional hierarchy of low volume to high volume streets within a subdivision, each street (except for cul-de-sacs) should be capable of accommodating moderate traffic volumes. This insures that traffic is dispersed throughout the subdivision without any one street bearing the burden of high volumes. As a result, less emphasis is placed on the use of cul-de-sacs and more emphasis is placed on creating a network of streets that provide direct access to the surrounding higher volume roadways. Cul-de-sacs should be limited to circumstances where topography, pre-existing development, or environmental constraints prevent street extensions. Gated communities should be prohibited since no through-movement is allowed.

While planning for connectivity, it is important to also plan for non-motorized modes of travel such as walking and bicycling. In addition to providing vehicle connection to adjacent land, trails and bikeway systems should also be planned to provide for direct routes to adjoining neighborhoods and commercial areas. Even where roadway connections are not possible due to topography or environmental constraints, right-of-ways for bicycles and pedestrians may still be required to connect residential areas with near-by commercial services, schools, parks, and other facilities.

The Planning Board should consider adoption of standards in its Subdivision Regulations that promote connectivity. Education of the public to such a change will be needed to alleviate concerns that proposed changes will not cause negative impacts with higher traffic volumes. Measures should be included to prevent cut-through traffic from seeking alternate routes through neighborhoods. This can be accomplished with good site design, traffic-calming measures, and narrower street widths.

## OTHER TRANSPORTATION MODES

### Mass Transit Alternatives

Typically, mass transit serves persons who find it difficult to travel by automobile. These include the elderly, people with disabilities, young people, and people living on limited incomes. However, commuters are increasingly making use of mass transit alternatives.

Bus Service: The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA), the region’s bus service provider, continues to play a small but vital role in Central Massachusetts. West Boylston is a member of the WRTA and receives regular bus service (Route 30N) to Worcester primarily along Route 12 due to the concentration of residents and businesses in close proximity to the roadway. The ratio of the revenue received from this route to its operating cost was 21.2% for 2002 (\$34,170 revenue, \$161,222 operating cost), down from 25.4% for 2001. Table 6-4 provides a comparison of West Boylston’s cost efficiency with other area towns. The percentages are expressed as the ratio of revenue to operating costs.

**Table 6-4  
Comparison of Bus Route Cost Efficiency**

Community	Route	Cost Efficiency
West Boylston	# 30N – West Boylston	21.20%
Holden	# 32 – Jefferson	66.22%
Shrewsbury	# 15 – Shrewsbury	25.26%
	#18 – Edgemere	42.12%
	#28 - Lake Shore	41.33%
Leicester	#19S – Cherry Valley - Leicester Center	10.01%
	#33 – Leicester	3.15%
Auburn	#10 - College Hill	4.18%
	#25 - Canterbury - Auburn Ind. Park	20.38%
	#26S - Bryn Mawr - Auburn Mall	25.52%
Millbury	# 5E - Wheelock Ave	5.34%
	#22 - Millbury Center	14.25%

In 2002, West Boylston’s WRTA assessment was \$32,368, up from \$29,726 in 2001. Starting in 2002, cities and towns in outlying areas of Boston (beyond the 78 communities that surround the city) are being assessed an annual fee by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). Each town’s assessment will be based on the latest Census population for the community, with a credit for the assessment charged by its regional transportation authority. This new program will be phased in over a 5-year period with an additional 20% assessed each of the following 4 years. It is expected that West Boylston will not be required to pay the MBTA until 2005, at which time the Town’s assessment is estimated at \$7,500. The fee will increase to approximately \$15,500 in 2006. In 2011, a recalculation will occur based on West Boylston’s 2010 Census figures and the Town’s WRTA assessment at that time.

CMRPC conducts surveys of bus ridership to insure accurate data is available for evaluating service on the system’s various routes. In West Boylston, CMRPC performed a weekday survey during February 2000 and a Saturday survey in the spring of 2001. The terminus of the route is the junction of Central and Prospect Streets in the center of West Boylston. Bus schedules change periodically but can be viewed online at [www.TheRTA.com](http://www.TheRTA.com).

### Weekday Bus Service:

Service within West Boylston operates on a flag stop basis. At the time of the survey, the outbound bus provided West Boylston with hourly service from 5:50 AM to 11:00 PM and the inbound bus provided hourly service from 5:25 AM to 11:25 PM. On the weekday the 2000 survey was performed, the ridership on the outbound route was 49, and for inbound, it was 47. It took an average of 24 minutes for the 3 morning rush hour trips to travel from the Wal-Mart in West Boylston to City Hall in Worcester.

### Week End Bus Service

On Saturday, the outbound bus provided hourly service starting with a 6:50 AM departure from the Worcester City Hall continuing until the last departure at 9:00 PM. The hourly inbound bus service started at 6:25 AM and stopped at 8:25 PM. The ridership for outbound Saturday bus service was 106 (79 of whom disembarked at Wal-Mart) and for inbound service it was 78. Reduced service was provided on Sunday. Hourly inbound service included 8 departures from Wal-Mart, starting at 10:25 AM and continuing to 7:25 PM. When the survey was performed (6/2/02), outbound ridership was 9 and inbound was 12.

### Train Service

Worcester's historic Union Station now serves as the region's primary rail passenger hub. The station currently provides inter-city train service through Amtrak, and commuter rail through the MBTA. Amtrak is the region's sole long distance railroad passenger service provider and Worcester is the only stop in the region. Destinations on Amtrak's Lakeshore Limited run include Albany, NY, New York City, Cleveland, OH, and Chicago, IL. However, Amtrak is currently experiencing budget difficulties that could result in service changes.

There is an extensive freight rail network in central Massachusetts that is currently utilized by five freight rail providers. The Guilford Rail System (GRS) maintains an active rail line between Worcester, at Barbers Station, and the Town of Ayer. This active rail line extends through West Boylston (See Map 13). There are no businesses or industries using freight rail services at the present time.

### Sidewalks and Pedestrian Use

The generally poor condition of sidewalks in West Boylston is a source of concern for the Town-Wide Planning Committee. Lack of sidewalks in many locations, and cracked and heaved sidewalks in other areas, discourage leisurely recreational walking as well as their use as a mode of transportation. Greater use of sidewalks can eliminate automobile trips for short errands, helping to reduce air emissions and improve traffic flow. Health benefits arise from greater walking activity, and increased obesity is a national concern that has implications on the cost of health care. And perhaps most importantly, a safe and connected sidewalk network can encourage more students to walk or bicycle to school. Parents are reluctant to have their children walk or bike to school when they may encounter safety hazards and high volumes of speeding traffic. In addition, driving students to school increases AM peak hour traffic congestion. Nationally, the Safe Routes to School (SR2S) movement advocates for improvements to sidewalks and trail systems to insure children can walk to school safely. To increase safety, low-cost measures can be implemented, such as revamping crosswalks, installing high-visibility signage, and modifying traffic signal phasing. Where excessive speeds are a concern, more expensive traffic calming measures may be needed.

Unfortunately it is not uncommon for sidewalk maintenance to receive short shrift when competing for limited funds for transportation improvements. However, thoughtful consideration should be given to pedestrian use when transportation projects are implemented. New subdivision streets should not only be built with sidewalks, but connections should be made to adjoining subdivisions. When adjacent to other subdividable land, easements should be reserved for future connections. The Town should undertake a sidewalk inventory and set priorities for improvements. These priorities should include:

- Improving pedestrian amenities to shopping areas along the Route 12 Corridor to minimize auto use.
- Making connections to existing trails and bikeways.
- Providing safe routes to schools.
- Ensuring equal access to those in wheelchairs by install curb ramps in high use areas.

## **Off-Road Trail Development**

The Wachusett Greenways is an association of volunteers from West Boylston and five surrounding towns that work toward the development of non-motorized recreational trails in the region. Wachusett Greenways has promoted the Mass Central Rail Trail, 1.5 miles of which extends through West Boylston along the Quinapoxet River between Thomas Street and the Holden/West Boylston line (See Map 13). It is located on the abandoned line of the Mass Central Railroad and opened in October of 1997. This stone dust packed trail is intended for walking, bicycling, wheel chair users, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. A new segment of the trail opened in 2002, extending the route across the Quinapoxet River to Route 31 in Holden. A total of approximately 10 miles of trails has been constructed in Sterling, West Boylston, and Holden, and the plan is to include these trails in one linked 30-mile stretch from Sterling to Oakham.

Just recently, the CMRPC examined its North Subregion, which includes the Town of West Boylston, to determine the possibility of accommodating additional recreational trails. The study, *North Subregion Inter-Community Trail Connection Feasibility Study*, was financed in part through a grant from the US Federal Highway Administration, under contract with the Massachusetts Highway Department, and was completed in December of 2002. A local task force was assembled to investigate potential long distance trails to connect communities in a regional network. A short stretch at the northern tip of West Boylston was identified as a viable location to construct a new trail. The trail would be about ¼ mile in distance, along the Stillwater River, and would connect to the existing rail trail in West Boylston. CMRPC staff conducted the necessary field work and land title research for prospective trails throughout this sub-region. At the conclusion of the study it was determined that this particular trail has a high degree of feasibility due to the fact that the majority of the trail would be located on permanently protected DCR lands and existing roadways, and it crosses few properties under private ownership. In 2004 - 2005, the entire segment from the beginning of the rail trail at Thomas Street to Sterling Center is expected to be completed.

## **Air Travel**

Worcester Regional Airport represents the only inter-state air travel provider located in Central Massachusetts. In February 2003, the last private carrier, US Airways, ended service at the Airport. Officials blame the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack and the general slump in the aviation industry for causes of the Airport's decline. The Massachusetts Port Authority, which manages the Airport for the City, is still hopeful the Airport can play a significant role in the regional air passenger system. In the near term, officials are considering other general aviation options that can take advantage of the excellent facilities at the Airport. Despite the lack of passenger service in Worcester, area residents are still well served by other major airports for their domestic and international travel needs. West Boylston is centrally located with about equal travel time to Bradley Airport in Hartford, Logan Airport in Boston, T.F. Green Airport in Providence, and the Manchester Airport in New Hampshire. There are also six local airports in the region that are designed to accommodate smaller, general aviation aircraft; these include the near-by Sterling Airport, the Spencer Airport, the Oxford Airport, the Southbridge Municipal Airport, the Hopedale Industrial Park Airport, and the Tanner-Hiller Airport in New Braintree.

### **SUMMARY OF TRANSPORTATION ISSUES IN WEST BOYLSTON**

1. With two interchanges to I-190, the Town has excellent access to the interstate highway system. North/south travel is well developed with major routes such as I-190 and Routes 12 and 140 running in this direction.
2. East/west movement is generally limited by the Wachusett Reservoir and topographic constraints.
3. There are no major regional highway projects planned for the near-term. Town-wide traffic is expected to increase by 16% over the course of this decade and by about 10% the following decade. To accommodate this additional traffic, high volume roads will require intersection improvements and changes in geometry.
4. The principal transportation improvement project that should be planned for is the upgrade to Route 12 through the commercial corridor. Route 12 should be viewed as the principal gateway through the Town and improved to enhance economic development and travel conditions. A variety of improvements will be needed, including re-surfacing, new curbs and sidewalks, attractive landscaping, signage controls, and placing overhead wires underground.

5. One long-range proposal that could come to fruition is the construction of a new interchange with I-190 in Holden at Malden St., near Lee Street in West Boylston. Many issues will need to be considered and resolved before construction could occur. Local officials are opposed to the project because of the anticipated negative impacts it would have on the community.
6. The sewer improvement project currently underway will result in many local streets receiving a finish course that will greatly improve neighborhood conditions.
7. Recent cutbacks in the state's Chapter 90 program will drastically curtail needed road improvements in other locations.
8. With the re-construction of the Route 140 bridge over the Thomas Basin in 2003, there are no other bridges in need of repair in West Boylston at this time.
9. The top 4 accident locations are: Scarlett Marketplace site drive, the intersection of Routes 12 and 140, the intersection of Franklin Street and Route 12, and the intersection of Route 12, Woodland Street and Pierce Street.
10. The WRTA provides bus service to West Boylston along Route 12 to the Town Center. Typical weekday ridership is just under 100 passengers per day. The service provides an important mode of transportation for those unable to own a personal vehicle. With service cuts on the horizon for the WRTA, it is important for officials and residents support the service and to monitor possible route reductions.
11. Recent changes to the manner in which the MBTA assessments are calculated means that West Boylston will begin to pay an assessment of \$7,500 in 2005 and the amounts will increase in succeeding years.
12. Due to lack of funds, sidewalk maintenance has suffered. In general, the Town has not sought to develop a good interconnected sidewalk system for pedestrians.
13. The Wachusett Greenways Trail along the former Mass. Central Railroad offers a valuable amenity for local and regional residents. It is anticipated that the trail will eventually provide a long distance route from Sterling to Oakham. The *Open Space and Recreation Plan* and CMRPC's *North Subregion Inter-Community Trail Connection Feasibility Study* contains other trail options to encourage pedestrian activity in West Boylston.

### **Transportation Goals**

1. Promote efficient transportation systems that provide for different modes of travel to meet the needs of all West Boylston residents while maintaining a small town atmosphere.
2. Make improvements to existing roadway infrastructure to improve safety and reduce congestion.
3. Promote alternatives to automobile travel, including greater pedestrian activity, safe bicycling, and maximum use of transit services.
4. Develop property in coordination with the adjacent road and trail systems to promote greater street connectivity, improve traffic circulation, and provide municipal services in an efficient manner.

### **Strategies to Improve Transportation Systems**

1. The highest priority for transportation should be the improvement of the Route 12 Corridor. The Town should begin the process of developing conceptual design plans with its own funds and work closely with MassHighway officials on long range funding. Such a project will bolster the Town's image as a business-friendly community and yield positive benefits on community aesthetics, economic development, and promoting alternative modes of travel. Recommendations of the *Route 12 Traffic Study* should be implemented, including consolidating curb cuts to allow one, or a maximum of two, curb cuts per site, in order to reduce the number of conflicting turning maneuvers, re-aligning intersections with poor geometry, upgrading or adding signal control where warranted, and making access improvements at high volume site drives.

2. The Town should adopt a Pavement Management program to insure the continuing upkeep of the streets and walkway systems.
3. To reduce heavy reliance on automobile use, the Town should embark on a plan to improve and construct sidewalks and promote bicycling activity through expansion of the trail system. Particular attention should be provided to improving walking systems near schools to encourage more students to walk to school. In addition, sidewalks should be constructed where necessary along Route 12 to promote pedestrian safety along this busy roadway.
4. The Town should move forward on recommendations in the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* and *North Subregion Inter-Community Trail Connection Feasibility Study* regarding enhancements to the local and regional trail systems.
5. The Planning Board should review its Subdivision street width standards, particularly where traffic volumes are low, to determine if narrower streets are feasible without compromising public safety or affecting municipal services. Narrow streets encourage slower speeds, minimize the amount of storm water runoff, lower construction costs of development, and reduce long-term maintenance costs.
6. In addition, the Planning Board should review its Subdivision Regulations to improve street connectivity. Standards could be adopted for distance between intersecting streets and promoting pedestrian connectivity.
7. At high accident locations, the Town should undertake a careful analysis of traffic patterns and design improvements to reduce accident rates.
8. Local officials should participate in regional transportation planning activities, especially those of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. Such involvement can keep the town abreast of possible regional transportation projects that may affect the Town and insure that Town supported projects are advanced to construction.
9. To insure that transportation issues remain “on the front burner” the Board of Selectmen should appoint a Transportation Committee to study the Town’s transportation needs and work to implement targeted improvements. The Committee should tackle the Route 12 Corridor reconstruction, sidewalk and trail projects, and remedies at high crash locations.
10. Local officials should pursue road alternatives to the Hartwell Street industrial district in order to divert truck traffic on Maple Street and other residential neighborhoods. For example, perhaps Hartwell Street could be extended to Temple Street (Rt. 140) if topography permits.
11. Where currently absent in high traffic areas, curb ramps should be installed for handicapped accessibility to allow those in wheelchairs to use community facilities.
12. The Board of Selectmen should open a dialogue with the WRTA to seek improved transit services for West Boylston. Possibilities include more frequent service on the existing route, expanding the area currently served, and adding a shuttle from a central location in West Boylston to Union Station for Boston commuters.

## CHAPTER 7 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

### Extracts from the “Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2002 Update”

#### COMMUNITY VISION

##### **Description of Process**

The first West Boylston Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee was formed by the selectmen in September of 1994. A notice on the local cable Television Channel was made for three (3) months and asked for volunteers for the committee and one person responded. The committee was made up of a representative of the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Parks Commission, and the public.

The committee invited members from the Historical Society and the Parks Commission to meetings. A survey to establish the open space and recreational goals of the town's citizens was developed and distributed at two town meetings held in October. The survey was given to the PTA and Senior Citizens Group. Of the 190 survey forms distributed, there were a total of 56 respondents. A copy of the survey and the tabulated results were included as Appendix A. of the first West Boylston Open Space and Recreation Plan, dated February 1996 (revised August 18, 1997). The Board of Selectmen's Community Action Statement, prepared in 1993, was reviewed and incorporated in the Plan.

Following the acceptance of this Plan, the Townwide Planning Committee commissioned Royce Anderson, Ph.D., an independent consultant, to do a much more extensive survey of townspeople (see Section 6.B. and Appendix A for survey results). The Townwide Planning Committee helped in formulating the survey questions and made the decision to add business and student surveys to the overall project. Of the 4,859 citizen surveys that were distributed, 1,888 were completed and returned for an exceptionally high return rate of 39 %. Analysis of demographic data from the returned questionnaires shows that the respondents are generally representative of the town's citizens. These survey results provided the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update with extensive public input. Since the state requires that Open Space and Recreation Plans be updated every five years, the Townwide Planning Committee appointed a new subcommittee in February 2000 to update the 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The work of this new committee is described in Section 2.B. of this report.

