



---

## NEW BRAINTREE

---

### Open Space and Recreation Plan 2020

*Beautiful, Rural, Agricultural*



# TOWN OF NEW BRAINTREE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN, 2020

## **This plan was prepared for:**

Town of New Braintree  
20 Memorial Drive  
New Braintree, MA 01531

## **This plan was prepared by:**

The Town of New Braintree Open Space Committee  
&  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

## **The Town of New Braintree Open Space Committee Members:**

Joseph Chenevert, Board of Selectmen  
Renee Gregoire, Finance Committee  
Stephanie Korzec, Conservation Commission  
Corwin Castonguay, Board of Appeals  
Genevieve Stillman, Planning Board  
Deborah Morrison, Historical Commission  
Lee McLaughlin, Community Member  
Dean Gildert, Community Member  
Thomas Clough, Community Member  
Suellen Scott, Alternate Community Member  
Thomas Scott, Alternate Community Member  
Judith Jones, Alternate Community Member

## **The following individuals and groups also aided with the development of this plan:**

Dani Marini, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission  
Cynthia Henshaw, East Quabbin Land Trust  
Conservation Commission  
Planning Board  
Board of Selectmen  
East Quabbin Land Trust





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE .....	7
B. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION .....	7
C. ENHANCED OUTREACH AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION .....	8
<b>SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING .....</b>	<b>10</b>
A. REGIONAL CONTEXT .....	10
B. HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY .....	14
C. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS .....	14
<i>Population Statistics</i> .....	15
<i>Age Statistics</i> .....	15
<i>Income Statistics</i> .....	16
<i>Employment Statistics</i> .....	16
<i>Special Groups</i> .....	18
D. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS .....	20
<i>Patterns &amp; Trends</i> .....	20
<i>Infrastructure</i> .....	20
<i>Long-term Development Patterns</i> .....	21
<b>SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>24</b>
A. GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND TOPOGRAPHY .....	24
<i>Bedrock Geology</i> .....	24
<i>Surficial Geology</i> .....	24
<i>Soils</i> .....	25
<i>Topography</i> .....	26
B. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER .....	28
C. WATER RESOURCES .....	28
<i>Surface Water</i> .....	28
<i>Flood Hazard Areas</i> .....	30
<i>Wetlands</i> .....	30
<i>Water Supply</i> .....	31
D. VEGETATION .....	34
E. FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE .....	34
<i>Fisheries</i> .....	35
<i>Rare and Endangered Species</i> .....	35
<i>Vernal Pools</i> .....	36
<i>Management</i> .....	36
F. SCENIC RESOURCES AND UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS .....	36





Roadways.....	37
Scenic Landscapes.....	38
Important Peaks, Hilltops and Landmarks.....	39
Local Panoramic Views .....	39
Bodies of Water .....	39
Historic Sites and Buildings .....	40
Markers and Monuments .....	40
Archeological Sites.....	40
Unique Environments.....	43
G. ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES .....	48
Solid Waste Disposal.....	48
Old Dump Sites.....	48
Underground Storage Tanks (UST) .....	48
Earth Removal .....	48
Unregistered Motor Vehicles .....	48
Nonpoint Pollution Sources.....	48
Pollution Concerns Related to Previous Industry .....	49
State Police Academy.....	49
Off Road Vehicle Use .....	49
Wildlife.....	49
Wastewater Treatment .....	49
Climate Change.....	50
<b>SECTION 5: CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS.....</b>	<b>52</b>
A. CONSERVATION AND PASSIVE RECREATION AREAS .....	52
State Properties.....	52
Private Lands .....	55
B. ACTIVE RECREATION AREAS AND FACILITIES .....	57
Town Properties.....	57
Private Recreation Lands.....	58
<b>SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION .....</b>	<b>62</b>
A. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS .....	62
B. STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS .....	62
<b>SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS .....</b>	<b>65</b>
A. SUMMARY OF RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS .....	65
B. SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY’S NEEDS .....	66
C. MANAGEMENT NEEDS, POTENTIAL CHANGE OF USE .....	67
<b>SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>70</b>





**SECTION 9: FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN ..... 72**

GOAL: PRESERVE THE RURAL CHARACTER OF NEW BRAintree ..... 72

GOAL: PROTECT FARMLANDS, FOREST RESOURCES, WETLANDS, AND WILDLIFE HABITATS..... 73

GOAL: IMPROVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGE/DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS. .... 74

GOAL: PROTECT VALUABLE WATER RESOURCES FROM ADVERSE IMPACTS. .... 74

**SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENTS ..... 77**

**SECTION 11: REFERENCES ..... 79**

**APPENDIX ..... 82**





---

## PLAN SUMMARY

---

### Section One

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



## SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY

The Town of New Braintree has a rich agricultural heritage and a wealth of open spaces and historic places. There are over 1,306 acres of farmland that have been protected by Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, a voluntary program that provides a non-development alternative to farmers and other owners in order to protect important agricultural land. Nearly half of all land in Town, 7,064 acres, is managed for farming and forestry purposes under the Chapter 61 program. Forests, fields, and former mill villages that once flourished with the power supplied by the Ware River are dispersed throughout the scenic rolling hills.

New Braintree has one of the smallest populations in Massachusetts. However, its pastoral scenery is likely to change through a gradual influx of new residents seeking affordable housing and an appealing environment (potential population increases from people moving away from climate hazards in coastal communities). As the population grows, there will be an increasing need to preserve the rural character and enhance the passive recreation resources that New Braintree residents enjoy.

A community survey found that respondents overwhelmingly prefer the Town's tranquil landscapes and small-Town qualities. They were drawn to the Town for its agricultural and quiet nature. This Open Space and Recreation Plan is the initial element of an ongoing planning process that will guide the future growth and preservation of New Braintree.

The 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) builds on the 2005 update. First, it describes New Braintree's regional context and its history, as well as the patterns and trends that might affect future development. Next, the OSRP identifies agricultural, natural, and historic resources, and provides an inventory of existing conservation and recreation areas. Finally, community needs, goals, and objectives are discussed, incorporating the findings in the 2020 community survey that asked residents their views on open space and recreation issues in New Braintree.