##### **Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals**

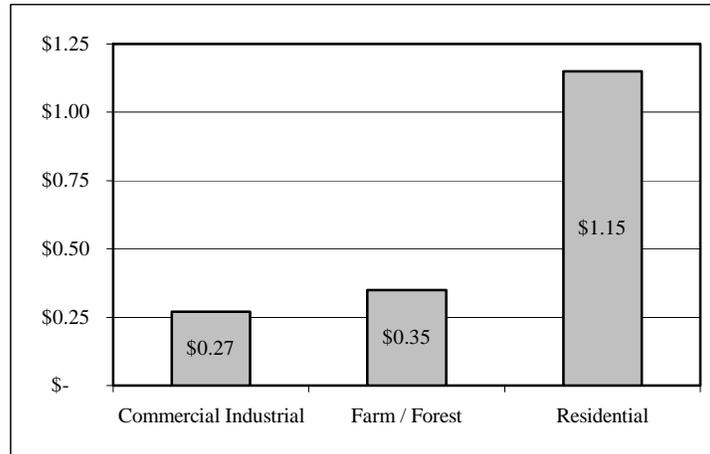
The town of West Boylston has a wealth of open space surrounding the Wachusett Reservoir, but some recreational uses are restricted by the DCR. Most of the town's unrestricted recreational areas are in constant demand, currently overused, and with the projected population growth, the burden on these areas will increase. The town requires a plan that addresses the needs for increased recreational space, as well as recreational areas and activities that are accessible to the elderly and disabled. Cost-efficient recreational opportunities should be available to town residents of all ages and capabilities. The Plan should preserve the aesthetics of the Town's environment and West Boylston's small town character.<sup>1</sup> The purity of the Town's water supply and the DCR waters must be preserved and new water supplies may be needed. Access to DCR lands must be preserved and expanded.<sup>1</sup>

There has been much criticism in town of the low payments the town receives from the DCR. Many people feel that the town would be much better off financially if the DCR had not taken so much land because if this land were developed it would yield large amounts of property tax revenue. While this may be true for commercial or industrial development, it is not true for residential development. Studies in suburban and rural communities of New England have tried to assess the different costs of community services based on different types of land use. The results of these studies have been summarized by the American Farmland Trust<sup>2</sup> and are shown in Figure 7.1. These Cost Of Community Services (COCS) studies, conducted in more than 70 communities over the past decade, have shown that owners of farm, forest and open lands pay more in local tax revenues than it costs local government to provide them services. Residential land uses, in contrast, are a net drain on municipal coffers: It costs local governments more to provide services to residential homeowners than homeowners pay in property taxes. As one can see from Figure 7.1, residential property yields only \$1 in property tax revenue for every \$1.15 in community services that it demands. Farm/forest land, by contrast, demands only \$.35 in community services for every \$1 it yields in property tax revenue, and

commercial/industrial property demands only \$.27 in community services for every \$1 it yields in property tax revenue.<sup>2</sup>

The findings of COCS studies are consistent with those of conventional fiscal impact analyses, which document the high cost of residential development and recommend commercial and industrial development to help balance local budgets. What is unique about COCS studies is that they show that agricultural land is similar to other commercial and industrial uses in its beneficial tax impact. In every community studied, farmland has generated a fiscal surplus to help offset the shortfall created by residential demand for public services, such as schools.

**Figure 7-1  
Land Use Revenue Comparison**



Median Cost – per dollar of revenue raised – to provide public services to different land uses.

Source: “Conservation Is A Community Investment”

Although the DCR does not pay taxes on the land that it owns, it is required under Chapter 59, S. 5G, of Massachusetts General Laws to make Payments-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) to the town. The state Department of Revenue must value this DCR land every five years at full and fair cash value, using the community’s commercial tax rate. In other words, the DCR’s protected open space land is valued as if it is developable property. That figure is then multiplied by the highest tax rate (the commercial tax rate) to determine the PILOT amount. The PILOT can never be less than the previous year’s payment. West Boylston received a PILOT payment of \$569,752 for FY2001. This payment was an increase of 124 percent over the \$258,874 received in FY2000 (the last year of the previous five-year revaluation cycle) even though total DCR land ownership increased by 50 percent during this same period. West Boylston now receives an average of \$214/acre from the DCR for permanently protected open space. Since the town has chosen to have the same tax rate for both commercial and residential property, the town has not received as much in PILOT payments as it would have had it had adopted a tiered tax rate. One change that would probably benefit the town would be to have the revaluation of DCR land take place on an annual basis rather than only once every five years. This change would require an act of the legislature.

In 1999, Royce Anderson, Ph.D., did a Town-wide Survey of Citizens and Businesses for the Town-wide Planning Committee. The survey was extremely successful, with a return rate of almost 40 percent, which is very high for surveys of this type. The results showed strong support for open space and retaining West Boylston’s small town character. Out of 27 activities, walking or hiking was the activity that residents said they pursued the second most frequently. Fifty percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “future development should be discouraged. Only 23 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of 33 statements, the three that got the highest level of agreement were: 1. “I like the small town character of West Boylston.” 2. “I like the presence of Wachusett Reservoir.” 3. “I like the open space and recreational activities in West Boylston.” (See Appendix A for Survey Summary.)

Although the DCR has taken one-third of the land in West Boylston and many people resent the apparent loss of property taxes this has meant for the town, West Boylston's residents seem to appreciate having this open space. They would also like increased access rights to the DCR's vast land holdings and increased PILOT payments.

## **ANALYSIS OF NEEDS**

### **Summary of Resource Protection Needs**

1. Protection of the town's water supply, wetlands and the Wachusett Reservoir.
2. Open spaces linkage through creation of greenway corridors (naturally vegetated pathways) and improved linkages along roadways.
3. Support for private mechanisms to preserve open space, such as the recently created West Boylston Land Trust.
4. Protection of open spaces currently under Chapter 61 (Forestry), 61A (Agricultural), and 61B (Recreational).
5. Preservation of portions of former county-owned land for open space and recreation.
6. Protection of historical sites on town-owned open space (e.g. historical sights along Rail Trail) and existing natural features on town-owned land. Integration of historical sites into town-owned open space.
7. Zoning strategies to preserve open space.
8. Certification of vernal pools.
9. Less sedimentation of streams and less eutrophication of ponds.
10. Increased supply of drinking water, reduction of unaccounted-for water and reduction of manganese in town's water.

### **Summary of Community's Needs**

1. Expanded and improved passive and active recreational facilities.
1. Additional town-owned open space.
2. Preservation of existing town-owned open space and natural resources.
3. Access to DCR-owned open space parcels in perpetuity, unless access to a particular parcel is determined by town and DCR to be detrimental to water quality.
4. More open space in the densely-developed areas (e.g. Precinct 1).
5. Upgrading of existing recreational facilities so they meet ADA requirements.
6. Public information about availability and location of existing recreational facilities and open space areas by use of maps, pamphlets, etc.
7. More pedestrian walkways, including sidewalks along the commercial section of Route 12 and on the Stillwater River Bridge.
8. More community oriented swimming and picnicking areas.
9. More access to recreational facilities for very young children.
10. Increased PILOT payments from DCR land.

### **Management Needs and Potential Change of Use**

1. Education of town officials and citizens about the benefits of open space and especially the need for town-owned and controlled open space.
2. Continued maintenance of existing open space and recreation facilities.

3. Professional assistance and education for local officials and boards dealing with issues regarding land use, recreation, water, and the town's tax base, so that laws and regulations relating to land use are consistently enforced, and there is improved coordination among these boards and officials.
4. Improved coordination and cooperation between local officials and county and state officials, such as DCR. Ensure input by town officials into DCR's Public Access Plan.
5. Encourage private landowners to open their land to the public, especially when their land is needed to link trails.
6. Increased parking and sanitary facilities to facilitate use of and preserve access to DCR land. Encouragement of public users of DCR land to respect DCR rules and regulations.
7. Coordinated and professional management of town's water and sewers.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Resource Protection Goals**

1. Assure that the Town's open space and recreation concerns are addressed when decisions are made regarding the future uses of DCR and former county-owned land.
2. Protect environmentally sensitive areas through restrictions on development or acquisition of development rights
3. Establish wildlife greenway corridors.
4. Preserve existing farmland and establish a plan for acquisition/protection of land under Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B.
5. Create an open space/cluster zoning bylaw to protect water quality and to maintain open space, especially in areas that have been or will be sewered.
6. Coordinate open space preservation with historical preservation.
7. Work with town departments to protect existing natural features on town-owned open space
8. Preserve fisheries in the Reservoir and its tributaries.
9. Consider limitation of increases in inter-basin transfer of water that will occur with the sewer project.
10. Promote water conservation and reduce the amount of "unaccounted for" water.
11. Find ways to protect privately owned wetlands and seek certification of vernal pools.
12. Reduce stream bank erosion and eutrophication of ponds, such as Carroll's Pond.
13. Promote alternatives to polluting land use practices, such as excessive fertilizer use.

### **Community Goals**

1. Acquire more land for open space and recreation, and improve existing facilities.
2. Work with the DCR and state legislature to ensure local access to DCR-owned parcels for passive recreation and, where suitable, for active recreation.
3. Acquire more open space and develop recreation facilities in the more densely developed southern part of town.
4. Upgrade existing recreation facilities so they are handicapped accessible.
5. Develop maps, pamphlets, and informational packets about town-owned open space and recreational facilities, and develop an outreach campaign for the public.
6. Increase opportunities for passive recreation on town-owned land, especially for the elderly.
7. Preserve small town character of town.

8. Develop both North-South and East-West trail linkages for walkways and wildlife corridors, and develop linkages to trails and wildlife corridors in abutting towns.
9. Develop sidewalks and walking trails to facilitate pedestrian traffic.
10. Increase access to recreational facilities by very young children at Pride Park and Woodland Park.
11. Support historic interpretive trail development along the Mass. Central Rail Trail.

### **Management Goals**

1. Appoint a permanent Open Space Advisory Committee to develop overall plans and implementation strategies for open space. The Committee shall have input into town decisions that affect open space, parks and resource protection.
2. Establish a plan to familiarize local officials and residents about the benefits of open space.
3. Help the new West Boylston Land Trust become an effective community resource and coordinate actions of the Land Trust with town boards and commissions.
4. Develop and implement an operation and maintenance plan and, where appropriate, a fee structure, for the town's recreational facilities.
5. Obtain a commitment from the Town to preserve and expand the current amount of town-owned open space and recreational land.
6. Develop and implement rules and regulations for use of parks and recreational facilities.
7. Have professional assistance available for town officials making land use and recreation decisions and for interactions with state, county, and DCR officials.
8. Develop mechanism to ensure input from town boards and departments into Planning Board's site plan review and subdivision review process.
9. Create coordinated, professional management of the town's water supply and new sewers.
10. Develop better enforcement of bylaws designed to protect the environment, such as Aquifer Protection Zoning.
11. Hold a public hearing to get public input whenever a use change is proposed for any open space owned by the Town.

## **FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN**

### **Actions To Achieve Resource Protection Goals**

1. The Town Administrator shall appoint a permanent Open Space Advisory Committee immediately to develop overall plans and implementation strategies for open space, including implementation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. The Open Space Advisory Committee shall have input into town decisions which affect open space, parks, and resource protection. – 2002
2. The Board of Selectmen with the aid of the Open Space Advisory Committee and the Parks Commission shall have input into decisions regarding future uses of DCR and former county-owned land to ensure that parts of these remain open and accessible for recreational use. The usage of DCR lands shall be contingent upon the need to protect the water quality of the Wachusett Reservoir. – 2002
3. The Board of Selectmen shall continue to review and submit comments on the draft of the Wachusett Reservoir Public Access Plan currently being prepared by the DCR when it is updated.

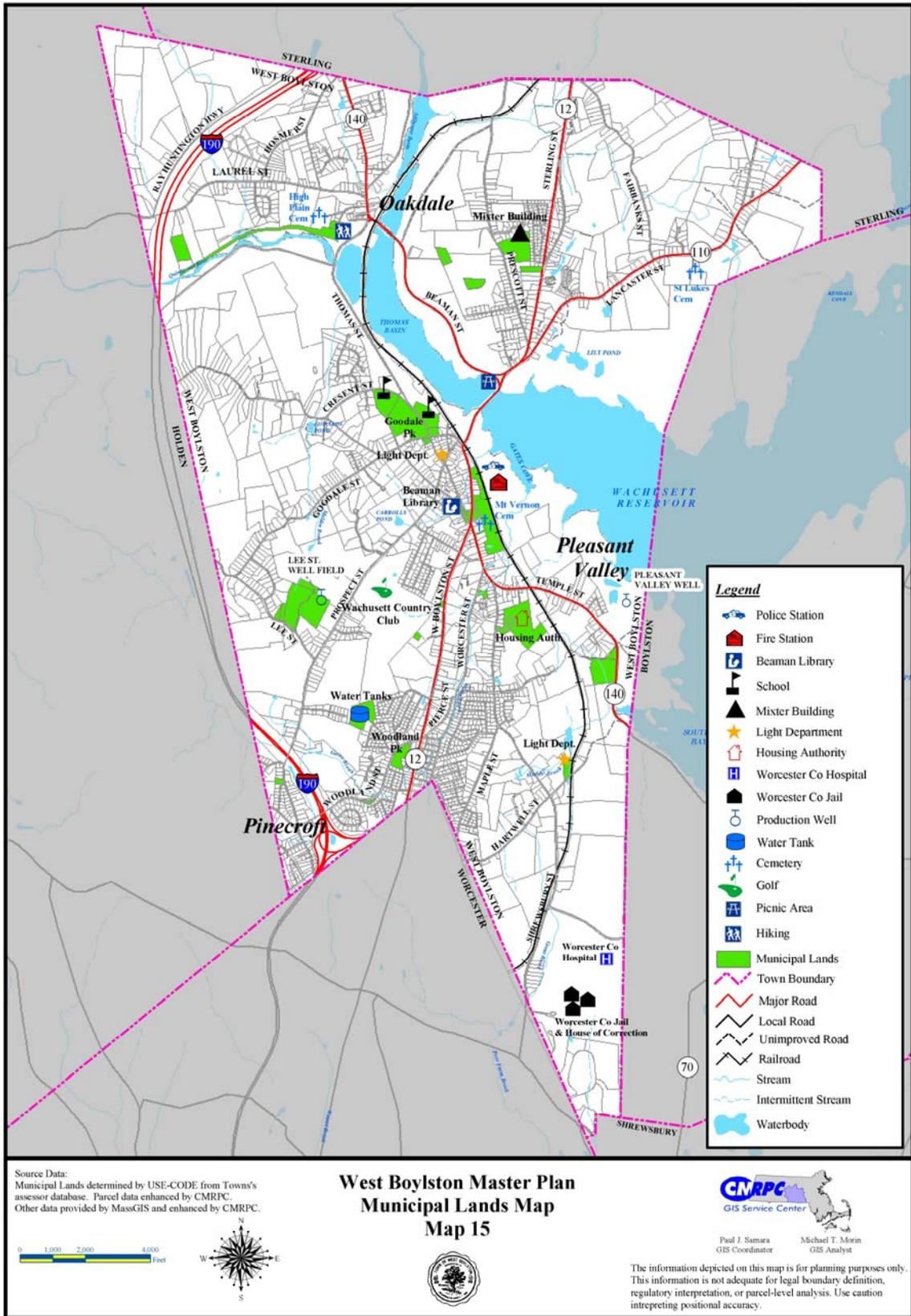
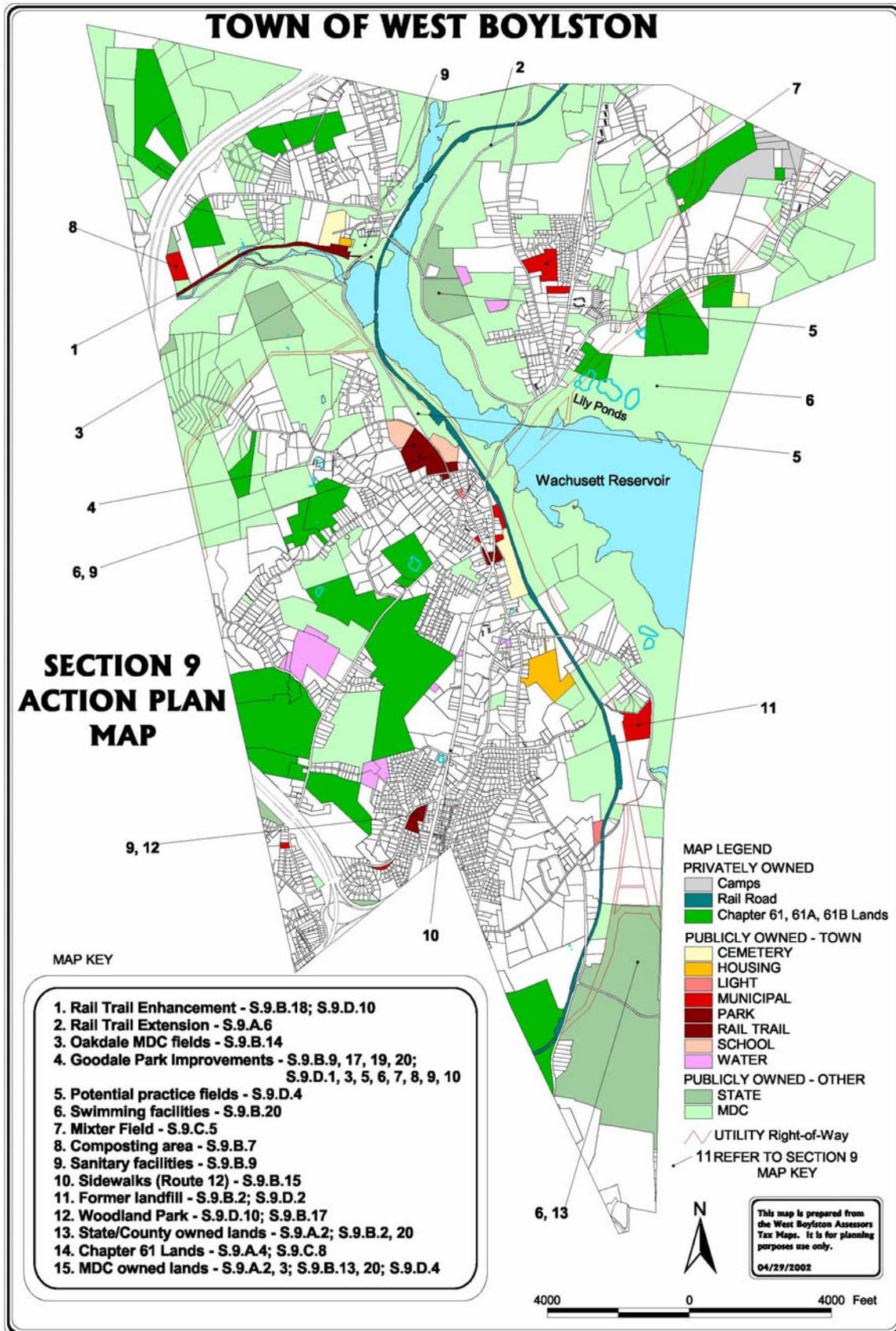