Community input was used by New Braintree's Open Space Committee to identify four broad goals for this Open Space and Recreation Plan:

- ❖ Preserve the rural character of New Braintree.
- ❖ Protect farmlands, forest resources, wetlands, and wildlife habitats.
- ❖ Improve recreation opportunities for all age/demographic groups.
- ❖ Protect valuable water resources from adverse impacts.

Specific objectives were identified to help New Braintree achieve these goals. The concluding sections outline a Five-Year Action Plan to guide community activities that can advance these goals and objectives.





---

# INTRODUCTION

---

## Section Two

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



## SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

### A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In 2005, the Town of New Braintree created an Open Space and Recreation Plan as part of their Master Plan update. The 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan has since expired and serves as a starting point for the 2020 update. The 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan reflects the long-standing commitment of the Town of New Braintree to protect the environment, preserve its small-Town character, and enhance recreation resources in the community. The primary purpose of this OSRP are to:

- ❖ Identify and assess factors that are relevant to open space, agricultural land, and resource protection.
- ❖ Inventory current agricultural, conservation, and recreation lands, and determine community needs for open space opportunities.
- ❖ Provide an action plan to guide Town boards and community groups.
- ❖ Provide an Open Space and Recreation Plan that may be used within the Town Master Plan.

This 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan may be used as one of the core elements of a long-range plan to guide community decisions for open space, agricultural land and resource protection, housing, economic development, and scenic highways. In preparing this document, the Open Space Committee utilized input from Town boards and residents to determine priorities and recommend actions. These priority actions will help to protect and sustain the rural qualities that New Braintree residents enjoy.

### B. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The East Quabbin Land Trust initiated the Open Space and Recreation planning process by facilitating a discussion in New Braintree around conserving Wespalis Farm, a 200-acre farm in Town. Conservation of this critical agricultural land could be achieved through the receipt of a Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grant. A current and updated Open Space and Recreation is required in order to be eligible to receive a LAND grant. In February of 2020, a group of New Braintree residents met with the Selectboard to discuss the possibility of updating the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. At that meeting, the Selectboard voted and signed an application for a Conservation Assistance for Small Communities grant. New Braintree received the Conservation Assistance for Small Communities grant in March of 2020. In early April after funds were secured and contracts were signed, the Town of New Braintree retained the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to facilitate the development of the 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan.





Danielle Marini, Assistant Environmental Planner for CMRPC, worked closely with New Braintree's Open Space Committee to complete this update. At the start of the planning process, the coronavirus pandemic began, affecting communities worldwide. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person and could result in mild to severe symptoms. In Massachusetts, Governor Charlie Baker ordered all non-essential businesses and organizations statewide to shut down or work from home on March 23, 2020. This order was extended on March 31<sup>st</sup>, April 28<sup>th</sup>, and May 15<sup>th</sup>. As a result of this order, New Braintree's Town Hall was closed, and public meetings were not allowed to be held in-person. In lieu of meeting in-person, the New Braintree Open Space Committee held a series of public meetings virtually over Zoom. Virtual public meetings were held on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, June 4<sup>th</sup>, and June 18<sup>th</sup>.

In addition to holding various public meetings, the Open Space Committee conducted a survey to obtain residents' views concerning the preservation of open space in New Braintree. Social distancing measures brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic created an obstacle in obtaining public input resulting in a largely virtual engagement effort. The survey was developed on Survey Monkey and links to access the survey were emailed to residents, were posted on the Town's website, and were posted on various social media pages. Flyers were also mailed to all households at the beginning of May 2020. These flyers detailed information about the survey and included both a link to the survey and a QR code which allowed residents to scan the code with their phone to pull up the survey on their device. Paper copies of the survey were delivered to residents on an as needed basis and were entered manually into Survey Monkey by project manager, Deborah Morrison. The survey was open to collect responses from May 1 – May 31. A total of 87 residents returned their surveys, representing approximately 8% of New Braintree's population. Community survey findings are provided in Appendix A and will be further detailed throughout this plan.

## C. ENHANCED OUTREACH AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

When social distancing measures are lifted, and when the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic lessens, the New Braintree Open Space Committee will host a public forum in order to collect more community input. The Open Space Committee discussed holding the public forum in person either during the month of September or October. However, the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and mandates from the Baker-Polito Administration will determine how and when the public forum will take place. At the public forum, the Committee will present this Open Space and Recreation Plan and will encourage discussion of conservation and recreation issues. While no Environmental Justice communities were reported in New Braintree, efforts will be made to ensure that the public forum is accessible to all.





---

## COMMUNITY SETTING

---

### Section Three

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



## SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

### A. REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Town of New Braintree is in the western part of Worcester County, Massachusetts, approximately seventeen miles west of Worcester and almost equidistant from the northern and southern borders of the state. The Town is triangular, with its longest side, or base, toward the south. It is bounded on the north by the Town of Barre; on the east by the Town of Oakham; on the south by the Town of North Brookfield, the Town of West Brookfield, and the Town of Ware; and on the west by the Town of Hardwick. The Ware River separates New Braintree from the Town of Hardwick, and the Town's eastern-most point touches the Town of Spencer. New Braintree contains approximately 13,340 acres of land.

The New Braintree Town center is located at the intersection of Utley Road, Wine Road, Oakham Road, West Brookfield Road, and Old Common Road. Situated on a high hill, the Town center offers scenic views of the surrounding countryside. The New Braintree Police Department, United States Postal Service, New Braintree Congregational Church, and Kip's Christmas Tree Farm can be found in the center.

New Braintree is generally hilly, with its highest point at Tuft's Hill located in the eastern part of Town, north of Moore Road and west of Igoe Road. Another prominent highland is "Rattlesnakes' Rocks", a ridge of cliffs and rocks facing east in the western part of Town. Rattlesnakes' Rocks is located south of Unitas Road. Mohawk, or Cushman, Hill is located just east of Webb Road. Other hills are Muster Hill, the site of the Massachusetts State Police Complex, and Fort Hill near the junction of Barre-Cut-Off Road and Route 67. Rounded glacial drumlins and winding stream valleys extend into adjacent Towns.