Figure 16



The Open Space Advisory Committee shall, with the aid of the Board of Assessors, establish a long-range plan to ensure the preservation of lands under Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B, and support the agricultural use of DCR land under Massachusetts Department of Agriculture guidelines. – 2002

5. The Open Space Advisory Committee and the West Boylston Land Trust shall encourage greenway connections throughout the town, such as wildlife corridors and walking trails.
6. The Open Space Advisory Committee shall work with Wachusett Greenways to extend the Rail Trail along the Quinapoxet River and up to Sterling, possibly along Pleasant Street. To enable this extension, the town shall support the addition of a walkway on the bridge over the Stillwater River in Oakdale. – 2002
7. The Planning Board shall propose amending the local Zoning Bylaws to include provisions for Open Space development (Cluster Zoning) and explore other zoning changes which will preserve open space, especially in overdeveloped areas that are proposed to be sewered (Precinct 1). – 2003
8. The Town Administrator shall develop better enforcement of bylaws designed to protect the environment, such as Aquifer Protection Zoning. – 2002
9. The West Boylston Land Trust shall acquire (by purchase or by gift) open land and acquire development rights and/or restrict development with conservation easements in sensitive areas. 2002-2007
10. The West Boylston Land Trust shall acquire easements from landowners to link open space lands via natural corridors for hiking and wildlife routes. 2002-2007
11. The Conservation Commission and the Schools shall work to better protect privately owned wetlands by encouraging certification of vernal pools, utilizing students and volunteers such as Scouts. 2003-2007
12. The Town Administrator, through the Open Space Advisory Committee, with the aid of the Historical Commission, shall coordinate open space preservation with historical preservation efforts. 1996. 2003-2007
13. The West Boylston Land Trust and the West Boylston Historical Commission shall investigate the possible use of grants from the state Department of Environmental Management's Historic Landscape Preservation Program to preserve historic and treasured landscapes. – 2005
14. The town shall consider adoption of the state Community Preservation Act to preserve open space and historic sites and to create affordable housing. – 2005
15. The Water District shall take action to reduce the amount of unaccounted-for-water and increase water conservation. It shall obtain DEP permits to increase the amount of water it is permitted to withdraw from its wells and reduce the manganese in its water. It shall investigate whether new land protection efforts are needed to assure an adequate supply of water in the future. – 2003

### **Actions To Achieve Community Goals**

1. The Parks Commission shall continue to maintain the excellent facilities currently available to the community. 2002-2007.
2. The Parks Commission shall expand active recreational facilities and obtain additional land to be used for recreation such as the County/State-owned land off Shrewsbury Street and the former landfill. 2002-2007
3. The Parks Commission shall review its facilities for use by seniors and shall increase opportunities for passive recreation. 2002-2002
4. The Parks Commission shall determine how to best use available lands within the densely populated area of Town (Precinct 1).
5. The Parks Commission shall review all town recreation facilities for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. – 2002
6. The Open Space Advisory Committee shall prepare and implement a public education program to promote the wise use of the town's open spaces and recreation facilities. – 2004

7. The Superintendent of Streets and Parks shall publicize the availability of the public composting area and expand hours of operation. – 2004
8. The Parks Commission shall assess interest in formation of community gardens and look for an appropriate site, such as former farmland or DCR land. – 2006
9. The Parks Commission shall construct sanitary facilities at high use public areas, such as Goodale Park, Woodland Park and the Rail Trail. – 2004
10. The Parks Commission and the Planning Board shall develop mechanisms for adequate buffers between parks used for active recreation and residential zones. – 2003
11. The Parks Commission shall provide maps showing availability and location of recreational facilities. – 2003
12. The Parks Commission shall develop and implement rules/regulations and fees for use of Park facilities. – 2003
13. The Parks Commission shall seek additional recreational access on DCR land and comment on the DCR's Public Access Plan when the Plan is updated in 2002. – 2002
14. The Parks Commission shall seek long-term leases for town athletic fields that are located on DCR land. – 2003
15. The Town-Wide Planning Committee and the Board of Selectmen shall work for better pedestrian access, especially to commercial areas, including the installation of sidewalks along the southern part of Route 12. – 2005.
16. The Parks Commission shall assist the disabled and senior citizens in using walking trails. – 2003
17. The availability of infant and toddler recreational facilities shall be expanded at Pride Park and Woodland Park. – 2005
18. The town shall support efforts by Wachusett Greenways to develop historic interpretive side trails along the Rail Trail. – 2003
19. The Parks Commission shall retain and maintain the scenic pine grove in Goodale Park.
20. The Parks Commission shall ensure that a safe public swimming area is available to Town residents. Possible ways to do this include: a) securing a state grant to make the town pool handicapped accessible; b) giving the pools back to the DCR unless it pays to make the pool handicapped accessible or offers the Town use of the Lily Ponds for swimming, as was done in the 1930s; c) getting DCR assistance to help the Town partner with Sterling for use of Lake Washacum, as was done in the 1950s; or d) turning the pool into an enclosed four-season pool, and allow other towns and schools to use it for a fee. (Note: The Lily Ponds do not discharge to the Reservoir, except under extreme flooding conditions.) – 2003

### **Actions To Achieve Management Goals**

1. The Town Administrator shall appoint a permanent Open Space Advisory Committee to coordinate the management of open space and periodically update the Open Space and Recreation Plan. – 2002
2. The West Boylston Land Trust shall educate town officials and citizens about tax and other benefits of open space through use of American Farmland Trust brochure and other educational materials. – 2003
3. The Town Administrator shall obtain necessary professional assistance and training for local boards and officials dealing with open space, recreation, water, and the town's tax base so that laws relating to land use are consistently enforced.
4. The Town Administrator shall improve coordination among boards whose decisions affect open space and recreation and ensure that the Planning Board gets input from other town boards and departments during the site plan review and subdivision review process. – 2002
5. The Parks Commission shall obtain a commitment from the town to preserve the current amount of town-owned open space, e.g. open space and recreational uses around the Mixer Building. – 2003

6. The Superintendent of Streets and Parks shall establish a system of pedestrian and bicycle routes for safer access to existing and future recreational facilities and prepare maps of these routes. – 2004
7. The Board of Selectmen through the Town Administrator, Parks Commission, and Conservation Commission shall review the property currently owned by the town that is unusable (i.e. steep slopes and wetlands), and invite the DCR to swap such properties for flat useable areas owned by the DCR. – 2004
8. The Town Administrator shall require notification of the Conservation Commission (in addition to Board of Selectmen) when land under Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B is being considered for removal from this program. – 2003

**Specific Parks Commission Actions/Requests**

1. All Purpose Field: Rebuild bleachers (2003)
2. Landfill Property: Acquire property from Selectmen
3. Town Pool: Renovate pool using recommendation from engineer (2005)
4. Obtain additional practice fields by obtaining and developing parcel of DCR land north of Edwards School and by using DCR list of possible sites for additional practice fields, as well as former athletic field adjacent to John Augustus Hall (DCR headquarters on Beaman Street). (2003)
5. Softball Field: Complete dugouts (spring 2002)  
Safety fence on Goodale Street (spring 2002)  
Construct lights
6. A and B fields: Construct dugouts (spring 2002)
7. Construct additional parking areas around Goodale Park: Lenkarski property and near playground
8. Baseball field: Re-grade and extend irrigation  
Construct dugouts  
Construct lights
9. Repair or re-construct tennis and basketball courts at Goodale Park (2002)
10. Install bathroom facilities at Goodale Park and Woodland Park
11. Continue to investigate additional land for the Parks Commission to acquire

## CHAPTER 8 CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES<sup>1</sup>

### CULTURAL RESOURCES

Since the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir 100 years ago, West Boylston has been destined to remain a small New England town. The residents place a high value on this small town atmosphere according to the citizen survey completed by the Town Wide Planning Committee in 1999. Preserving this small town culture seems to be one of the things most citizens agree upon.

The Town has many of the traditional cultural resources of other New England towns: the library, the schools, churches, clubs and service organizations. Sports are very popular in West Boylston with many opportunities for youths and adults. The open space surrounding the Reservoir provides the opportunity for outdoor recreational activities, although there are many restrictions necessary to protect the drinking water supply. Our section of the Rail Trail in Oakdale provides an excellent walking, biking, or jogging opportunity.

The newly expanded Beaman Memorial Library has many cultural and educational resources for children and adults. It provides a variety of programs for all ages throughout the year. A very helpful staff make its resources available to the patrons. Computers are available to provide Internet resources. The Friends of the Beaman Memorial Library provide volunteer help and resources that help to expand the Library's role in the community.

The Cultural Council helps to underwrite and/or sponsor various cultural programs using shrinking State grant funds. The future availability of these funds is uncertain as the State is reducing financial aid to the cities and towns across the board.

West Boylston has a number of Clubs, Fraternities and Service Organizations. Some are chapters of large organizations and others have a more local origin. The list includes:

Beaman Oak Garden Club	Friends of Beaman Library
Woman's Club	WestBest
Odd Fellows	Athletic Association
Masonic Lodge	Parent Teacher Organization
Community Club	Friends of WBPA-TV
Wachusett Area Rotary Club	Lions Club
Elder Services	

Veterans organizations consist of both the American Legion Post 204 and Ladies Auxiliary and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6907 and Ladies Auxiliary. Both organizations own their own buildings and meet regularly although their members are aging. They organize the Town Memorial Day Parade and Exercises and decorate the graves of all veterans buried in West Boylston. The Town also appoints a Veteran's Agent to assist veterans.

West Boylston has a large variety of Youth Groups and programs. They include:

Boy Scouts, Troop 151	Little League
Cub Scouts	Basketball Leagues
Campfire Girls	Soccer Leagues
Girl Scouts	Pop Warner Football
Babe Ruth Baseball	Girl's Softball

School Programs include:

National Honor Society	School Dramatic Productions
School Sports Programs	Yearbook

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter prepared by Charles Greenough, Town-Wide Planning Committee

In addition, the Town's Parks Commission runs a summer recreation program that has included a swimming program at the Town Pool. However, due to a lack of funds, the potential closing of the Pool is being discussed.

Every year because of a shortage of tax dollars available for youth and other cultural programs, the users have been asked to pick up more and more of the costs related to these programs.

The Bandstand Committee raised funds to construct the bandstand on the Town Common and now organizes a full schedule of summer concerts sponsored by local businesses. A wide variety of local musical groups perform each Sunday evening during the summer.

The West Boylston Public Assess Cable TV, Channel 11, cablecasts from the Mixer Building an events bulletin board, government meetings, local sports, a monthly magazine show, and other programs of local interest.

Channel 12 cablecasts from the Edwards Elementary School an events bulletin board, and various programs performed at that school.

Channel 13, located at the High School, is inactive.

The Council on Aging sponsors many events for seniors at the Senior Center located in the Mixer Building. West Boylston has a growing senior population, and the Center has been expanding its programs and services that now include:

Programs and parties	Health programs
Trips	Computer center
Daily lunch program	Transportation
Activity and card rooms	Senior Lounge

West Boylston has a wide variety of religious opportunities for its citizens. Churches include:

Our Lady of Good Counsel	Baptist Church
First Congregational Church	Oakdale Methodist Church
First Assembly of God Church	Christ Lutheran Church
Hossana Chapel	Rock Church/Freedom Worship Center

All of these churches have regular services and various programs for their members and their children.

One of the most important cultural resources for the Town's citizens is the close proximity to the Greater Worcester area's varied and plentiful cultural resources. Being in the heart of Central Massachusetts provides a cornucopia of things to do and see just a short distance away.

The Town Meeting form of government has been used by the Town since its inception and is a very important cultural resource. It is a prime factor in the small town atmosphere so cherished by the citizens of West Boylston.

But the most important cultural resource, one that is necessary for the existence of most of the resources listed above, is the people of West Boylston. Volunteer participation is an essential ingredient in the Town Government and all other organizations that make possible the culture of a town such as this.

Almost two hundred years ago, the citizens of West Boylston banded together to form our Town, and generation after generation of volunteers have provided the man and woman power to make it work and provide the high quality of life we now enjoy.

## **HISTORIC RESOURCES**

As noted in the history of the Town of West Boylston, the Town underwent a radical change with the coming of the Reservoir, which resulted in the loss of most of the historical resources now under many feet of water. However, the Historical Society has assembled many historic artifacts at the Bigelow Tavern, which was purchased by the Town in 1977 for use as a Historical Museum and as the headquarters of the Historical Society.

Many other historic resources survived. Some buildings were moved from their sites in the valley to new sites on the shores of the Reservoir. The Beaman Tavern Watering Trough was accepted as a gift in 1901 and placed at its present site near the Library in 1930.

All of the graves from the cemetery in the valley were moved to the Mount Vernon Cemetery near the present day Common.

In the 1970's Boy Scout Troop 16 of Oakdale published a guide to the oldest buildings in the Town entitled "Historical Trail in West Boylston". It contained a short history of 49 buildings in town and located them on an accompanying map. The oldest was the William Whitney House (1730) located on Tobin Lane (off Laurel St) in Oakdale.

Several homes in the Oakdale Historic District have been preserved much as they existed before the construction of the Reservoir.

Also in the Oakdale section can be found several foundations of factories and homes torn down to make way for the Reservoir. Several of these can be seen from the Rail Trail. The Oakdale park area contains two rows of old shade trees that once lined a busy thoroughfare.

The most prominent historical artifact in West Boylston is the Old Stone Church located on the shores of the Reservoir near the Route 12 Causeway. Built just before the construction of the Reservoir, it has been preserved to remain a symbol of the Town that Survived.

**CHAPTER 9  
MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

**MUNICIPAL FACILITIES**

**Municipal Facilities Task Force**

The Town Wide Planning Committee appointed a Municipal Facilities Task Force consisting of a Selectman, TWPC members, Police and Fire Chiefs, a Municipal Light Board member, a School Committee member, Council on Aging representatives and a Finance Committee member. Funds were approved at a Town Meeting to hire an architect.

The Task Force reviewed all other plans and reports prepared in the past 10 years or more on municipal buildings and facilities, and hired and worked closely with the architect, Paul Lieneck of Haynes, Lieneck and Smith Inc. of Ashby, Mass. Mr. Lieneck and/or Task Force members toured all buildings and interviewed many Town officials and department heads.

As a result of these investigations and many informative discussions at Task Force meetings, the Task Force identified the options available to the Town and presented its recommendations to the TWPC. These recommendations were accepted and are included in the Master Plan.

The studies clearly showed that many of the municipal facilities have suffered from a lack of maintenance and modernization for many years. The recent upgrading and expansion of the Library and the schools have started the process and set the stage for the rest of the Town's buildings and facilities.

The Task Force recommended that the Town start immediately on a long-range, comprehensive plan to improve existing facilities that are in dire need of repairs, and to implement a maintenance and improvement plan to care for all Town-owned buildings in the future. The longer it takes to complete this plan the more it will cost. Estimated inflation will add approximately \$50,000 per million dollars of value per year. Interest rates are favorable at the present time, but are likely to increase in the future.

The Task Force adopted the following guidelines to establishing priorities.

- Does the present facility interfere with service provision?
- Would an improved facility cut costs?
- Would an improved facility improve service?
- Would an improved facility improve accessibility (ADA)?
- Would an improved facility reduce safety risks?
- Would an improved facility improve working conditions?

The reuse of a facility for a new purpose would of course mean the existing department must be moved first, and that helped to set the order in which the various improvements are to occur.

**Recommended Building Improvements**

Projects listed are ranked in the order they should be undertaken.

**Table 9-1  
Municipal Building Program**

1. Shepard Building Renovations	\$2,100,000	2005
2. Streets and Parks: New Building on County Land with Municipal Light Plant Building	\$3,800,000	2006
3. Bancroft Building Converted to Town Hall	\$3,000,000	2008
4. Demolish Mixer Building and Build a New Senior/Community Center (Making Room for New Playing Fields)	\$2,700,000	2009
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,600,000</b>	

These figures reflect the estimated effects of inflation, inspection services and other contingency costs, but not finance costs. The longer the Town waits to implement this program, the more it will cost.

The costs of these projects should be integrated into the Town Financial Plan. Costs of all the recommended actions proposed by the Master Plan must be considered together and priorities set. Local officials should also explore opportunities for grants or loans for some of these projects.

Once these four major building projects are successfully completed, and older buildings are adequately maintained, the Town's major building needs will be solved for many years into the future.

However, many other smaller projects have also come before the Task Force that could impact the funding of the major projects listed above.

Projects that will need immediate attention include:

- High School roof - replacement
- Edwards School roof - replacement
- Library parking - Possible purchase of land. Cost is approximately \$300,000 - when available. Medium to long term.
- Town Pool repair or replace - Cost estimated from \$1,000,000 to \$3,000,000. Voters must decide relative priority considering other building needs.
- Construct trash transfer/recycling station on county land near DPW garage. Explore this option to cut trash pick-up costs.

Projects that will be needed in the long-term include:

- Addition to Edwards School for new classrooms - Cost is unknown.
- Build new playing fields - Cost is unknown.
- Acquire new land for cemetery – Cost to be borne out of the Cemetery Trust Fund.
- Permanent toilets for parks - Cost is approximately \$160,000 each.

The re-use of the existing Light Plant building was not determined in this study. The Town owns the land but the building was built by the Light Department with ratepayer funds. The Architect believed this building would not be suitable for use by the Town as a Police Station, Town Hall, or Senior Center because of the high cost of renovation or limited size.

Two possible uses were suggested: sell the building to help finance this building program; or provide space for School administrative offices.

This building program has been presented as a package, and the Task Force recommended that it be adopted in its entirety. Members believed that is the only fair way to solve the Town's municipal facility problems, and that such an approach would have the greatest chance of successfully achieving all identified needs.

The Town Wide Planning Committee is very aware of the fiscal limitations before the Town at the present time. However, the critical facility needs outlined in this chapter have been getting worse year after year for the past 15 or 20 years. The citizens of the Town must face up to these needs as soon as possible if they expect the same high level of municipal services to continue. Not spending money on a building program has been a very costly mistake that must be rectified. This chapter presents a plan that if adopted, will prevent such mistakes from occurring in the future.

The costs of this building program must be weighed against the cost of doing nothing, which has been the preferred option for the past 20 years. This can only lead to large sums spent on patching up deteriorating buildings, inefficient use of costly fuels, employee ineffectiveness and low morale caused by poor working conditions, and wasted tax dollars trying to "get by" with poor public buildings.

With the 200th Anniversary of the incorporation of the Town in 2008, what better way to celebrate than to implement this building program and start the next 100 years with pride in our new and efficient municipal buildings.

On the Town's 100th Anniversary, the residents were faced with rebuilding the whole Town after the construction of the Reservoir. Residents today should live up to their example by getting the job done just like they did.

### **Maintenance Program**

The TWPC recommends very strongly that in addition to the Building Program there should be established a proactive maintenance program to care for all Town facilities, protect public investments and prevent a similar building crisis in the future.

The upkeep of municipal facilities is divided into the following categories:

- Custodial care - The day-to-day cleaning and polishing.
- Light maintenance - Light repairs such as broken windows, door handles, lights, etc.; preventive maintenance and lubrication of mechanical systems; cleaning carpets and filters etc.; checking emergency systems; and snow removal.
- Maintenance - Painting, plumbing, electrical and carpentry work; sanding and restoring floor finishes; replacing damaged items and installing new equipment.
- Energy conservation - Important concern of all maintenance personal and managers.
- Planned expansion and remodeling - Estimate future needs and provide for necessary growth.

The TWPC recommends that a central point of accountability be established, with detailed record keeping functions and overall responsibility for this maintenance program. This could be a Physical Plant Manager for all or some of the facilities or separate responsibilities for individual facility managers.

The TWPC is in favor of a centralized manager, but is skeptical of the political ramifications of creating such a position. Combining the school maintenance program with the rest of the Town facilities should be studied to see if it would be cost effective.

Contracting out work to private vendors should be explored for possible cost savings. Unified contracts for maintenance services such as plumbing, electrical and carpentry may also help to reduce costs and should be studied.

In summary, a routine maintenance program must be funded every year either in separate budgets or in a Physical Plant Manager account. It is much more cost effective to fix small problems when they happen than it is to construct large buildings. Waiting until "next year" always costs more in the long run.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICES**

Municipal services are provided in West Boylston by a combination of paid employees and volunteer citizens. While the efforts of the town employees are certainly very important, the citizens who volunteer to serve on the various boards and committees are indispensable to the running of the Town. Their dedication and expertise are essential to the Town's well being.

The Town of West Boylston has the Board of Selectmen/Town Administrator/Town Meeting form of government. Municipal services are provided by several departments under the leadership of elected and appointed boards and officials. These include the Board of Selectmen/Sewer Commissioners, the Town Administrator, the School Board, the Park Commissioners, the Municipal Light Board, the Cemetery Trustees, the Beaman Memorial Library Trustees, the Housing Authority, the Town Clerk, the Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, and the Board of Assessors.

Water is provided by a separate Water District which covers most of the Town under the leadership of an elected Water Commission.

## **Existing Conditions**

Recent budget cuts have caused a reduction in services previously provided to the community and an increased dependence on user fees not charged before. A total of 12 Revolving Accounts were authorized by the May 2004 Town Meeting for the various Departments and Boards which enable them to collect and spend fees for the services they provide.

Furthermore, the service providers, employees and volunteers, with the exception of the Library are working in crowded, poorly maintained, outdated, and unsatisfactory conditions. The Municipal Facilities Section of this Plan outlines the conditions and the recommended solutions to this problem.

The cost of providing municipal services has been rising much faster than the resources needed to support them. The rising cost of health insurance is an example of the extreme negative effect on the municipal budget. In addition, land use restrictions imposed by the Watershed Protection Act to safeguard the Wachusett Reservoir tend to slow the rate of growth of the Town of the Town and limit its ability to generate new growth to help offset rising expenses.

## **Public Safety**

Services in this area are adequate according to the Fire and Police Chiefs, but coverage is very thin at certain times. They are concerned budget cuts could lead to a reduction in essential public safety training needed to meet today's minimum standards. The Dispatch Center needs major upgrades in equipment, training of personnel and to be relocated to a public area that meets ADA accessibility standards.

### *Public Safety Goals*

- Upgrade the present facility to adequately house police, fire and dispatching.
- Continue to expand training programs to keep personnel up to date with the latest equipment and procedures.
- Improve crime prevention. Improve fire prevention.
- Increase school and public building security.
- Upgrade Communication Center equipment and move to an area that complies with ADA accessibility standards.
- Maintain a Public Safety budget that provides the funding necessary to continue to function as an public safety unit.
- Establish maintenance plan for buildings and equipment.
- Adopt MMA Study recommendations.
- Study expanding EMS service.

## **Department of Public Works**

The May 2004 Town Meeting created a DPW for the first time in West Boylston. It combined the Streets and Parks, the Sewer Department and Tree Warden duties. The appointed Park Commissioners control the use of the parks, while the DPW controls the upkeep of the park facilities. The \$52 million sewer project is nearing completion and will soon be turned over to the Town. Thirty miles of Town streets have been disturbed by this project. The street drainage system needs to be upgraded to comply with State and Federal regulations. The Streets and Parks Department is struggling to meet the needs of the Town because of understaffing at the present time.

### *Department of Public Works Goals*

- Clarify organizational chain of command.
- Build new facility on Town land near jail.
- Meet minimum staffing requirements by filling vacancies. Investigate inclusion of Water District.

- Make detailed assessment of town street conditions after sewer project completion and create improvement plan.
- Work with TWPC toward reconstruction of Route 12 by State. Establish a sidewalk improvement and expansion plan.
- Establish a street drainage upgrade plan and implement.
- Establish an integrated maintenance plan for buildings and equipment.
- Create a yearly work plan.

### **Schools**

The West Boylston school system is contained in two buildings, the Major Edwards Elementary School and the Middle/High School. School facilities are used for many non-school activities such as Town Meetings and youth sports. Both buildings were expanded and upgraded in the 1990's but do not have the room needed to expand their services to special needs, a full day kindergarten program and other programs.

Both roofs are in need of replacement and the process has started. The school department does not have its own athletic fields. The school complex is adjacent to Goodale Park and has use of those athletic fields for their sports programs. This decreases the amount of time available for other community park facility uses.

#### *Schools Goals*

- Replace both school roofs.
- Plan for expansion of facilities.
- Investigate school use of Light Plant building when vacated.
- Complete strategic planning study now under way.
- Continue achieving a high quality of education for the town's children.

Appendix C. contains the "Strategic Action Plan" from the Department's Strategic Plan of June 2004. The Action Plan is the product of an intensive planning process completed by an 18-member Strategic Plan Steering Committee. As noted in the report, "Through its goals and action plans, the strategic plan identifies strategic goals, actions to address issues, timelines, required resources and identification of the leadership staff who are most responsible for guiding the actions. The strategic plan furthers the public understanding and trust in the direction and efforts of the school districts as they commit themselves to excellence." (page 2)

### **Library**

The Beaman Memorial Library was completely renovated and expanded in the 1990's. It is the cultural center of the Town and it runs many programs for all ages. The library has a large collection of books, tapes, and computer terminals for the use of its citizens. It belongs to a regional collaborative that allows its patrons to use other libraries in the region. The staff is well trained and very helpful to all ages. It is under the direction of an elected Board of Trustees.

#### *Library Goals*

- Implement Long Range Plan as budgets allow.
- Increase parking accommodations.
- Continue staff training to keep current with technological advances.
- Add technology expert to staff.
- Plan and fund maintenance plan for building and equipment.

## **Administration**

The Town of West Boylston has not had a town hall since the old one burned down in 1912. Town offices have been housed in a variety of places since that time and are presently located in the Mixter Building, which was built as a school in the 1960's. Most offices of the Town are located here as well as the Senior Center and the Public Access TV studio. The building is open to other community organizations for their use. Town Meetings are held at the Middle/High School. The building is unsuited for use as a town hall and the leaking roof, etc make for very uncomfortable working conditions for all.

The Board of Selectmen is presently searching for a new Town Administrator. The elected Board of Selectmen hires the Town Administrator to oversee the daily administration of the Town's business, while the Board creates the policies needed to direct the affairs of the Town. The Town administrative offices are understaffed.

The positions of Financial Director and Town Accountant are being filled on a temporary basis at the present time by Financial Advisory Associates, Inc., a private consulting firm. The firm has a contract through 2005. Management after that date is to be decided.

Treasurer and Tax Collector positions are combined.

The elected Town Clerk keeps the official records of the Town, swears in Town Officials, and issues various licenses and permits. This office does not have a secure vault to safeguard the Town's vital records.

Inspection services are provided by the Inspector of Buildings (who is also the Zoning Enforcement Officer), the Wiring Inspector, Plumbing Inspector, Gas Inspector, and Animal Control Officer, all of whom are appointed by the Town Administrator. The Health Inspector is appointed by the Board of Health. These services are funded by user fees.

### *Administration Goals*

- Improve working conditions by moving to new quarters.
- Clearly define responsibilities of Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.
- Board of Selectmen creates written policy log book with procedures outlined for future members.
- Decide on financial department structure and implement.
- Have Board of Selectmen members take advantage of training opportunities.
- Meet minimum staffing requirements as budgets allow.
- Improve office structure.
- Appointment process should be studied to try to improve volunteer participation in government and to encourage training of these volunteers.
- Better coordinate administration activities.
  - Coordinate development review procedures and inspection services.
  - Stricter Zoning enforcement.
  - Coordinate, streamline and enforce permitting.
- Include secure storage area for town records in new building.
- Keep up to date with technological advances in equipment and staff training.

## **Council on Aging**

The COA is located in the Mixter Building and provides varied program for the Town's elder citizens. These include a daily lunch, meals-on-wheels, transportation, a senior lounge, trips, and many other social and recreational activities.

### *Council on Aging Goals*

Continue expanding services to meet the needs of a growing senior population.

Expand outreach programs.

Move in to a new facility.

Educate seniors on benefits available to them.

Expand lunch program.

Increase senior awareness of local programs and services.

### **Development Services**

The Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, The Board of Health, and the Conservation Commission are all volunteer boards charged with responsibilities outlined by State law. They are financed by revolving funds that are collected from their applicants and are also used to obtain technical advice from consultants. Legal advice is generally provided by the Town Counsel, who is appointed by the Town Administrator.

#### *Development Services Goals*

- Coordinate these services so that information flows freely between all concerned agencies.
- Stricter enforcement of regulations and decisions.
- Timely information provided by town departments so that decisions can be made quicker.
- Central clearinghouse for coordination of decisions by all boards involved.

### **Cemetery Department**

The Mount Vernon Cemetery is operated under the control of an elected Board of Cemetery Trustees. The Board uses a revolving account, trust funds, and Town budget funds to operate and improve this facility.

#### *Cemetery Department Goals*

- Plan for increasing area for burial sites.
- Implement site improvements as needed.

### **Municipal Light Plant**

The Town-owned electrical system is under the direction of an elected Light Board. User fees are the main source of income. This facility is semi-independent from the rest of the Town's service providers.

#### *Municipal Light Plant Goals*

- Build new facility on County land and move in.
- Feasibility study for underground wires along Route 12.
- Develop and publish long range plan.

### **Water District**

Water in West Boylston is provided by an independent Water District with elected Water Commissioners. Most of the Town is serviced by the District. It is funded completely by user fees.

#### *Water District Goals*

- Implement Tata & Howard water study recommendations.
- Study combining activities with DPW.

### **Housing Authority**

The Orchard Knoll housing complex is managed by an elected Housing Authority. It is funded by State subsidies and rents. It contains a mix of elderly and family housing.

#### *Housing Authority Goal*

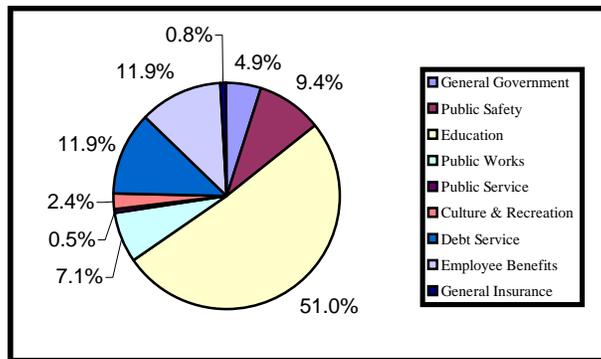
- Consider expanding operations to create more affordable housing in West Boylston.

## CHAPTER 10 FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

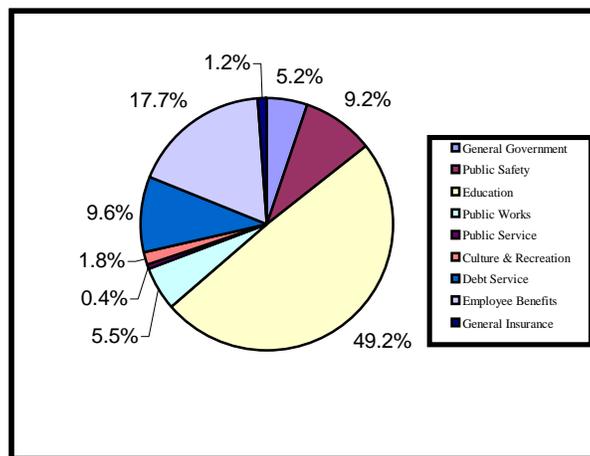
### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Like many Massachusetts cities and towns, West Boylston has seen steeply rising costs that make it increasingly difficult to fund yearly operating budgets, much less pay for needed capital projects. As can be seen in Figures 10-1 and 10-2 below, there has been a significant increase in employee benefits and insurance costs as a percentage of the entire budget. These items increased from about 13% of the Town's budget in FY 2001 to about 19% in FY 2005. Conversely, direct service categories decreased their share of the Town budget: public safety (-0.3%), education (-2.1%), public works (-1.6%), and culture and recreation (-.6%). In addition, the Town postponed some needed capital expenses in order to reduce its debt payments; as a result, debt service decreased from 12% of the budget in FY 2001 to 9.6% in FY 2005.

**Figure 10-1  
Municipal Expenditures 2001**



**Figure 10-2  
Municipal Expenditures 2005**

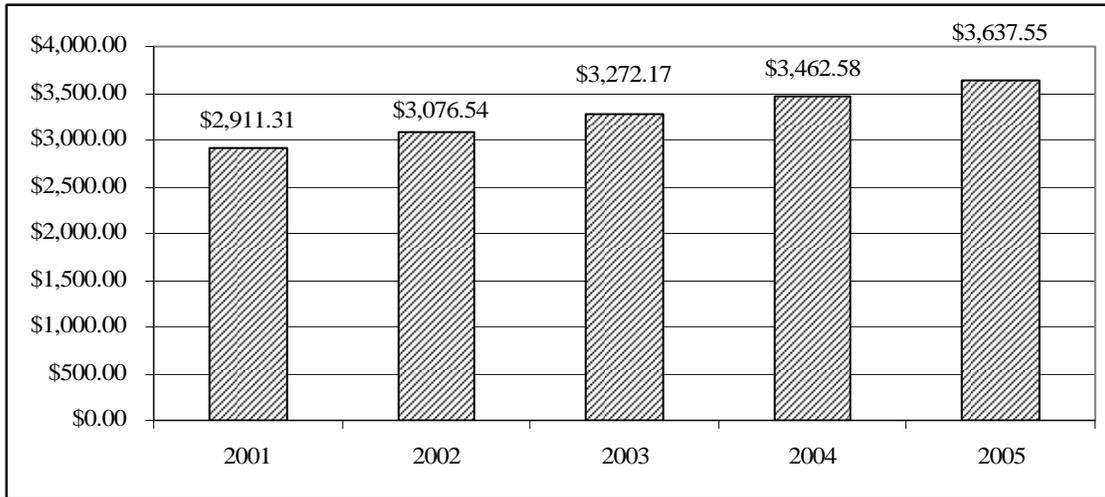


Cash reserves have been used to balance the operating budgets for the last several years in an effort to avoid tax increases beyond the allowed Proposition 2½ levy limit. In FY 2005, for example, over \$1.1 million was transferred from free cash and other sources to overcome an operating deficit. These reserves

are now perilously low. And in FY 2004, the budget was cut by 3% across the board by reducing some services in order to achieve a balanced budget.