During the 1800s, nearly all the land in New Braintree had been cleared of forests and converted to pasture for agricultural uses. Now, while there are still several working farms in the region, much of the forests have returned. The forested landscape includes large expanses of protected lands that supply varied outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

The climate is not as cold as in the Berkshires nor is it tempered by coastal effects. New Braintree lies within the Chicopee River Basin. During the period from 2016-2020, there was an average of 4.29 days with minimum temperatures below 0 degrees Fahrenheit within the Chicopee River Basin. Also, during this time, there was an average of 1.57 days with maximum temperatures above 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Annual total precipitation for this regional averaged 45.82 inches during the period of 2016-2020. There was also an average of 14.82 consecutive dry days during this time period. Gardens do not generally require irrigation.

Air and water temperatures are most conducive for swimming from mid-June through August. The climate is right for producing maple syrup in spring and vivid fall foliage, which are tourist attractions. Snow cover





is usually adequate for winter sports in January and February, and there are often substantial snowfalls in December and March.

All of the land in New Braintree is part of the larger Chicopee River Basin that replenishes the Ware River, the Quaboag River, and the Swift River. The Ware River is found on the western border of Town. The river's name is a corruption of weir, and tradition holds that the river is named for the Indian fishing weirs that were found in the river by the early settlers.

Also attributed to the river is the Indian name Menamesick or Menameseek, said to mean "great fishing basket" or "fishing weir." Villages built on the banks of the river are said to have been called Menameseeket, contracted to Menameset or Wenimisset. This name survives today as Winimusset Brook. Other streams in New Braintree are Meadow Brook and Sucker Brook. Several smaller, unnamed brooks empty their waters into these streams.

Winimusset Brook rises south and southwest of Wine Road and flows north into the Ware River. The brook appears to have been a good source of fish, for in 1898 a five-year lease made by "Boston parties" to fish the brook expired. The lease, apparently for exclusive fishing rights, was made with the landowners adjacent to the brook.

Meadow Brook begins in North Brookfield, flows west, and enters New Braintree just north of Prouty Road. It flows generally west for approximately a mile before turning south into West Brookfield where it becomes Mill Brook and flows into Wickaboag Pond.

Sucker Brook begins in New Braintree at Cusky Pond and Mason Pond. It flows south-southwest before entering North Brookfield near Mill Road. A map drawn by Rufus Putnam in 1785 shows this brook as Mohawk Brook. There is a second Sucker Brook located almost completely in West Brookfield that begins in New Braintree west of West Brookfield Road near the Town line.

There are no large natural lakes in New Braintree; however, there are many small ponds that have been created by damming brooks or excavating swampy areas. Some of these ponds were used to procure ice before refrigeration became available to New Braintree farmers. Several named ponds are noted below:

- ◆ Cusky Pond is located south of Worcester Road, approximately ¼ mile east of Route 67;
- ◆ Hall's Pond is south of the junction of Dennis Whitney and Bernard Whitney Roads;
- ◆ Hibbard's Pond is just west of the junction of Padre and Gilbertville Roads;
- ◆ Lily Pond is a quarter mile east of the junction of Hardwick and West Roads;
- ◆ Mason Pond is located just north of the intersection of Route 67 and the Oakham Cross Road. This pond served as a source of ice for several farms in the vicinity.