Residential properties have been asked to shoulder an increasing share of local services. The average single family tax bill increased from \$2,911.31 in FY 2001 to \$3,637.55 in FY 2005. This amounts to an increase of 25% over the five-year period.

**Figure 10-3  
Average Single Family Tax Bill: 2001 - 2005**



Furthermore, as can be seen in Table 10-1 below, the residential tax levy increased by over \$2.0 million during this period, and now represents over 84% of the total tax levy. Commercial taxes actually declined by \$79,000 during this period, while industrial taxes increased by about \$77,500.

**Table 10-1  
Tax Levy Analysis, 2001 - 2005**

	2001		2005		Change	
	Dollars	Percent	Dollars	Percent	Dollars	Percent
<b>Tax Levy:</b>						
Residential	\$6,271,618	79.09%	\$8,285,088	84.26%	\$2,013,470	5.17%
Commercial	842,552	10.63%	763,433	7.76%	-79,119	-2.86%
Industrial	493,285	6.22%	570,841	5.81%	77,556	-0.42%
Personal	321,963	4.06%	213,574	2.17%	-108,389	-1.89%
<b>Total Tax Levy:</b>	\$7,929,418	100.00%	\$9,832,936	100.00%	\$1,903,518	0.00%

Other important factors influence the ability of the Town to pay for its capital and operating expenses:

1. Many user fees have been implemented in an effort to shift service costs wherever possible from tax revenues, constricted by Prop 2½, to actual service users.
2. Limited new growth due to lack of buildable land and restrictions imposed under the Cohen Act, (see DCR Influences, page 23) have further reduced the Town's ability to see significant growth to keep pace with rising costs.
3. The Town's taxable base has been seriously diminished by land purchases by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts over the years.
4. Construction of the sewer system has imposed new taxes and service charges on many of the Town's citizens.
5. Increasing State controls and regulations require towns to provide costly services they have difficulty funding e.g. schools, housing open space, transportation, etc. Reducing department budgets beyond certain levels could also result in loss of State funds.
6. Most municipal buildings and facilities are aging and inadequate. No realistic comprehensive capital improvement plan or effective process for maintaining or replacing them exists.
7. Many citizens are not aware of the numerous challenges facing the Town in the form of aging capital infrastructure, operating revenue shortfalls, and compliance obligations, and of the implications of failing to take action to address these challenges.
8. Potential 40B housing developments could result in demands for infrastructure expansion. (Schools, sewer, roadways, etc.)
9. The Town of West Boylston gets no special revenue for hosting the House of Correction. Other towns do.
10. Increased taxes will be accepted by West Boylston citizens only if they are convinced of the need. Yearly operating budgets must be balanced and should be paid for by recurring revenue. Costs will continue to rise well beyond revenue growth.

### **GOALS**

1. Develop and implement a budget process that considers the entire Town's needs fairly and promotes cooperation and understanding among the various departments. Improve citizen information and outreach in the budget process.
2. Develop and implement a realistic and effective capital improvement financial plan and process.
3. The Reservoir and the State Agency controlling it are here to stay and the Town must try to improve its relationship with whatever agency is in control. Continue working for higher PILOT funds.
4. Communicate regularly with the Worcester County Sheriff and increase efforts to get more benefits from hosting The House of Correction.
5. Explore expanding the tax base through increased economic development.
6. Explore new ways of providing Town services that will cut costs or improve services; including revisiting failed past attempts to see if conditions or attitudes have changed.
7. Seek grant money from outside sources to support Town operations as much as possible. Complying with State regulations increases the Town's eligibility for grants and other payments.
8. Identify state laws and regulations that negatively affect West Boylston, and pursue appropriate strategies to pass amendments more favorable to the Town.
9. Regionalize purchasing and/or other governmental functions and services where such will reduce costs.

## STRATEGIES

### **Goal #1 - Budget Process**

1. Start budget development earlier.
2. Continue joint meetings with School Committee, Fin Com and Selectmen. Add others if productive.
3. Keep process as public as possible.
4. Consider the entire Town's needs fairly and develop priorities, understanding the impacts of any budget cuts. When evaluating the Town's needs, consider all major citizen groups within the Town and the relative ability of each to benefit or withstand changes in priorities.
5. Capital improvement funds should be included in all yearly budgets. In addition, insure building and facility maintenance costs are properly accounted for each year. Do not defer to later years.
6. Review traditional line items to see if there might be a clearer way to present the budget to the public. What costs are included in each line?

### **Goal #2 - Capital Improvement Plan and Process**

1. Implement the municipal building plan contained in the Master Plan as soon as finances allow. Our municipal buildings must be reconditioned, expanded or replaced. A capital building program must be started.
2. Form a permanent Capital Planning Committee to assist the Town in planning for, administering, and prioritizing capital improvement needs.
3. Investigate a centralized maintenance system responsible for maintaining all Town buildings and facilities.
4. Include capital improvement funds in all yearly budgets.
5. Include funds for buildings and facilities maintenance in all yearly budgets.

### **Goal #3 - Improve Relations with State Agencies that Control Facilities Within Our Town**

1. The Wachusett Reservoir, extensive land holdings, and strong state land use controls affect the Town's ability to grow. It is in the Town's best interest to work to improve its relationship with the state agency in charge of watershed protection.
2. Continue working for higher PILOT funds (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes) from state-owned lands.
3. Negotiate for appropriate use of State controlled lands by the Town.
4. Take advantage of any technical assistance or grants offered by the State.

### **Goal #4 - The House of Correction**

1. The new Sheriff and jail administration offer an opportunity to negotiate for payments to offset costs incurred by hosting this facility.
2. Look for ways to increase prisoner work projects beneficial to the Town.
3. Take advantage of offers to use lockup facilities.
4. Take advantage of offers to use Corrections personnel as special duty police officers.

### **Goal #5 - Increase Economic Development**

1. Implement strategies contained in the Economic Development Section of the Master Plan.

2. If needed, allocate Town funds, and/or apply for State grants, to help increase the Town's tax base.

#### **Goal #6 - Explore New Ways of Providing Town Services**

1. Establish a "Pay as you throw" trash pickup service. (Short term)
2. Develop a trash transfer facility. (Long term)
3. Cut or cap employee health care costs.
4. Control legal expenses by eliminating unproductive law suits.
5. Consolidate departments.
6. Enforce zoning bylaws and town regulations that will increase revenues.
7. Share equipment and manpower where ever possible.
8. Improve communication among departments.
9. Improve equipment maintenance programs.
10. Improve citizen understanding of the financial costs required to provide the services they want and promote citizen involvement in any changes.

#### **Goal #7 - Complying with the Commonwealth's Rules and Regulations**

1. Seek to comply with State regulations to increase the Town's eligibility for grants and other payments.
2. Reducing department budgets beyond certain levels could result in loss of State funds.
3. Communicate openly and work cooperatively with State agencies to insure the Town's interests are represented in state decision-making processes.
4. Keep state required planning efforts such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Housing Plan up-to-date and meet any other requirements that make the Town eligible for State funds.
5. Do not establish costly programs not needed by the Town just because they result in State grants.

#### **Goal #8 - Changing State Laws and Regulations**

1. Understand changing State law is very difficult. We should keep trying, but realize our successes will be few and far between.

#### **Goal #9 - Regionalized Purchasing and Other Governmental Functions to Reduce Costs**

1. While regional service and purchasing proposals might not have been approved in the past, potential cost savings may be realized through efforts to gain the public's trust and support.
2. Take a proactive approach to Regionalization of functions, purchasing, and/or departments.

## **CHAPTER 11 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the principal recommendations that have been developed during the course of the Town-Wide Planning process. Recommendations are presented under appropriate major planning themes, and may be listed under several subject areas if relevant to the discussions in different chapters of the Plan. The actions are numerous, but have been identified by the Town-Wide Planning Committee to be important components of achieving the long range Vision expressed at the very beginning of the Plan.

Table 11-1 contains a matrix of the specific recommendations and the boards or individuals who are designated as most responsible for advancing each item to implementation. Because of the diverse nature of the actions, it is important that the key implementer be identified to insure no item is forgotten and to avoid confusion as to who should take the lead. This format also helps each entity to easily identify those recommendations for which it has jurisdiction.

Table 11-1 also includes a timeframe to denote whether a short, medium or long-range effort will be required. Short-range strategies are changes to local policies that do not entail large expenditures of funds and can be accomplished within a one to two year horizon. For example, zoning by-laws amendments and administrative changes to the local government structure may take careful study and planning, but can be implemented by existing boards and town staff at little or no cost. Medium range strategies will require a concerted effort by the responsible parties and could take up to five years for implementation. These projects may also require modest funding to hire consultants, or are dependent upon actions only partially within the Town's control. Long-range projects are those for which detailed plans are necessary and require major expenditures of Town funds. These are typically capital projects that require long-term borrowing and/or grant funding to complete. On-going items are those that do not have specific timeframes but should be incorporated into the responsible party's customary practices.

Map 17, Action Plan Recommendations, attempts to display the location of those recommendations that have a specific geography that can be readily identified and mapped. Its purpose is to help the citizens of West Boylston who have not been involved in the planning process to readily understand the key concepts of the Plan, and how each component fits within a unified whole. In a sense, it seeks to summarize the many inter-related aspects of the Plan and to demonstrate a comprehensive approach to addressing the important needs facing the Town in the years ahead.

As the map and matrix suggest, upon adoption of this Plan by the Planning Board and Town Meeting, the comprehensive planning phase comes to an end, and the challenge of bringing about positive change begins. Many of these tasks will not be easy, and finding scarce resources among competing needs is an obstacle that requires constant attention. The Town Wide Planning Committee, as mandated by Town Meeting, must remain actively involved to shepherd the recommendations through to completion. It is important that Town boards and committees not lose sight of their roles in this phase and devote their considerable talents to achieving as much as possible in the coming years. The Board of Selectmen must also provide Town staff and volunteers with the funding and assistance they need to insure that valid recommendations do not sit unattended for lack of adequate resources.

As with any Plan, it should be re-examined as the Town grows and conditions change. The Town-Wide Planning Committee is charged with this function, and it must maintain vigilance to insure its nature is not compromised by extraneous considerations. The Plan should serve as a guide to all departments and volunteer boards to work together as one community to achieve what is in the Town's best interests. West Boylston is blessed with outstanding natural beauty and a dedicated corps of volunteers committed to keeping the Town a wonderful place to live and work. This Plan can assist in that effort, but without active community involvement in its implementation, it will merely be a well-intended, but ultimately unsuccessful product of thousands of hours of volunteer and consultant labor.

**Table 11-1  
Implementation Strategy**

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
<i><b>Economic Development</b></i>		
Create Economic Development Commission or Task Force to promote economic development.	Board of Selectmen/ Business Community	Short-Term
Improve access to Hartwell Street Industrial District.	Board of Selectmen/DPW	Long-Term
With the cooperation of the Massachusetts Highway Department, prepare Master Plan to re-develop the Route 12 Corridor as a community Gateway. This should include beautification elements, such as landscaping, pedestrian connections, and underground wiring.	Board of Selectmen/DPW/ Town Wide Planning Committee (TWPC)/ Municipal Light Dept.	Medium-Term
Implement the Route 12 Master Plan.	Board of Selectmen/DPW	Long-Term
Identify regional economic development strengths and target sectors that are a good fit with the Town's work force and infrastructure assets.	Economic Development Commission (EDC)	Medium-Term
Encourage small business development	EDC	Short-Term
Improve coordination among municipal boards and departments	Town Administrator	Short-Term
Become active in regional and state economic development planning.	TWPC/EDC	Short-Term
Become a member of an Economic Target Area (ETA).	Board of Selectmen/EDC	Medium-Term
Develop a marketing program to promote West Boylston as a desirable location for a small business.	EDC	Medium-Term
Develop tourism as an economic engine	EDC	Short-Term
Hold community fairs and special events.	EDC	Short-Term
Inform local employers of technical and financial resources to improve skills of local work force.	EDC	Short-Term
Provide lending sources and technical assistance to small businesses.	EDC	Short-Term
Create non-profit Economic Development Alliance with neighboring towns.	Board of Selectmen/EDC	Medium-Term

1. Recommended item may appear in more than 1 category.
2. Short-Term: 1-2 years. Medium-Term: 3-5 Years. Long-Term: More than 5 Years

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
<i>Housing</i>		
Investigate the potential use of the land purchased near the Jail for affordable housing.	Housing Partnership	Long-Term
Seek funding to build additional rental units for low and moderate-income households.	Housing Authority	Medium-Term
Form collaborative relationships to increase the use of project-based section 8 certificates and vouchers.	Housing Authority/ Resources for Communities and People (RCAP)	Medium-Term
Promote additional Local Initiative Program (LIP) projects.	Housing Partnership	Short-Term
Create a non-profit housing trust, or work with an existing organization, to raise funds for affordable housing activities.	Board of Selectmen/ Housing Partnership	Medium-Term
Empower the Housing Partnership to implement a housing agenda to address the needs of the Town and work with a non-profit housing organization.	Board of Selectmen/ Housing Partnership	Medium-Term
Adopt an Incentive Zoning Bylaw to encourage developers to provide housing for low and moderate-income households in new developments.	Planning Board	Short-Term
Convene a forum on community housing issues to raise awareness of local needs.	Housing Partnership	Short-Term
Participate in the soft second mortgage program to assist first time homebuyers.	Housing Partnership	Short-Term
Identify land in tax delinquency that may be suitable for housing and offer to first-time homebuyers.	Housing Partnership	Short-Term
Revise Zoning Bylaw requirements for multi-family housing to include standards for design, neighborhood compatibility, and environmental protection. Increase density to four units per acre.	Planning Board	Short-Term
Evaluate the existing building stock for opportunities to rehabilitate structures for affordable housing.	Housing Partnership	Short-Term
Promote the use of accessory apartments to create units for low and moderate-income renters. If deed restrictions are in place for a period of 15 years, such units may be counted on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.	Housing Partnership	Short-Term
Use a “limited development” approach to create some affordable units and preserve open space.	Conservation Commission/ Planning Board	Medium-Term
Apply for funds to start a housing rehab program.	Town Administrator	Medium-Term

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act to acquire open space, protect historic resources, and create affordable housing.	Board of Selectmen/ Conservation Commission/ Housing Partnership	Medium-Term
<b><i>Open Space and Recreation</i></b>		
Provide input into decisions on future uses of DCR and county-owned land to ensure they remain open and accessible for recreational use.	Board of Selectmen/Open Space Committee/Parks Commission	On-Going
Establish a long-range plan to ensure the preservation of lands under Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B, and support the agricultural use of DCR land.	Open Space Committee/ Board of Assessors	Medium-Term
Encourage greenway connections throughout the town, such as wildlife corridors and walking trails.	Open Space Committee/ West Boylston Land Trust	On-Going
Extend the Rail Trail along the Quinapoxet River and up to Sterling, possibly along Pleasant Street.	Wachusett Greenways/ Open Space Committee	Short-Term
Amend the Zoning Bylaws to include provisions for Open Space development (Cluster Zoning).	Planning Board	Short-Term
Improve enforcement of bylaws designed to protect the environment.	Town Administrator	Short-Term
Acquire open land by purchase or gift, and work with landowners to preserve sensitive resources through conservation restrictions.	West Boylston Land Trust	On-Going
Acquire easements from landowners to link open space via natural corridors for hiking and wildlife routes.	West Boylston Land Trust	On-Going
Protect privately owned wetlands by encouraging certification of vernal pools, utilizing students and volunteers such as Scouts.	Conservation Commission/ School Department	On-Going
Coordinate open space preservation with historical preservation efforts.	Town Administrator/Open Space Committee/Historical Commission	On-Going
Investigate the use of state grants to preserve historic and treasured landscapes.	Open Space Committee/ Historical Commission	On-Going
Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act to acquire open space, protect historic resources, and create affordable housing.	Board of Selectmen/ Conservation Commission/ Housing Partnership	Medium-Term
Take action to reduce the amount of unaccounted-for-water loss and increase water conservation.	Water District	On-Going
Expand active recreational facilities and obtain additional land for recreation.	Parks Commission	Medium-Term

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
Increase opportunities for passive recreation for seniors.	Parks Commission	Medium-Term
Review all town recreation facilities for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.	Parks Commission	Short-Term
Prepare and implement a public education program to promote the wise use of the Town's open space and recreation facilities.	Open Space Committee	On-Going
Publicize the availability of the public composting area and expand hours of operation.	Superintendent of Streets and Parks	Short-Term
Assess interest in formation of community gardens and look for an appropriate site.	Parks Commission	Short-Term
Construct sanitary facilities at high use public areas, e.g. Goodale Park, Woodland Park and the Rail Trail.	Parks Commission	Medium-Term
Provide adequate buffers between parks used for active recreation and residential zones.	Parks Commission	Short-Term
Provide maps showing availability and location of recreational facilities.	Parks Commission/Open Space Committee	Short-Term
Develop and implement rules/regulations and fees for use of Park facilities.	Parks Commission	Short-Term
Develop Operation and Maintenance Plans for active recreation areas to keep facilities in good condition.	Parks Commission	Short-Term
Seek additional recreational access on DCR land.	Parks Commission	On-Going
Seek long-term leases for town athletic fields that are located on DCR land.	Parks Commission	Medium-Term
Improve pedestrian facilities, especially to commercial areas, including the installation of sidewalks along the southern part of Route 12.	Board of Selectmen	Long-Term
Improve walking trails for the disabled and senior citizens.	Parks Commission	Medium-Term
Expand the availability of infant and toddler facilities at Pride Park and Woodland Park.	Parks Commission	Medium-Term
Develop historic/interpretive side trails along the Rail Trail.	Wachusett Greenways/ Open Space Committee	Medium-Term
Retain and maintain the scenic pine grove in Goodale Park.	Parks Commission	On-Going
Provide a safe public swimming area for residents.	Parks Commission	Long-Term
Provide information to town officials and citizens about tax and other benefits of open space.	West Boylston Land Trust	Short-Term

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
Provide training to local officials dealing with open space, recreation, and water, so that laws relating to land use are consistently enforced.	Town Administrator	Short-Term
Improve coordination among boards whose decisions affect open space and ensure that the Planning Board gets input from other officials during the site plan review and subdivision review process.	Town Administrator	Short-Term
Preserve the current amount of town-owned open space, especially that around the Mixter Building.	Parks Commission	On-Going
Assess town-owned property that is unusable (i.e. steep slopes and wetlands), and invite DCR to swap such properties for flat usable areas.	Town Administrator/Parks Commission/Conservation Commission	Medium Term
Establish a policy of notifying the Conservation Commission when land under Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B is being considered for removal.	Town Administrator/ Board of Assessors	Short-Term
<p><i>Specific Recreation Projects:</i></p> <p>Develop new football field.</p> <p>Rebuild bleachers at All Purpose Field.</p> <p>Acquire landfill property from Selectmen and develop plans for recreational use.</p> <p>Renovate Town Pool.</p> <p>Obtain additional practice fields e.g. a parcel of DCR land north of Edwards School, and athletic fields adjacent to John Augustus Hall on Beaman Street.</p> <p>New dugouts, safety fence on Goodale Street, and add lights at Softball Field.</p> <p>Construct dugouts at A and B fields.</p> <p>Construct additional parking areas at Goodale Park.</p> <p>Re-grade and extend irrigation, construct dugouts, and add lights at baseball field.</p> <p>Repair or re-construct tennis and basketball courts at Goodale Park.</p> <p>Install bathroom facilities at Goodale Park and Woodland Park.</p> <p>Continue to investigate additional land to acquire for parks and recreation.</p>	Parks Commission	On-Going
Update the 5-Year Open Space and Recreation Plan upon its expiration to keep the Town eligible for state and federal funds.	Open Space Committee	Medium-Range

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
<i>Transportation</i>		
Create a Transportation Committee to study needs and implement targeted improvements, i.e. the Route 12 Corridor reconstruction, sidewalk and trail projects, and remedies at high crash locations.	Board of Selectmen	Short-Term
With the cooperation of the Massachusetts Highway Department, prepare Master Plan to re-develop the Route 12 Corridor as a community Gateway. This should include beautification elements, such as landscaping, pedestrian connections, and underground wiring.	Board of Selectmen/DPW/ Town Wide Planning Committee (TWPC)	Medium-Term
Implement the Route 12 Master Plan.	Board of Selectmen/DPW	Long-Term
Adopt a Pavement Management Program to insure the continuing upkeep of streets and walkways.	DPW	Medium Term
Develop a plan to improve and construct sidewalks and promote bicycling activity through expansion of the trail system. Improve walking systems near schools and construct sidewalks along Route 12 to insure pedestrian safety along this busy roadway.	Board of Selectmen/DPW/ Planning Board	Medium Term
Implement recommendations in other plans to enhance local and regional trail systems.	Open Space Committee	On-Going
Review Subdivision street width standards to determine if narrower streets are feasible without compromising public safety.	Planning Board	Short-Term
Review Subdivision Regulations to improve street connectivity.	Planning Board	Short-Term
At high accident locations, undertake analysis of traffic patterns and design improvements to reduce accident rates.	DPW	Medium-Term
Participate in regional transportation planning activities, especially the Transportation Committee of the CMRPC and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to keep abreast of regional projects that may affect the Town and insure that Town projects are advanced.	Board of Selectmen/Town Administrator/Planning Board	On-going
Participate in planning studies that consider a new I-190 interchange at Malden St. in Holden to represent the Town's opposition to the proposal.	Board of Selectmen/Town Administrator/TWPC	Long-Term
Improve access to Hartwell Street Industrial District.	Board of Selectmen/DPW	Long-Term
Install curb ramps to provide barrier-free access to	Board of Selectmen/DPW	Long-Term

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
community facilities.		
Open a dialogue with the WRTA to seek improved transit services for West Boylston.	Board of Selectmen	Short-Term
<b><i>Land Use</i></b>		
Adopt a new Zoning Map with Assessors parcels as the base.	Planning Board	Short-Term
Investigate the feasibility of creating Village zoning districts for Oakdale, Pinecroft and the Town Center to insure future development is compatible with the village character of each area.	Planning Board	Medium-Term
Revise the Schedule of Use Regulations to insure appropriate land uses are allowed in each district.	Planning Board	Short-Term
Adopt a cluster development bylaw to preserve open space, preserve natural resource functions, and allow for a more compact development form.	Planning Board	Short-Term
Increase the permitted density of multiple family developments in the GR district now that sewers are available. (From 2 to 4 units per acre)	Planning Board/Housing Partnership	Medium-Term
Study the feasibility of allowing Mixed Use projects, especially in existing villages.	Planning Board	Medium-Term
Consider prohibiting single-family homes in Business districts to minimize conflicts between incompatible land uses.	Planning Board	Short-Term
Develop a water and sewer policy that manages growth.	Planning Board/DPW/West Boylston Water District	Medium-Term
Reduce the minimum lot size in Industrial districts from 5 acres to 2 acres.	Planning Board	Short-Term
Insure adequate resources are allocated for zoning enforcement.	Board of Selectmen	On-Going
Undertake a thorough revision of the Zoning Bylaw to insure consistency with the Plan.	Planning Board/Board of Selectmen/ZBA	Short-Term
<b><i>Municipal Facilities</i></b>		
Public Safety Building: Combine Police, Fire and Dispatch departments at the Shepard Building.	Board of Selectmen	Medium-Term
Streets and Parks Building: Construct a new building on former County land; combine with Municipal Light Plant building.	Board of Selectmen/DPW/Light Department	Medium-Term

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
Town Hall: Convert Bancroft Building to town office building.	Board of Selectmen	Medium-Term
Senior Center: Demolish Mixer Building and find a new home for the Senior/Community Center with a large function room. This will make room for new playing fields and future building use.	Board of Selectmen/ Council on Aging	Long-Term
<i>Other Needs:</i>	Town Meeting/Board of Selectmen and:	Schedule to be determined
Build new light plant building with cost borne out of revenues.	Light Department	
Reuse the existing light plant building by school department or other town offices.	School Department	
Purchase land near the Library for parking purposes.	Library Commission	
Construct an addition to Edwards School.	School Department	
Repair or replace the Town Pool.	Parks Commission	
Build new playing fields.	Parks Commission	
Acquire land for cemetery.	Cemetery Commission	
Construct permanent toilets for parks.	Parks Commission	
<b><i>Municipal Finance</i></b>		
Initiate a budget process that is open to public scrutiny and involves all boards and departments. Present budget recommendations in layman's terms and identify impacts on citizens and Town programs.	Board of Selectmen/ Finance Committee/ Town Administrator	On-Going
Include capital improvement funds in all yearly budgets. Insure building and facility maintenance costs are properly accounted for each year.	Finance Committee	On-Going
Implement the municipal building plan contained in this Master Plan as soon as finances allow.	Board of Selectmen Town Administrator	Long-Term
Form a permanent Capital Planning Committee to assist the Town in planning for, administering, and prioritizing capital improvement needs.	Board of Selectmen	Short-Term
Investigate a centralized maintenance system responsible for maintaining all Town buildings and facilities.	Town Administrator	Short-Term
Improve relations with the DCR and seek their financial or technical support to achieve Town goals.	Board of Selectmen	On-Going
Continue working for higher PILOT funds (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes) from State-owned lands.	Board of Selectmen	On-Going

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS		
Recommendation <sup>1</sup>	Responsibility	Timeframe <sup>2</sup>
Open a dialogue with the new Sheriff to negotiate for payments to offset the Town's costs incurred by hosting the Jail.	Town Administrator	Short-Term
Allocate Town funds, and/or apply for State grants, to help increase the Town's tax base.	Board of Selectmen Town Administrator	On-Going
Explore new ways of providing Town services. (See Chapter 10.)	Town Administrator	On-Going
Seek to comply with State regulations to increase the Town's eligibility for grants and other payments.	Town Administrator	On-Going
Communicate openly and work cooperatively with State agencies to insure the Town's interests are represented in State decision-making processes.	Board of Selectmen/ Town Administrator	On-Going
Keep required planning efforts, such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Housing Plan, up-to-date and meet any other requirements that make the Town eligible for State funds.	All Departments	On-Going
Identify potential cost savings through regional service and purchasing proposals and work to gain the public's trust and support.	Board of Selectmen Town Administrator	On-Going

1. Renovate the Route 12 Corridor to be an attractive gateway into Town, including new sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, and burying overhead utility lines. A revitalized Route 12 will promote private investment, meet local needs for services, and improve traffic flow.
2. Municipal investments should enhance the Town Center as the focus civic life. Town buildings (e.g. the new Town Hall) and cultural activities should be concentrated here, and new land uses should complement the vision of establishing a pedestrian scale, mixed use village center.
3. Combine Police, Fire and Dispatch departments at the Shepard Building.
4. Construct a new Municipal Light Department building on former County land.
5. Construct a new Streets and Parks building on former County land, if feasible.
6. Convert the Bancroft Building to a town office building.
7. Demolish the Mixer Building and construct a new Senior Center/Community Center. Add new playing fields at this location.
8. Construct an addition to Edwards School for new classrooms.
9. Reuse the existing light plant building by school department or other town offices.
10. Promote greater pedestrian connectivity by linking subdivisions with trails and by improving sidewalk systems, especially near schools.
11. Work with the WRTA to increase bus service along Route 12.

**Map Legend**

- Town Boundary
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Unimproved Road
- Railroad
- Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Waterbody

**Constraints**

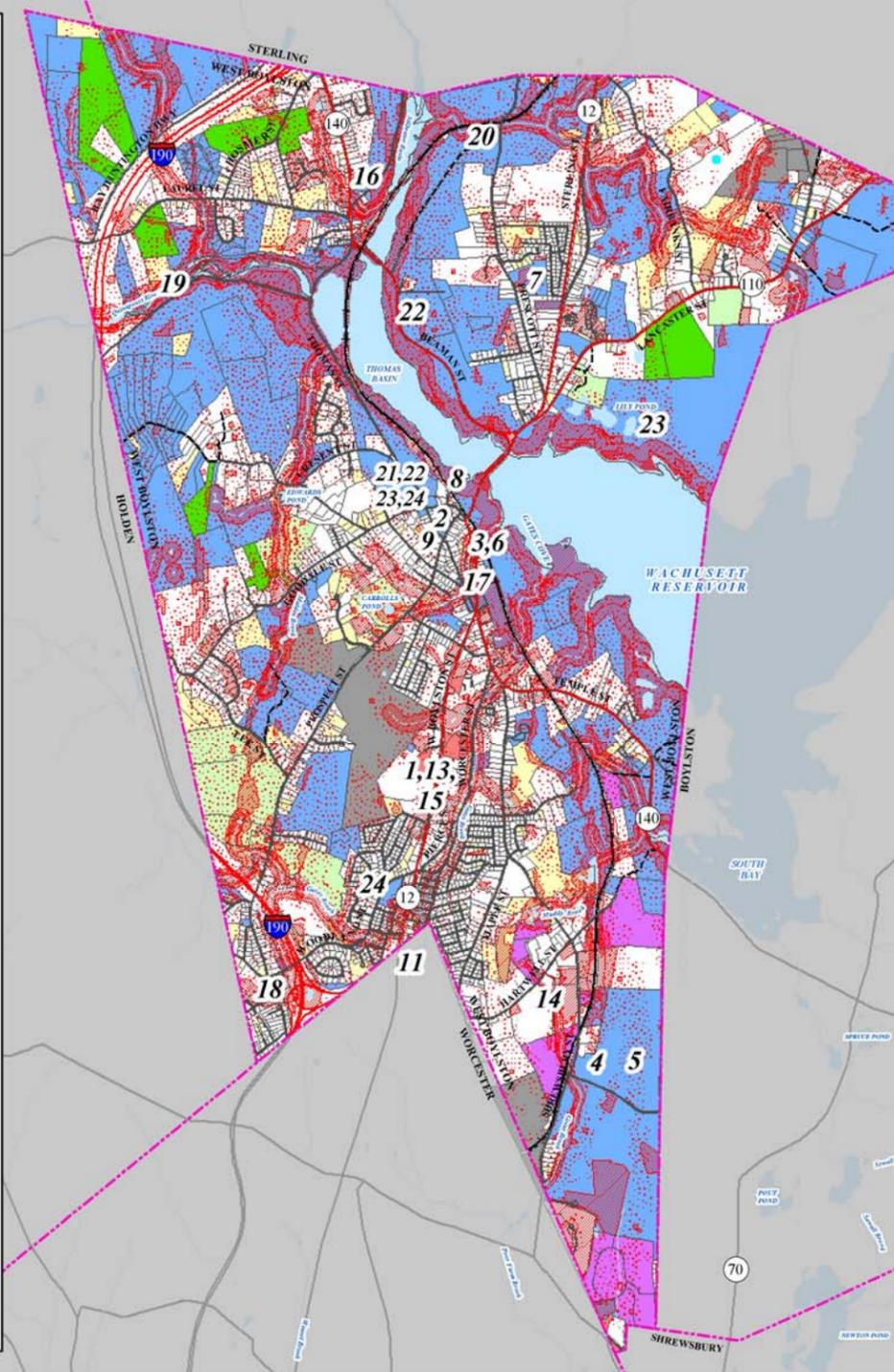
- Land with Absolute Constraint (Development Impractical)
- Land with Partial Constraint (Limited Development)

**Developed & Protected Lands**

- Developed Lands
- Protected Lands

**Vacant & Undeveloped Lands**

- Vacant Residential
- Vacant Commercial
- Vacant Industrial
- Chapter 61: Forestry
- Chapter 61A: Agriculture
- Chapter 61B: Recreation



12. Consider the adoption of a cluster housing option to help preserve open space and sensitive natural resources while overall maintaining a low-density pattern in outlying areas.
13. Allow Mixed Use Development, where a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional land uses are authorized at a greater intensity in a carefully planned manner.
14. Improve access to the Hartwell St. Industrial district and reserve for traditional industrial activities.
15. Promote the Route 12 Business district for retail, restaurants and service establishments that serve local needs and attract tourist dollars.
16. Preserve Oakdale as a traditional New England village with small-scale commercial activity.
17. Reserve the Town Center area for high-end retail shops and small professional offices.
18. For Pineroft, adopt a village district to accommodate a mix of residential and small-scale commercial uses and to prevent new structures that are incompatible architecturally.
19. Support historic interpretive trail development along the Mass. Central Rail Trail.
20. Extend the rail trail north to the Sterling town line to complete the link of the Wachusett Greenways plan to Sterling Center.
21. At Goodale Park, improve sanitary facilities, recreational fields and play equipment.
22. Obtain additional practice fields north of Edwards School and at the former John Augustus Hall on Beaman Street.
23. Repair the Town Pool and make it handicapped accessible, or develop a Town beach at the Lily Ponds.
24. Improve recreational facilities for young children at Pride Park and Woodland Park.

**West Boylston Master Plan  
Action Plan Recommendations  
Map 17**

Source Data:  
Parcel based data layers determined by USE-CODE from Town's assessor database. Data enhanced by CMRPC GIS staff.  
Protected lands include those open space parcels owned by federal, state, county, municipal and local agencies as well as those lands having APR or CR designation.  
Constraint data supplied by CMRPC. Absolute constraints include state designated wetlands, steep slopes (25+%), floodplains, Cohen and RPA primary buffers, etc. Partial constraints include slopes 8-25%, secondary buffers for both Cohen Bill and RPA.  
Base data provided by MassGIS and enhanced by CMRPC.



The 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.



## **APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS**

### **Survey Approach**

In order to identify issues that will impact the long-range planning process for the town of West Boylston, a survey was conducted of all of its citizens, age 18 and older. This approach was taken as opposed to a random sampling of the citizenry to encourage the broadest community involvement possible in designing the town's future. Secondly businesses in town were surveyed to compare their opinions to the citizens since most businesses are owned and managed by non-residents. Finally, in an effort to include the opinions of the town's youth, a student survey was also conducted.

Royce Anderson, an independent consultant was assigned the job of conducting this survey. Since it was impossible for him to be fully aware of all of the issues facing this community, the Town-wide Planning Committee and Survey Subcommittee helped in formulating the survey questions and they made the decision to add business and student surveys to the overall project.

The questions they developed for the Citizen Questionnaire were separated into the following four categories:

1. Citizen evaluation of town services
2. Citizen use of town facilities
3. Activities in which citizens engage, including involvement in local government
4. Personal opinions on a wide range of issues, including
  - The character of the town
  - The use and expansion of DCR land and the reservoir
  - The sewer project
  - Regionalization of town services
  - Future development in the town
  - Future tax spending

The consultant compiled the questions and presented numerous drafts for review by the two committees involved. This survey was mailed to all residents of West Boylston, 18 years old and over. Of the 4,859 citizen surveys that were distributed, 1,888 were completed and returned for an exceptionally high return rate of 39%. Analysis of demographic data from the returned questionnaires shows that the respondents are generally representative of the town's citizens.

Mr. Anderson modeled the Business Questionnaire on the Citizen Questionnaire and added other issues requested by the Survey Subcommittee. This survey was sent out to all business organizations in town. Out of 310 sent, 58 were completed and returned for a 19% return rate.