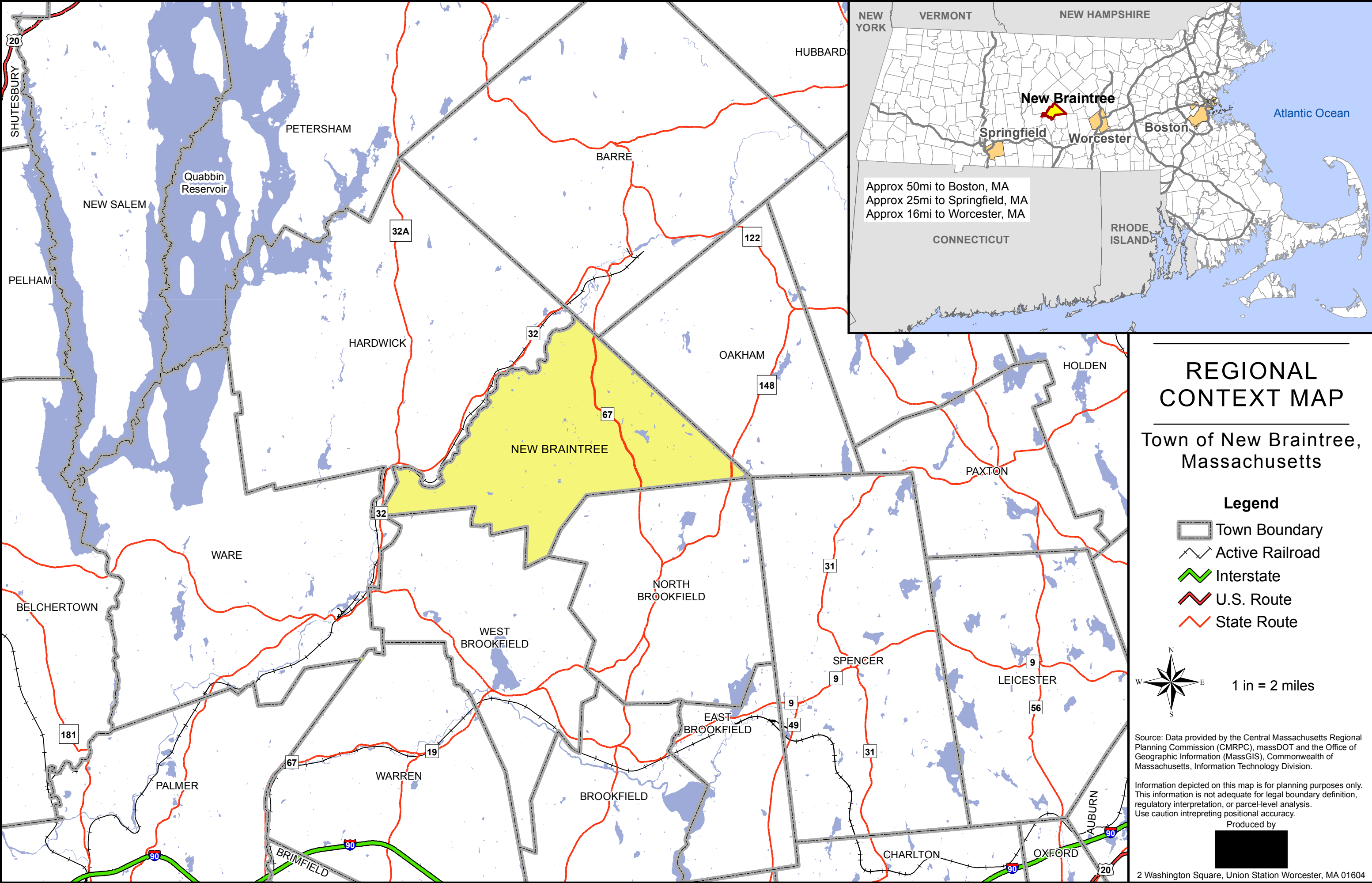




At its easternmost point, New Braintree also has a small section of shoreline on Brooks Pond.

There are two large meadows in Town: Winimusset Meadow and Ditch Meadow. Winimusset Meadow lies west of McKay and Slein Roads along Winimusset Brook. Most of this meadow now serves as a state wildlife management area. Ditch Meadow is located along Meadow Brook south of Gilbertville Road and north of Prouty Road. Reportedly, the meadow is named for a ditch that was dug in the 1600s to divert water from Meadow Brook into Sucker Brook during the summer months for Pynchon's mill in what is now West Brookfield. The Rufus Putnam map of 1785 shows this meadow as Nacommuck Meadow, suggesting that the name Ditch Meadow may be of a later date and not related to the early mill. Even though there are many swampy areas in Town, only one is named. Hall's Swamp lies south of the junction of Dennis Whitney and Bernard Whitney Roads. Several wetland areas in New Braintree extend into neighboring Towns.





# REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP

## Town of New Braintree, Massachusetts

### Legend

- Town Boundary
- Active Railroad
- Interstate
- U.S. Route
- State Route

1 in = 2 miles

Source: Data provided by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by

2 Washington Square, Union Station Worcester, MA 01604

Date: 8/11/2017 Path: H:\Projects\IO\_NewBraintree\_GIS\m202\_Locus\_11x17.mxd





## B. HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

Before its settlement by the English, the Town of New Braintree was inhabited by various groups of Native Americans for at least 9,000 years. The Town was once home to the Nipmuck (or Nipnet) people. In 1709, New Braintree was first settled, and in 1751, New Braintree was officially incorporated. In January of 1751, the General Court issued an order establishing a precinct, comprised of the Braintree Grant, a tract of 6,000 acres lying between Rutland and Brookfield; a part of Hardwick lying east of the Ware River; and about 1,200 acres from the north part of Brookfield. It was not until 1776 that it became a Town, and shortly thereafter received the name New Braintree.

In his *History of Worcester County* (1792), Peter Whitney wrote of New Braintree: 'For its bigness it exceeds any other Town in the county in fine grazing land, as is evidenced by the annual product of the dairy and beef.'

By 1800 the Town had gained a reputation of making cheese, much of which was shipped to Boston. That only lasted until 1888. The arrival of the railroad in New Braintree provided a way to ship milk to the expanding industrial cities and Towns of Massachusetts, and milk quickly replaced cheese as the main agricultural product of the Town. During the next fifty years, farmers also raised livestock, including cattle, sheep, horses, and poultry.

Today, the automobile has allowed most of the residents to earn their living in business and industry outside of Town, but the chief industry within the Town remains agriculture. Since the 1950s the number of individual working farms has decreased dramatically, and much of the pastureland has grown up to brush and woods. However, most of the best land has remained under cultivation, usually rented to the larger dairy farms still in operation.

The lack of development in New Braintree can be attributed to several important factors, two of which are the land requirement and the limited number of building permits which are issued annually. According to the Zoning Bylaws, the minimum requirement for new construction is 135,000 square feet with 250 feet of frontage. The maximum number of building permits that can be issued annually for new construction is twenty. Another factor limiting development is the Quabbin Reservoir, which is a barrier to the development of east-west highways through western Worcester County.

## C. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

New Braintree's population has been increasing for the past thirty years. The characteristics of this population are important in planning for the recreation and open space needs of Town residents. Statistics in this section include data provided by the U.S. Federal Census, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, and the Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training.



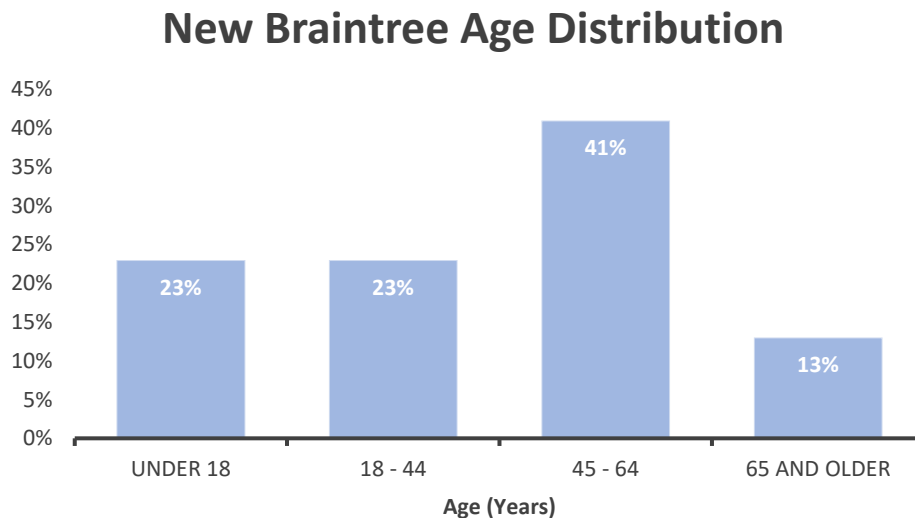
## POPULATION STATISTICS

New Braintree's population grew 31% from 671 in 1980 to 881 residents in 1990 (2010 US Census data). This growth rate continued in the 1990s, and the Census shows an additional 5% increase to 927 residents in 2000. Throughout the early 2000s, the population continued to grow with an additional 7.8% increase to 999 residents in 2010.