The Student Questionnaire was developed by the Survey Subcommittee using the Citizen Questionnaire as a starting point. Questions were eliminated that were not considered relevant for youth, and two questions were added. These questions are about the preparation given by the town's schools for the students' future in the workplace and the students' intention to remain living in West Boylston. The surveys were distributed and collected by the Subcommittee and 206 completed forms were delivered to the consultant for analysis.

### **Citizen Survey Findings**

One of the findings of this survey is the existence of four distinct demographic groups with similar attitudes toward the town's current state of affairs and its future. The demographics of these groups are outlined below. Their attitudes are described wherever relevant within the next section of the survey findings.

## Groups

1. **Less Active** (largest group—33% of total population)
  - Somewhat older (Average: 50)
  - Least educated/lowest income/lowest house value (Average: some college, \$40,000 annual salary)
  - Lived in town average of 10 years.
  - Fewest children attending town schools.
2. **Active Families** (27% of total population)
  - Youngest of the groups (average age: 35)
  - Most educated / Highest income / Highest house value
  - Lived in town the shortest amount of time.
  - Largest families / Most children attending town schools.
3. **Satisfied Citizens** (22% of total population)
  - Oldest of the four groups (average: over 50)
  - Lived in town the longest of the four groups
  - Fewer children attending town schools than in the Active Families Group.
4. **Dissatisfied Citizens** (19% of population)
  - Second youngest of the four groups (average age: 45)
  - Second highest in income and house value.
  - Lived in town longer than all but those in the Satisfied Citizen Group.

The following sections describe the principal findings of this analysis for each of the survey categories along with specific results for the subgroups.

## Evaluation of Town Services

According to the survey analysis, the citizens that responded to the survey were generally satisfied with the town services -- 64% gave them an overall rating of good or very good. Individually the ambulance, fire, electric, library, water, trash collection, and police services received the highest rating. The lowest rating went to Animal Control, Inspection Services, Board of Selectmen, Board of Assessors, and Open Space Management. Only 2.1% of the citizens rated the overall town services as bad or very bad.

The Satisfied Citizens Group rated the overall town services the highest and the Dissatisfied Citizens Group rated these services the lowest.

## Use of Town Facilities

According to the survey analysis, the town facilities or town-sponsored activities that are utilized the most are:

The Public Library, the town's summer concerts, DCR land, and Goodale Park (in that order).

The facilities that are used the least are:

The Oakdale Recreation Park, the Public swimming pool, the public tennis courts, the Senior Center, and the Public Bus.

The citizens in the Less Active Group tend to use the town facilities the least, the Active Families Group use them the most.

Who uses the Pool?

According to the survey analysis, the citizens who use the town pool the most are not part of any of the identified demographic groups. These citizens also tend to use the town's tennis courts, Pride Park Playground and the Mixter athletic fields.

Who uses the Senior Center?

According to the survey analysis, the Satisfied Citizens Group uses the Senior Center the most, however only 23% of those 75 and older use it fairly or very often. The usage rate drops from there -- the percentage is 13% for those 65-74, and 7% for those 55-64.

### **Citizen Activities and Town Involvement**

According to the survey analysis, the physical activities or town involvement that West Boylston citizens engage in the most are:

Voting in public elections, walking or hiking, watching local access TV, attending town meetings, volunteering for church or other charitable activities, taking children to the playground. (in that order)

The least involvement is in the following activities:

Horseback riding, snowmobiling, ATV motoring, and off-road 4-wheeling.

Who attends town meetings?

According to the survey analysis, citizens who often or very often attend town meetings comprise 16% of the town's population. These individuals tend to be older, go to public concerts, and play golf. They attend to oppose spending tax money on public sports and recreational facilities. Of the four subgroups, the Satisfied Citizen Group attends town meetings most frequently.

Who plays sports?

According to the survey analysis, about 24% of the town's population often or very often play baseball, basketball, soccer, tennis, or football. They use the Mixter athletic fields, Goodale Park, Woodland Park, and the Oakdale Recreational area. They favor more tax spending on public sports and recreational facilities. The citizens in the Active Families Group tend to be the most active in sports.

### **Opinions on Town Issues**

In this section of the questionnaire, citizens were asked to give their opinions on a 5 point "disagree-agree" scale. The numerical equivalents for the answers are as follows:

strongly disagree	1
disagree	2
no opinion	3
agree	4
strongly agree	5

The issues that are covered in this section are:

- The character of the town
- The reservoir, use and expansion of DCR land, and open space
- Current and future development in the town, and Rte 12 expansion
- Regionalization of town services
- The sewer project
- Tax spending

## Town Character

According to the survey analysis, one of the strongest findings in the opinions section was that overall the citizens have a very positive attitude toward the town itself. The average responses for survey questions regarding the character of the town are as follows:

West Boylston is a good place to raise children.	4.26
I like the small town character of West Boylston.	4.21
West Boylston is a very attractive looking town.	3.99
I am very pleased with the overall appearance of the town.	3.85

Specific opinions of any of the subgroups under this topic are as follows:

- The Satisfied Citizens Group most strongly appreciate the town’s attractiveness and small-town feel.

## DCR Land and Open Space

According to the survey analysis, citizens like the presence of the reservoir, the open spaces, and the recreational facilities. They feel that the DCR should acquire more land to protect the reservoir and preserve open space, but they also want the DCR to allow for more recreational use of their land. Generally, the citizens of West Boylston are concerned about environmental issues. The average responses for survey questions regarding these topics are as follows:

I like the presence of the Wachusett Reservoir in West Boylston.	4.16
I like the open space and recreational activities in West Boylston	4.01
The DCR should allow more recreational uses of its land.	3.64
The DCR should buy more land to protect the reservoir & preserve open spaces.	3.23

Specific opinions of any of the subgroups under this topic are as follows:

- The Dissatisfied Citizens Group is least in favor of expanding DCR land and least concerned with the environment in general.
- The Active Families Group feel the use of DCR land should be expanded more than the other groups and are most concerned with the environment.

## Current and Future Development, and Rte 12 Expansion

According to the survey analysis, a majority of the citizens are satisfied with the development that has occurred in the town to date, but 50% of the population is opposed to future development. Those that favor future development represent 23% of the town’s population and 27% of the town are neutral on this issue (they selected “no opinion” as their answer).

Those that oppose future development favor tighter zoning restrictions and want the DCR to buy more land to protect the reservoir and preserve open space. They believe the town needs more protected land in general. Those that favor future development feel the town needs more single-family homes and industrial parks.

The following list represents the top four land uses the survey respondents feel the Town of West Boylston needs within the next ten years (in order of how they were ranked):

1. More protected open space	3.44
2. Assisted living complexes	3.36
3. Elderly housing	3.28
4. More park land	3.06

The following list represents the land uses the survey respondents feel the town least needs within the next ten years:

1. Retail stores and plazas	2.10
2. Office buildings	2.44
3. Industrial parks	2.49
4. Housing	
a. apartment buildings	2.17
b. condominiums	2.19
c. affordable housing	2.72
d. single-family houses	2.77

A small majority of citizens are opposed to expanding Rte 12 to allow for more traffic.

- 49% disagree or disagree strongly.
- 40% agree or agree strongly.
- 13% no opinion

There was a similar result to the question regarding whether the town has a traffic congestion problem. The results were as follows:

- 52% disagree or disagree strongly
- 38% agree or agree strongly
- 10% no opinion

Specific opinions of any of the sub-groups under this topic are as follows:

- The Less Active Group is most opposed to development, especially along Rte 12.
- The Active Families Group is most opposed to the expansion of Rte 12.
- The Satisfied Citizens Group is the most satisfied with the development that has occurred in town to date. This group favors building more single-family homes, elderly housing, and office buildings. They also favor Rte 12 expansion.
- The Dissatisfied Citizens Group is least satisfied with the development that has occurred in the town to date. They are the group that most favors Rte 12 expansion and commercial development along Rte 12.

## **Regionalization of Town Services**

According to the survey analysis, the majority of the citizens are opposed to regionalization of any of the services currently provided by the town. This includes the school system, the police and fire departments, the road department, plowing services, and emergency medical services.

## **Sewer Project**

According to the survey analysis, most citizens agree that the sewer project will be good for the town. There is however, a large minority that feels it will only benefit those that are connected to it. The average responses for the questions relating to this topic are as follows:

In the long run, the sewer project will be bad for West Boylston	1.97
The town should expand the sewer system to include the entire town.	3.77
The sewer project is good only for those people who are connected to it.	3.08

## Tax Spending

According to the survey analysis, 51% of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that they are getting their money's worth for the taxes they pay to the town. The survey also showed that 52% disagree or strongly disagree that the town should keep taxes low even if it means reducing services and programs.

The majority of citizens favor increased tax spending in the following areas (in this order):

Improving elder services	3.19
Preserving open space	3.18
Improving sidewalks and roads	3.15 and 3.13 respectively

The majority of citizens are opposed to increased tax spending for economic growth and new development in town.

Specific opinions of any sub-groups under this topic are as follows:

- The Active Families Group is most opposed to tax spending for economic development. They favor tax spending for town services, and open space preservation in particular.
- The Satisfied Citizens Group is the most generous of the groups in terms of tax spending and they feel more strongly than the other groups that they are getting their money's worth for paid taxes.
- The Dissatisfied Citizens Group, more than the other groups, does not feel they are getting their money's worth for paid taxes. They favor tax spending for economic development but are the group that is most opposed to tax spending for park land, elderly housing, and assisted living.

## Business Survey Findings

According to the survey analysis, the main purpose for this survey was to compare the attitudes of the owners and/or managers of local businesses with those of the town's citizens. The return rate of this survey was 19%, which is significantly lower than the 39% return rate of the citizen survey. The business owners that responded to this survey generally agreed with the majority of the citizens on most issues. The one area of major disagreement is that businesses are more in favor of future economic development in town, specifically the construction of office buildings. They feel that this will keep the tax rate low and they are in favor of expanding the Rte 12 roadway to this end.

As with the citizen survey, the business survey respondents were asked to give their opinions on a 5-point "disagree-agree" scale. The numerical equivalents below are the same as the citizen scale.

strongly disagree	1
disagree	2
no opinion	3
agree	4
strongly agree	5

A comparison of specific areas of disagreement with the citizen survey is shown below.

	Businesses	Citizens
The Route 12 roadway should be expanded and improved to allow for more traffic.	3.28	2.85
More tax money should be spent to expand economic growth and development.	3.09	2.74
Over the next ten years, West Boylston needs more office buildings.	3.04	2.44
I am upset that there is so much speeding on West Boylston streets.	2.80	3.17
The sewer project is good only for those people who are connected to the sewers.	2.67	3.08
In the future, West Boylston should discourage further development.	2.51	3.34

The aspects of town that were viewed favorably in the business survey are:

- Attractiveness of town
- Access to highways
- Level of safety and police protection
- Population base from which to draw customers and employees (character of townspeople)
- West Boylston schools preparing students well to enter the workforce

The following are negative aspects of the town as reported by the business survey respondents:

- Lack of support from the town officials and government
- Town officials not responsive to their needs
- Tough regulation of signage
- Strict DCR restrictions
- Opposition of townspeople for further economic development affects overall tax rate.

Below is a break down of the length of time the businesses that responded to this survey have been located in West Boylston:

Less than 1 year	1.75%
1 – 5 years	17.5%
6 – 10 years	26.3%
11 – 20 years	21.1%
over 20 years	33.0%

The following are the types of organizations that responded, in descending order of volume:

Retail trade	26.3%
Other	19.3%
Professional/health/educ. services	14.0%
Business and repair services	12.3%
Construction	10.5%
Finance/insurance/real estate	7.0%
Manufacturing	5.3%
Wholesale trade	3.5%
Agriculture	1.8%

Of these businesses, 87.7% are owned and operated by town-based organizations, and 40.4% of the actual respondents live in town. An overwhelming majority of the responding businesses (64.9%) are very small, employing 1–5 people. The largest organizations that responded employ 100–300 people and they represent only 1.8% of this survey's respondents. The remaining businesses that responded employ 6–50 workers.

## **Student Survey Findings**

After the citizen and business surveys were implemented it was decided that a student survey should be performed in order to include opinions of the town's youth in the overall survey project. According to the survey analysis, the Subcommittee developed this survey based on the citizen survey. Several irrelevant questions were eliminated and 2 questions were added pertaining to the preparation the town's school system provides to its youth for the workplace, and the youth's plans for remaining in West Boylston. Royce Anderson was not able to report on the return rate of this survey because he was not involved in the distribution or collection of the survey forms. The data for 206 questionnaires was simply delivered to him for analysis.

The respondents in this survey rated all town services lower than the adults did in the citizen survey, especially the police and fire departments, the public library, and the middle and elementary schools. The responses still averaged out to acceptable or good, however.

According to the survey analysis, the youth utilize Goodale Park, the public tennis courts, the public swimming pool, DCR land, Woodland Park, and the WRTA buses more than the adults. Utilized less than the adults are the Public library, Mixter athletic fields, Massachusetts Rail Trail, public summer concerts, Oakdale Recreation Area, and the Pride park playground.

Like the adults, the students that responded are happy with the town's small town character, open space, and recreational activities, and feel it is a good place to raise children. Their responses were not quite as enthusiastic though. The youth also feel that future development should be discouraged, including commercial expansion along Rte 12, though not as strongly as the adults. The students are also less opposed to school regionalization and understandably, feel they have less influence on the decisions of their local town officials than the adults in the town.

Below are the average responses to the two questions that were specifically formulated for the student survey. The students apparently have a favorable feeling about their school system but do not plan to live in their town once they are on their own. The answer to this second question may be a reflection of the cost of living there or simply the desire to experience new places.

West Boylston's schools have prepared me well for college and the workplace.	3.26
Once I'm living on my own I plan to stay in West Boylston.	2.40

## **APPENDIX B: WEST BOYLSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **MISSION AND STRATEGIC GOALS**

#### **MISSION**

The mission of the West Boylston Public Schools is to prepare its students to be productive, contributing citizens in a democratic society. Our schools will provide students with opportunities to be reflective learners who are aware of their unique abilities and interests and will teach the skill and knowledge they need to develop their potential. In West Boylston, learning will take place in a safe environment which encourages high levels of achievement among all students.

#### **STRATEGIC GOALS**

**Strategic Goal 1:** Secure adequate funding to support an educational system that provides for the ever-changing needs of all West Boylston students.

**Strategic Goal 2:** Assess our instructional programs to ensure that the curriculum, instructional organization and instructional methods are planned and implemented to provide opportunities for success for all West Boylston students

**Strategic Goal 3:** Develop and implement an administrative structure at the Middle/High School that fully supports two school staffs and philosophies, i.e. the Middle School and the High School.

**Strategic Goal 4:** Develop and implement the structure and professional experiences that will develop curriculum leadership capacity among the professional staff, engaging them in decision-making relative to curriculum development, instruction and professional development.

**Strategic Goal 5:** Provide and properly maintain school facilities that will be sufficient to meet the changing needs of the student population and the educational programs needed to prepare them to be productive citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Strategic Goal 6:** Ensure that our schools are safe and secure environments for our students and staff.

**WEST BOYLSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**

Objective	Activities	Who	When	Assessment
<b>Strategic Goal I: Secure adequate funding to support an educational system that provides for the ever-changing needs of all West Boylston students.</b>				
A. Secure Town support for the School Committee's budget that provides adequate funding for an effective educational system.				School Committee Budget passes at Town Meeting in May 2005.
	1. Develop a better understanding about the School Department budget among the public.	Public Relations Committee	September 2004-May 2005	
	a. Per pupil expenditures compared to State average; regional average. b. School costs as part of town budget.			School Department versus other Town departments' attitude is dissipated.
	2. Improve strategic use of the Town Budget process			
	a. Clarify legal question of whose budget gets printed in the warrant. b. Complete the proposed School Committee budget by the end of January. c. Develop deeper knowledge of Town's revenue sources, especially non-real estate tax local revenues. d. Define a more active role for schools in the October Town Meeting.	School Committee  Administrative Team  Superintendent, School Committee  Superintendent, School Committee	Fall, 2004  January, 2005  September, 2004-May, 2005  September-October, 2004	School Committee budget process is coordinated with the Town budget process.
B. Develop community understanding and support for School Choice expenditures.	1. Analyze the pros and cons of adjusting the School Choice accounting cycle to coincide with the state's fiscal cycle.	Superintendent	June, 2005	End-of-year School Choice balance will reflect actual planned reserves.