According to the US Census Bureau, New Braintree's population was estimated to grow to 1,010 in 2011, to 1,012 in the year 2012, and to 1,022 in the year 2013. From there, the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates shows that New Braintree's population is 1,298 residents. The population density according to the 2010 US Census is 48/square miles, though using the 2018 estimates, the population density is likely closer to 62/square miles.

## AGE STATISTICS

The 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates also show the following population breakdown:



*Figure 1. Age Distribution in New Braintree*

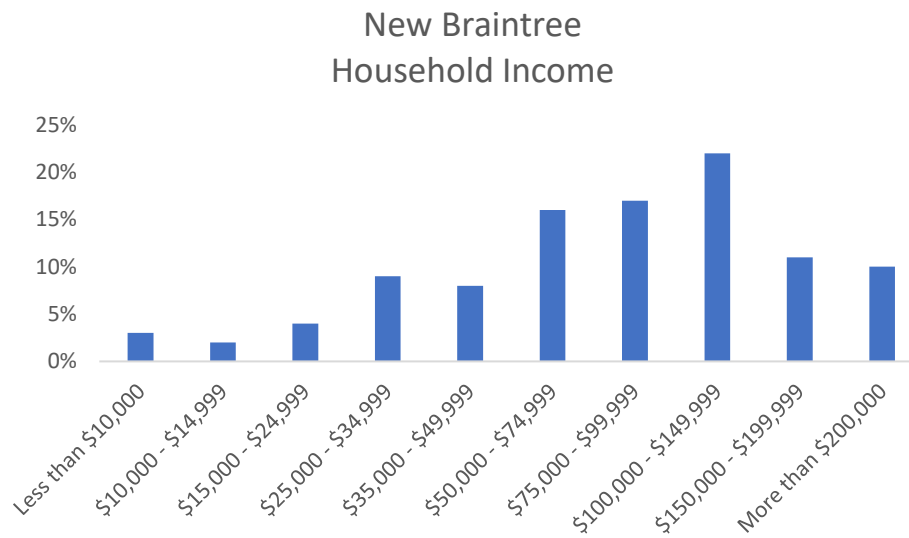
The 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan survey asked residents if they felt that existing recreational opportunities were adequate for the senior population. The results indicate that 52% of respondents felt that recreational opportunities were inadequate for the senior population. With 41% of the population between 45 to 64 years, and 13% of the population over 65 years old, the Town may want to consider



creating additional age-friendly recreation programs to serve these groups.

## INCOME STATISTICS

Data from the US Census Bureau 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates show that the median income for all New Braintree households was \$89,167, while the median earning for full time year-round workers was \$63,571. The approximate distribution of income can be viewed in the figure below.



*Figure 2. Distribution of household income in New Braintree, 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

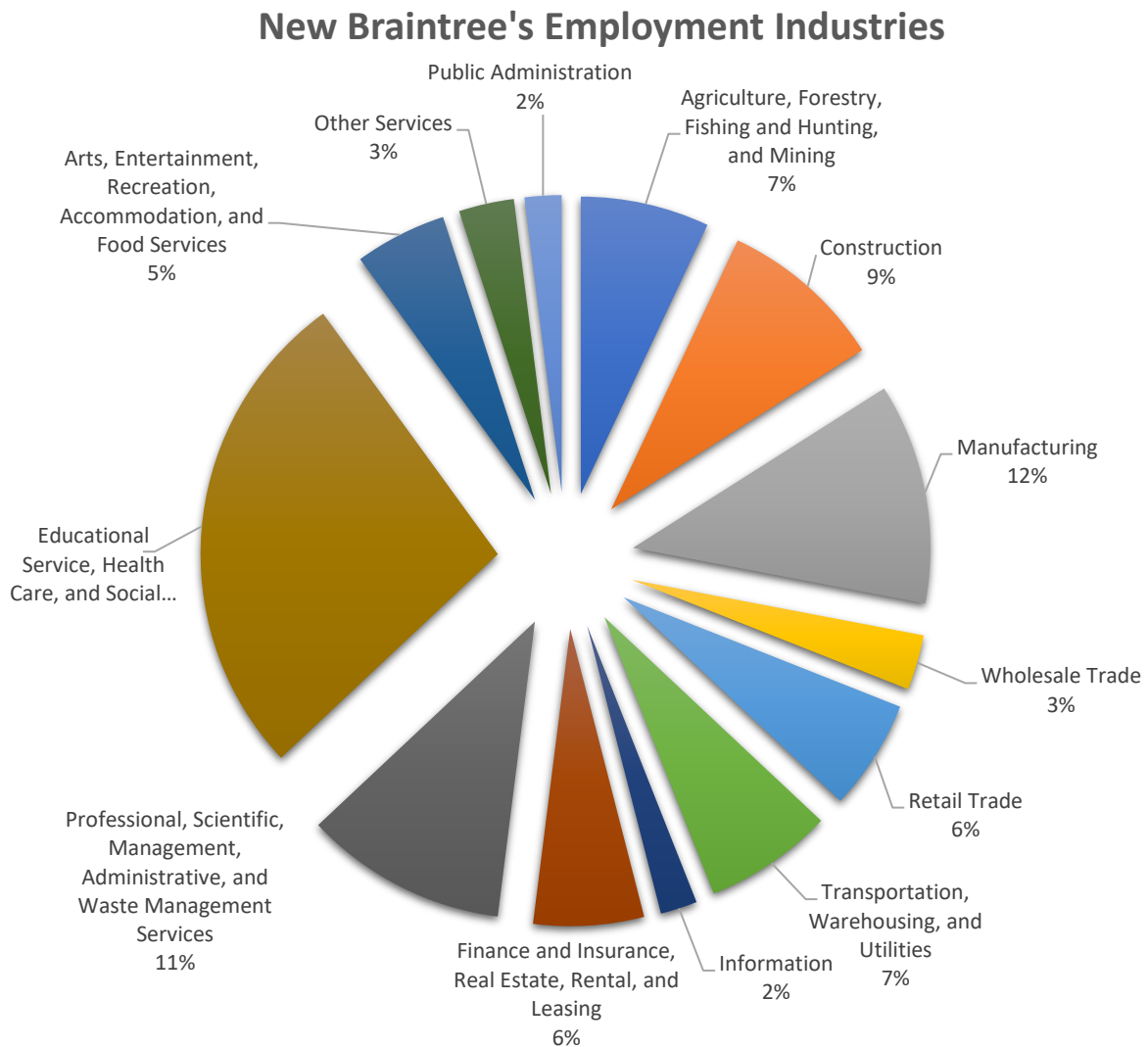
The 2018 ACS 5-Year narrative also found that 9% of residents in New Braintree were in poverty. Of those, 13% of children fell below the poverty line, 8% of people between 18 to 64 years were below the poverty line, and 4% of people 65 years and older were below the poverty line. These statistics indicate that New Braintree residents who are below the poverty line may not be able to spend additional money in order to meet their recreation needs. Thus, it will be important to provide appropriate recreational opportunities for very low-income residents.

## EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

The US Census Bureau indicates that 62% of the population 16 and over were employed. Of those who were employed, 74% of people were employed as private wage and salary workers, 17% were federal, state, or local government workers, and 9% were self-employed in their own business.



According to the 2018 ACS data, New Braintree's employed population worked in the following industries:



*Figure 3. Employment Industries in New Braintree, 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

Additional employment data show the 37% of New Braintree's employed population work management, business, sciences, and arts occupations, 12% work service occupations, 19% work sales and office occupations, 16% work natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations, and 16% work production, transportation, and material moving occupations. The Department of Unemployment Assistance Labor Market Information (LMI) indicates that in 2019, the unemployment rate in New Braintree was 3.9%.



## SPECIAL GROUPS

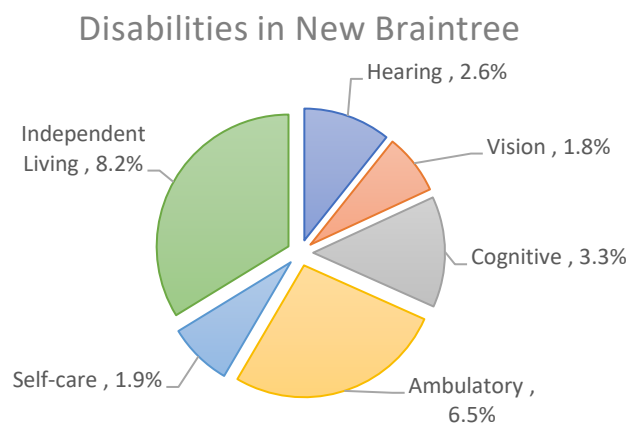
Data from the 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates indicates that the population by race in New Braintree can be broken down as follows:

*Table 1. Distribution of race in New Braintree, 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

Race	Percentage
White	99.3%
Black or African	0.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.0%
Asian	0.5%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Other	0.0%
Two or More Races	0.2%

The 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates also stated that 0.5% of people in New Braintree were of Hispanic origin, and 98.8% of people in New Braintree were White non-Hispanic. According to the MassGIS Environmental Justice Population Map on the following page, there are no significant Environmental Justice Populations located within New Braintree. The closest Environmental Justice Population is a group of low-income residents in North Brookfield. Even though there are no significant Environmental Justice Communities located within New Braintree, the Town should still consider these communities to ensure that open space and recreation opportunities are accessible to all.

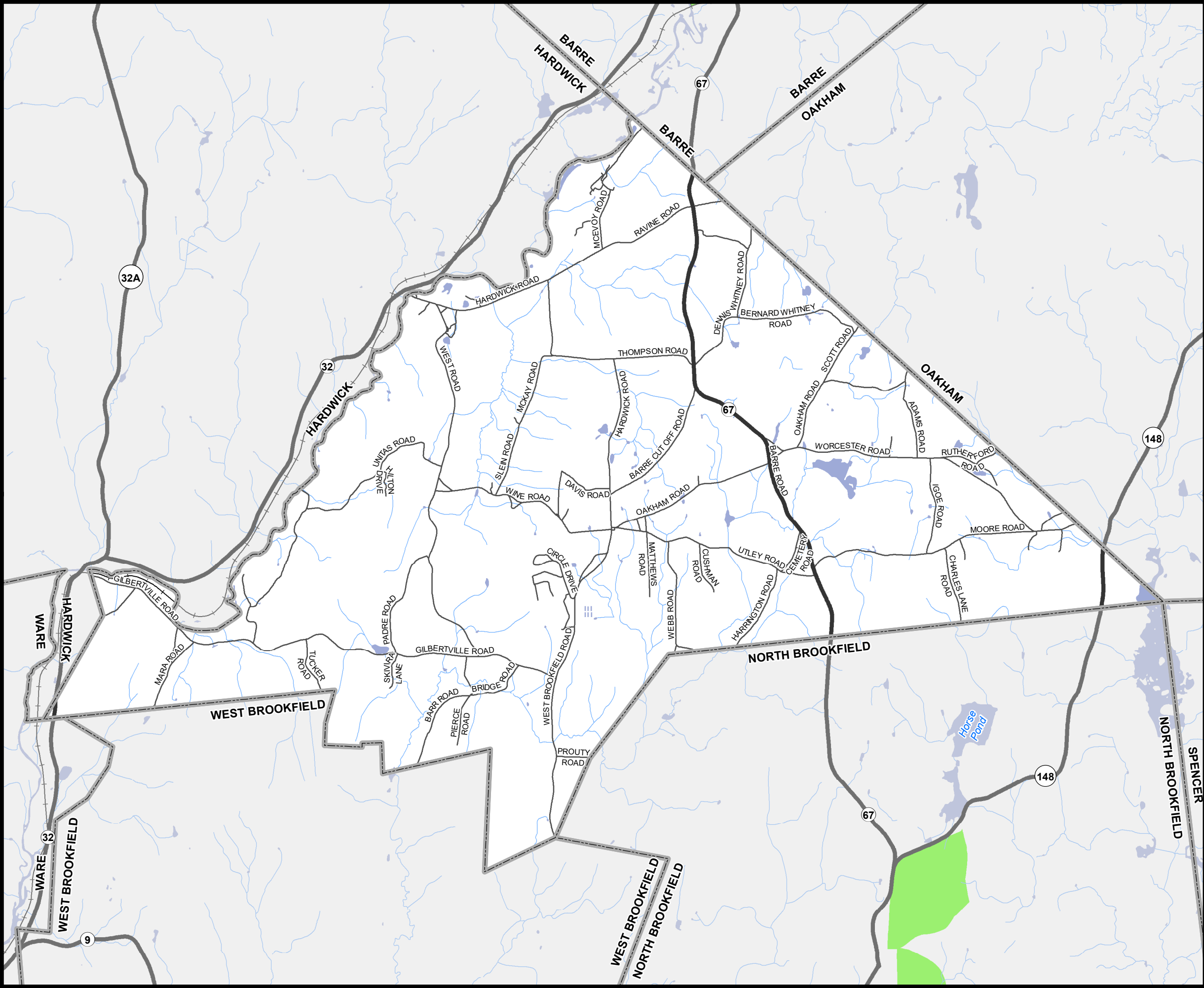
Further, the 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates breaks down the types of disabilities in New Braintree as follows:



*Figure 4. Distribution of disabilities in New Braintree, 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

Especially with an aging population, the Town should consider those with mobility difficulties when planning for future open space improvements.



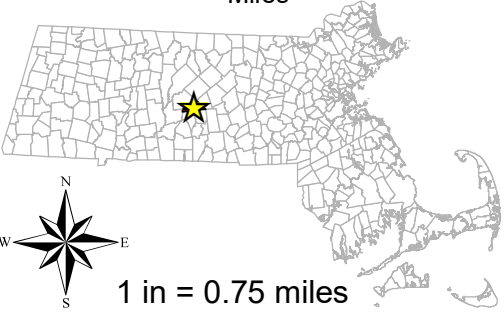
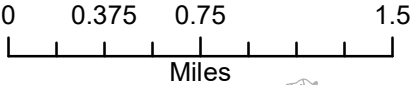


# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MAP

Town of New Braintree,  
Massachusetts

## Legend

- Town Boundaries
- Roads**
  - Major Road
  - Local Road
  - Active Railroad
- Water Bodies
- Streams
- Environmental Justice 2010 Populations**
  - Income



1 in = 0.75 miles

Source: Data provided by the Town of New Braintree, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by



One Mercantile Street, Suite 520 Worcester, MA 01608





## D. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

### PATTERNS & TRENDS

New Braintree today probably has the largest population size in its history. Following the Civil War there was a drop in population reflecting the rapid industrialization and growth of cities. The population continued to shrink until the 1930s when the depression appears to have forced people back to the land. The widespread use of the automobile since World War II has allowed the growth of population to continue.

By automobile, New Braintree is 34 minutes west of Worcester, 35 minutes south of Gardner, and 50 minutes southwest of Leominster and Fitchburg. Almost entirely residential, many Town workers have lengthy commutes to their places of employment. While its relatively affordable housing and scenic rural character make New Braintree a desirable place to live, the longer commute to employment centers tends to reduce the strong growth pressures being experienced by nearby Towns like Rutland, Holden, and Spencer.

New Braintree saw steady growth in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s as population increased by 16 residents a year on average. Home construction continues at a slow pace, with about 2 building permits annually, which has some minor impact on New Braintree's rural character. There are no large residential subdivisions planned at present, though there are a few proposed solar fields in litigation. Permanently protected open spaces comprise more than 17% of the land in New Braintree. And approximately 53% of the land is managed for farming and forestry purposes. Large lot sizes and environmental constraints, such as steep slopes and wet soils, will tend to limit residential development in the Town.

There are large tracts of state-owned land in New Braintree and nearby Towns that attract visitors for fishing, hiking and other outdoor pursuits. There are also charming historic buildings and homes located throughout the Town. New Braintree still has dairy farms, as well as hayfields and other agricultural areas. The parcels of land that are level and free of rocks are most easily farmed and the last to be abandoned. However, these unforested lands are also areas most easily converted to house lots and lost for agricultural uses.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Route 67 is the principal highway in Town, which runs through the east side of New Braintree. Heading north, Route 67 connects with Barre, Route 122, and Route 32. Traveling south, Route 67 connects with Route 9 in West Brookfield. In addition to Route 67, access is provided by Route 32 that runs parallel to the Town's western border, and by Route 148 that passes through the eastern tip of New Braintree. The Town is approximately 30 minutes to Interstate 90 and 38 minutes to Interstate 290.

The community profile prepared by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for





New Braintree describes the regional road network in the Worcester area, which includes three major cross-state highways: Route 9, Route 20, and the Massachusetts Turnpike. DHCD notes that there is no rail service or bus service in Town.

### *Water and Sewer*

There is no public water supply or sewer system in New Braintree. Individual private wells, drilled or dug, provide water for homes and other uses. The Massachusetts State Police Academy has its own water treatment plant and well field which supplies water to the property and to the New Braintree Elementary School. There are no plans at present for developing a community water supply.

Most sewage disposal systems in New Braintree are septic tanks with leach fields. In general, each home or business has its own septic system. Many soils in Town are not well suited to septic systems due to ledge or groundwater near the surface.