Objective	Activities	Who	When	Assessment
	2. Develop plan to expend one-time school choice surplus by addressing school facility needs and other relevant one-time costs.	Administrative Team, Coordinator of Administrative Services, School Committee	January, 2005	
	3. Decrease use of School choice funds for re-occurring budget costs (i.e. energy, communications, etc.).		FY 07 Budget	Increased percentage of school budget addressing one-time costs; decreased percentage addressing fixed costs.
C. Include School Department needs (i.e. facilities, programs, staffing) in Town-Wide Planning	See Goal V, Objectives A and C			
D. Improve the Town's revenue and budgetary capacity	1. Actively advocate for changes in state educational funding as Legislature responds to "Hancock" case.	School Committee	2004-05 School Year	
	2. Advocate for Town-wide study of strategies to increase revenues.	School Committee, Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen	FY 07	Town Revenue and budget capacity grows to support adequate Town services.
<b>Strategic Goal II: Assess our current instructional programs to ensure that the curriculum, instructional organization and instructional methods are planned and implemented to provide opportunities for success for all West Boylston students.</b>				
A. Ensure the effectiveness of "block scheduling" as an instructional organization structure at the High School.	1. Revisit and re-articulate the desired positive impacts on student learning that are the intended benefits of "block scheduling".	H/S Committee of staff, parents, students, and administrators	Fall, 2004	
	2. Identify the changes in instructional practice that are expected to be implemented with "block scheduling".	H/S Committee of staff, parents, students, and administrators	Fall, 2004	
	3. Identify the concerns that parents, staff, and students may have about the impact of "block scheduling".	H/S Committee of staff, parents, students, and administrators	Winter, Spring 2005	

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
	4. Collect evidence that is readily available that can be used to assess desired goals and concerns.	H/S Committee of staff, parents, students, and administrators	September, 2004 – May, 2005	
	5. Identify goals and concerns which are not easily assessed. Develop strategies to assess these goals and concerns.	H/S Committee of staff, parents, students, and administrators	2005-06 School Year	
	6. Use data to support the development of recommendations to continue or modify current block schedule organization.	H/S Committee of staff, parents, students, and administrators	2005-06 School Year	Implement recommendations to continue, modify or discontinue “block scheduling” based on assessment results.
B. Increase percentage of third grade students who demonstrate proficiency in reading on the Grade 3 MCAS test.	TBD			
C. Improve the performance of Special Education students on the MCAS math tests to achieve adequate yearly improvement (AYP).	TBD			
D. Develop an “internal” student assessment system.	1. Determine the capacity of Rediker software to compile individual student assessment data.	H.S. Asst. Principal, Technology Coordinator	September, 2004 – June, 2005	
	2. Use the “TestWiz” software to disaggregate MCAS data and assist teacher analysis of the test results.	Administrator Team, Technology Coordinator, Program Coordinators	Fall, 2004	
	3. Engage the teachers in the identification of instructional-based assessments related to “Power standards”.	Professional Development Steering Committee	Spring, 2005	
	4. Schedule Professional Development time at regular intervals for staff to engage in the analysis of internal assessment data.	Professional Development Steering Committee	2005 – 2006 School Year	Teachers make decisions about instructional programs and methods based on internal assessment data.

Objective	Activities	Who	When	Assessment
E. Develop a system to support “value added” assessment.	1. Identify software that can support student Portfolios to be used in conjunction with Rediker student assessment data.	H.S. Asst. Principal, Technology Coordinator	September 2004 – June, 2005	
	2. Engage teachers in identifying key assessment activities that give evidence of student proficiency.	Professional Development Steering Committee	2005 – 2006 School Year	
	3. Implement Student Assessment Portfolio.	All Teachers	2006 – 2007 School Year	Student assessment portfolio used to track student progress.
<b>Strategic Goal III: Develop and implement an administrative structure at the Middle/High School that fully supports two school staffs and philosophies, i.e. the Middle School and the High School.</b>				
A. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current Middle/High School administrative structure.	1. Obtain input from M/HS constituencies, staff, and administration about current strengths and weaknesses.	Superintendent/School Committee; M/HS Admin/staff team	October – November, 2004	
	2. Research administrative structures in other 6-12 schools of similar size. Inquire about strengths and weaknesses of each.	Superintendent/School Committee; M/HS Admin/staff team	October – November, 2004	Strengths of current model and areas in need of improvement are articulated.
B. Determine administrative structure that will address identified weaknesses of the current M/HS structure	1. Identify options for restructuring the M/HS administration that will address leadership needs.	Superintendent/School Committee; M/HS Admin/staff team	December 2004 – January 2005	
	2. Engage constituencies in discussion about advantages and drawbacks of each option.	Superintendent/School Committee; M/HS Admin/staff team	Dec. 2004 –Jan. 2005	
	3. Decide on option to implement.	Superintendent/School Committee; M/HS Admin/staff team	January, 2005	Recommended administrative model is selected.
C. Develop fiscal support for recommended administrative structure.	1. Educate the community about the advantages of the proposed plan.	Administrative Team, School Committee	February – May, 2005	Budgetary support for the endorsed administrative structure.

Objective	Activities	Who	When	Assessment
<b>Strategic Goal IV: Develop and implement the structure and professional experiences that will develop curriculum leadership capacity among the professional staff, engaging them in decision-making relative to curriculum development, instruction and professional development.</b>				
A. Develop greater clarity, alignment and consensus of curriculum K-12 through Curriculum Mapping	1. Develop Professional Development Plan to train and engage staff in Curriculum Mapping	Professional Development Steering Committee	August – September, 2004	
	2. Secure consultant support to support the “train the trainers’ model to develop expertise at each level.		August, 2004	
	3. Purchase software to support and facilitate Curriculum Mapping.		August – September, 2004	
	4. Staff develops curriculum maps. Maps are compared at grade, school and K-12 levels to identify “power standards”.	Professional Development Steering Committee, All Teachers	Professional Development half and full days. September – May	“Power Standards” for each curriculum area have been identified.
B. Develop Core Assessment Tasks utilizing the Understanding by Design model.	Engage staff in professional Development focused on UbD.	Professional Development Steering Committee	2005 – 2006 school year	Development of “internal assessment” tasks.
C. Implement Action research models to address areas of weakness in student performance.	Professional Development focus on staff analysis of student performance data.	Professional Development Steering Committee	2006 – 2007 School Year	Instructional program and method decision-making based on W.B. based action research.
D. Develop curriculum leadership roles that provide K-12 curriculum support.	1. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of current Department Coordinator structure.	Administrative Team	September, 2004 – June 2005	
	2. Research models of teacher-based curriculum leadership.	Administrative Team	September, 2004 – June 2005	
	3. Identify desired model and secure fiscal and contractual support.	Superintendent	2005 –06 school year	K-12 Curriculum leadership model is implemented.

Objective	Activities	Who	When	Assessment
<b>Strategic Goal V: Provide and properly maintain school facilities that will be sufficient to meet the changing needs of the student population and of the educational programs needed to prepare them to be productive citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.</b>				
A. Develop and implement a five-year plan to address school space needs.	1. Identify current and projected space needs to accommodate current program needs, student enrollment, CAP commitments and future program needs.	Administrative Team	September – November, 2004	
	2. Research portable classroom options for implementation in FY 05 as a short-term solution to address space needs.	Coordinator of Administrative Services	By January, 2005	
	3. Determine funding source for portable classrooms.	School Committee	January, 2005	Short-term solution to meet space needs is implemented.
	4. Work with Town-Wide Planning Committee in developing long-term solutions to school space needs.	School Committee, Superintendent, Coordinator of Administrative Services		
	5. Determine funding source for short-term and long-term space solutions.	School Committee, Appropriate Town Government Officials	FY 05 or later	Long-term solutions to address school facility needs are implemented.
B. Replace the roofs at both school plants.	1. Complete roof replacement architectural planning.	Coordinator of Administrative Services	September, 2004	
	2. Obtain Town commitment to roof replacement project.	Coordinator of Administrative Services	October, 2004	
	3. Replace roofs.	Coordinator of Administrative Services	Summer, 2005	
C. Develop and implement a five-year plan to address the major building maintenance and upgrade needs (e.g. gym floor, building systems).	1. Develop a prioritized list of needed major building improvements.	Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	September, 2004 – June, 2005	
	2. Work with Town-Wide Planning Committee to determine sources of funding for building improvement	School Committee, Coordinator of	FY 05 – FY 09	School facilities are safe for all student activities and have properly functioning efficient

Objective	Activities	Who	When	Assessment
	projects (i.e. School Choice funds, Town operational budget, debt exclusion override).	Administrative Services		building systems.
D. Improve the routine maintenance and cleaning of the buildings.	1. Implement newly developed building cleaning and maintenance schedule.	Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator, Custodial Staff	September, 2004 – June, 2005	
	2. Develop system to monitor cleaning and maintenance expectations and collect data to determine feasibility of the plan with current custodial staffing levels.	Coordinator of Administrative Services	September, 2004 – June, 2005	
	3. Identify additional resources needed to provide adequate on-going maintenance of school facilities.	Coordinator of Administrative Services	FY 06	School cleanliness is maintained and routine maintenance is conducted in timely fashion.
<b>Strategic Goal VI: Ensure that our schools are safe and secure environments for our students and staff.</b>				
A. Install systems that increase the district's ability to secure and control access to our school buildings.	1. Install "buzz-in" security system at Edwards Elementary School.	Elementary Principal, Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	September, 2004	Controlled entry system is fully implemented.
	2. Install control entry system utilizing security cameras at the M/HS.	M/HS Principal, Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	September, 2005	Controlled entry system is fully implemented.
	3. Install security alarm systems at each building.	Building Principals, Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	September, 2005	Security alarm system is installed.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
	4. Upgrade lock and key system.	Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	FY 05	
	5. Install “barriers” to limit access to the school roofs. Install improved security lighting.	Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	FY 07	Access to school buildings is controlled/monitored by security systems and procedures.
	6. Develop and implement plans to create additional parking capacity at both schools.	Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	FY 06	Adequate parking space is in place at both schools.
<b>B. Plan and implement strategies that will result in closer coordination with local safety agencies.</b>	1. Develop and implement building “label” system to facilitate emergency response by Police or Fire Depts.	Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	Fall, 2005	
	2. Purchase cell phone system compatible with Police and Fire Depts.	Coordinator of Administrative Services	August, 2005	
	3. Purchase “walkie-talkie” systems to facilitate communication among staff during emergency procedures.	M/HS Principal	August, 2005	School and Town Safety agencies are fully coordinated to implement Emergency Response procedures.
	4. Install P.A. and buzz-back systems in parts of buildings currently uncovered.	Coordinator of Administrative Services, Maintenance Coordinator	August, 2005	Communication capabilities between school offices and all parts of the building exist.
<b>C. Implement building-based security procedures (i.e. building evacuation, lock down, etc.).</b>	1. Implement new dismissal procedures at Edwards School.	Edwards Principal, Staff	September, 2005	
	2. Conduct new emergency response drills such as “lock down” response.	Building Principals	Annually beginning 2004 – 05	

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
	3. Develop and practice internal “Emergency Notification” to notify parents system in each school.	Building Principals	Annually beginning 2005 – 06	
	4. Conduct coordinated evaluation drills at both schools.	Building Principals, Town Safety Depts.	Bi-annually beginning 2005 – 06	Staff, students and emergency response personnel are experienced in all emergency response procedures.
	5. Explore feasibility of implementing a student identification system.	Coordinator of Administrative Services	2005-06	
	6. Train staff in use of school emergency equipment (e.g. first aid, fire extinguishers, etc.).	Building Principals, Town Safety Depts.	On-going	All staff is competent to use any emergency safety equipment in the school.

**APPENDIX C**  
**EXCERPTS FROM A REPORT ON THE WEST BOYLSTON FIRE DEPT.**

MMA Consulting Group, Inc.

Fire Chief's Staffing Plan

	Approximate Years			
	2000	2005	2010	2020
Fire Chief	1	1	1	1
Full-Time Clerk	0	1	1	1
Full-Time FF/EMT	2	4	8	18
Full-Time Captain/EMT	0	0	2	3
Full-Time Fire Prevention	0	0	1	1

It should be noted that the consultants generally agree with the Fire Chief about the initial years of the staffing plan, but it is our view that projecting staffing needs over a 20-year period should not be undertaken at this time for several reasons'. First, the Town needs to aggressively support and maintain the call fire department Secondly, the opportunities for regional and inter-local sharing are apparent and should be explored fully over the next five, or more, years. These actions would affect the nature of staffing needed in the future.

The consultants' staffing recommendations have not accounted for fire prevention, inspection, and plan review functions that are essential to the West Boylston Fire Department. Currently, the Fire Chief, or a full-time firefighter, is required to make inspections. This reduces the response capability of the Fire Department, given the limited staffing resources. Even with additional personnel, the Fire Department needs to develop a new service delivery model. The development of a comprehensive fire prevention and inspection program should be accomplished by adopting a regional inspection and prevention strategy or employing an individual on a part-time basis to support the inspection and plan review effort.

*RECOMMENDATION IV-9: The Fire Department should adopt a new comprehensive fire prevention and inspection service model.*

*Appoint a Fire Chief upon abolition of the Board of Fire Engineers* - It is difficult to make progress unless the administrative leader of the Fire Department is in place to carry out recommendations.

*Agree on a Staffing Plan* - The Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator need to agree on the long-term staffing plan for the Department. It is important that the Town begin the staffing process as soon as possible, since it is important that the Fire Chief has sufficient time to manage and plan for the Department's future. One additional emergency responder assigned to work weekdays, along with other personnel, would provide some relief for the Fire Chief.

**OPERATIONAL PRACTICES**

There are several operational changes suggested in this report, but two of the most critical operational support matters that should be addressed as soon as possible are the development of automatic mutual aid and the implementation of an emergency dispatch system.

*Start the Automatic Mutual Aid System* - The Fire Chief should immediately begin the process of working with surrounding towns to develop an automatic mutual aid system for target hazards. This requires identification of hazards, development of shared response and dispatch protocols, written agreements, joint training and planning.

*Emergency Medical Dispatching* - The Fire Chief, Police Chief and Town Administrator should begin the process of implementing an emergency medical dispatch system. A sound EMD system will allow the Fire Department, as well as the Police Department, to anticipate the type of response that is required for a

specific incident. This will allow the Fire Department to vary response protocols for life threatening and non-life threatening incidents.

#### *LONG- TERM PLANNING CONCERNS*

There are several long-term planning concerns that the Town needs to address. Several matters are concerned with equipment and facilities, and one major concern should be with the viability of more cooperation (in addition to automatic mutual aid) with surrounding communities.

#### **ROLE OF THE FIRE CHIEF**

The role of the Fire Chief should be altered to reflect the planning and management needs of the Town and the Fire Department. The role can only change if there are some additional resources which provide time for the Fire Chief to perform planning-related activities. Some of the major responsibilities of the Chief that need to be accomplished are:

Create the automatic mutual aid system.

Develop a recruitment and retention program for call personnel.

Develop a long-term strategic plan and work with surrounding communities to develop a system for sharing resources.

Monitor systematically the nature of emergency response, including the timeliness and quality of response.

#### **PRIORITY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

While we consider all the recommendations contained in this report to be important, this section is intended to place the recommendations into a framework which provides a sequential methodology of implementation. The recommendations contained in this report have been categorized as follows:

Priority 1: Recommendations that should be implemented without delay since they may bear directly on safety of personnel and efficient operation of fire, rescue or emergency medical services in the Town of West Boylston.

Priority 2: Recommendations that are important to safety and the efficient provision of fire, rescue or emergency medical services in West Boylston and which should be implemented as soon as reasonable and practical.

Priority 3: Recommendations that can contribute to the continued improvement of fire, rescue or emergency medical services in West Boylston and which should be implemented as soon as resources and operating conditions permit.

**EXHIBIT VIII-1**  
**PRIORITY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Priority</b>
111-1	The Town of West Boylston should engage in discussions with neighboring towns (Boylston, Clinton and Sterling) to develop a plan that allows the long-term sharing of resources. The discussions among towns should be at both the department head level (fire chief) and at the elected and policy level (administrators and boards of selectmen).	Long-term health of the emergency response system requires these discussions.	2/3
111-2	The Department should develop an automatic mutual aid program for target hazards and specific emergency calls.	This should be a high priority activity of the Fire Chief.	1
111-3	The West Boylston Fire Department should develop and formally adopt fire response performance standards to allow the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator to evaluate services.	The Fire Chief, in conjunction with Department personnel, should develop these standards.	2
111-4	The Fire Chief should monitor the achievement of performance standards.	This is a valuable management tool.	2
IV-1	The Town should restructure the governance of the Fire Department and abolish the Board of Fire Engineers. The Fire Chief should be appointed by the Town Administrator in accordance with the Town's Special Act Charter.	Implementation will clarify policy development and future planning.	1
IV-2	The Town should adopt a Fire Department management structure that places the Fire Chief clearly in command of the Department with the ability to manage and be held accountable for results.		1
IV-3	The Fire Chief should be employed on a contractual basis.		1
IV-4	The role of the West Boylston Fire Chief should be to manage, plan for and administer the Department.	The Fire Chief needs more time to manage the Department.	1
IV-5	The Fire Chief should have resources available to allow for the employment of administrative support/office personnel.	Support services are necessary for effective administration.	1
IV-6	The Board of Selectmen should clearly articulate a policy of supporting and enhancing the combination fire department model now operating.	This one of the most important steps which the Selectmen can take.	1
IV-7	Develop a three to five-year plan to increase the number of full-time firefighters/emergency medical technicians.	We have suggested that one new FF/EMT-P be added each year.	1

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Priority</b>
IV-8	Increase staffing in two phases. Phase I should focus on EMS coverage for Monday through Friday (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.) and Phase II should focus on Monday through Sunday (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.).		
IV-9	The Fire Department should adopt a new comprehensive fire prevention and inspection service model.	Part-time personnel or regional strategies are appropriate to address this need.	2
V-1	The Fire Department should employ firefighters/paramedics to respond during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.		1
V-2	The Town should explore the development of a regional emergency medical response system.	This is a long-term objective to consider.	3
V-3	The Fire Department should consider the expansion of its "on-duty" crew system to include a bunk in program for evenings.	Should be implemented as station rehabilitation occurs.	3
V-4	All dispatchers should be trained in emergency medical dispatch procedures and the EMD system should be implemented.	This will improve response to life-threatening incidents.	1/2
V-5	The Police Department should continue to respond to emergency medical incidents.	Integration of emergency response personnel is a sound policy.	1
V-6	The West Boylston Fire Department should continue to provide emergency medical services.		
VI-1	The Fire Chief, working with call personnel, should develop an action plan to increase the number of call personnel. The Department should have a small budget for recruitment.	This should be a priority of the Fire Chief.	1
VI-2	Consider the development of an incentive package of benefits to encourage an increase in the number of members and the retention of personnel.	This needs to be carefully considered.	2/3
VII-1	Plan for the reconstruction of the Fire station and provide additional space for duty crew living quarters.		1/2
VII-2	Reposition apparatus.		2
VII-3	Revise the apparatus replacement plan.	This has cost implications, but requires consideration.	2
VII-4	Review the ISO and NFPA equipment lists for aerial ladders and equip the heavy rescue as appropriate.		2