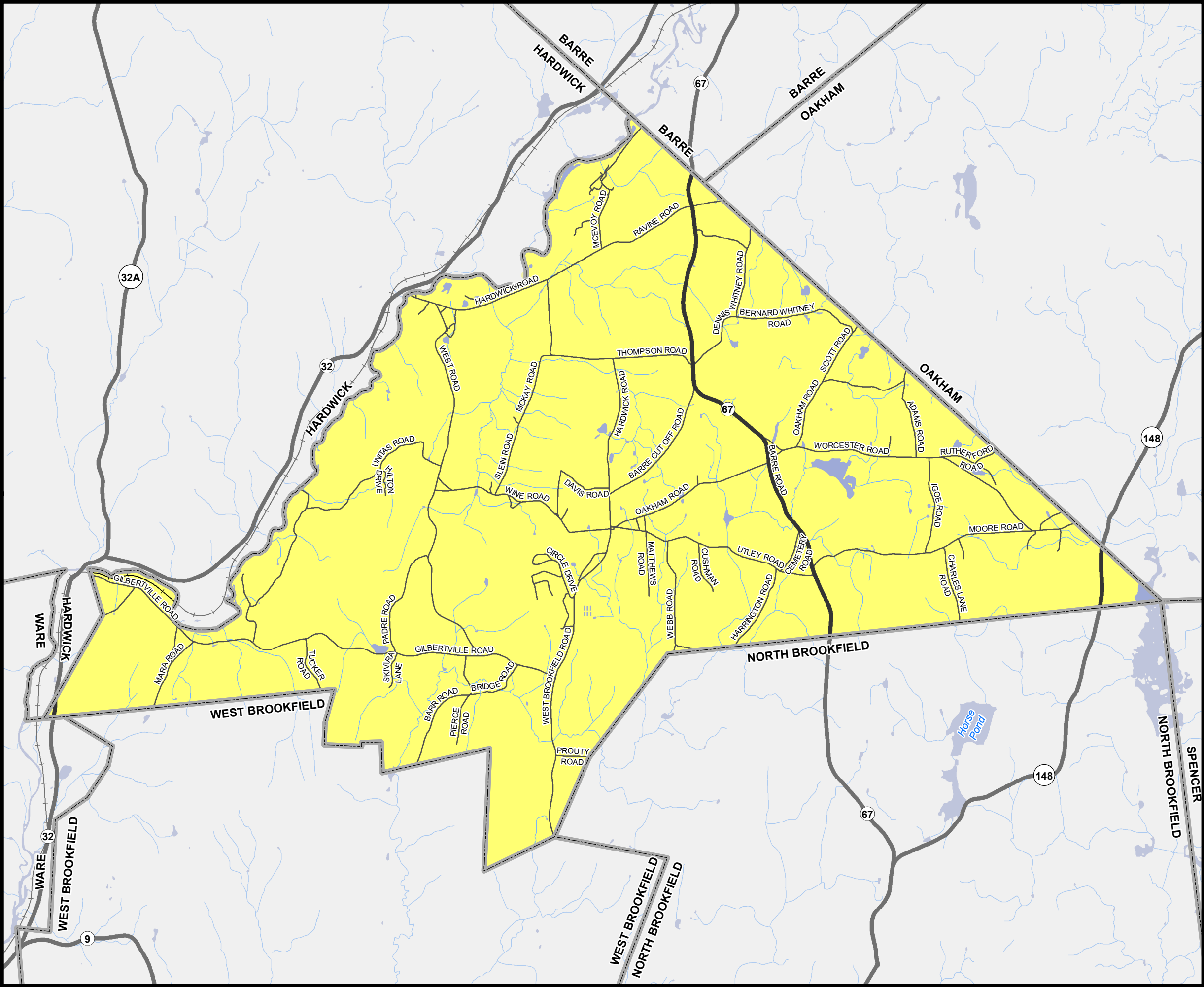
### **LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

The Zoning District Map on the following page displays New Braintree's only zoning district. The Zoning Bylaw in Town provides for one residential-agricultural district, which allows single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, and agricultural uses in all parts of Town.

Land uses that require a special permit from the Board of Appeals include: private recreation facilities, private schools, several types of retail and consumer service businesses, and light industry. Uses that are not specifically listed in the Zoning Bylaw are prohibited in Town.

Although the Town has large areas of protected open space, there are significant habitats, scenic and unique areas, stream corridors and other community resources, which are especially worthy of protection. Population growth in Town is likely to bring increasing needs for recreation areas, public water supplies, and wastewater treatment. As part of long-range planning, a hydrologic study can provide an analysis of community growth patterns and identify potential locations for municipal water and sewer facilities in New Braintree.





# ZONING DISTRICTS MAP

Town of New Braintree,  
Massachusetts

## Legend

Town Boundaries

### Roads

Major Road

Local Road

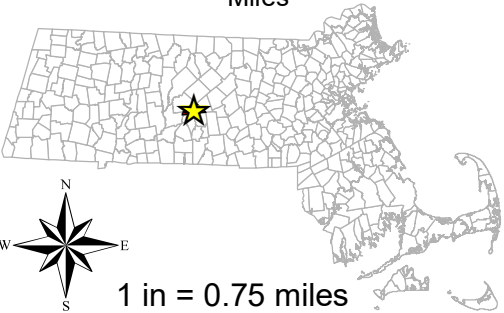
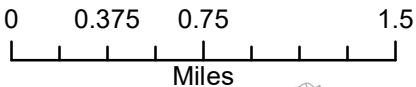
Active Railroad

Water Bodies

Streams

### Zoning Districts

Agricultural and Rural -  
Residential District



1 in = 0.75 miles

Source: Data provided by the Town of New Braintree, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by



One Mercantile Street, Suite 520 Worcester, MA 01608





---

## ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

---

### Section Four

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



## SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

### A. GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND TOPOGRAPHY

New Braintree's geology is a primary influence on the natural and man-made landscape that we enjoy today. Geological processes have formed the rolling hills and valleys that define the Town. These processes also affect the fertility and drainage characteristics of the soils. This is important because soils determine which vegetation that can grow, as well as the limitations for land uses that can occur. Together, the geology, soils, and topography all determine how both surface waters and ground waters function, which is highly important to both the natural and built environments.

#### BEDROCK GEOLOGY

The bedrock that lies underneath Central Massachusetts was formed approximately 350-400 million years ago during the Paleozoic era. This bedrock was created when the sediments that were deposited in ancient seas were hardened by various geologic processes. Following this, other tectonic events folded and heated this sedimentary rock, changing it into metamorphic or igneous rock formations. Generally, there is a north-south alignment of these bedrock formations. Some of this bedrock is soft and can break down into clays that hold water tightly, making it less available to residential wells.

Most of New Braintree lies over bedrock aquifers, and most private wells are bedrock artesian wells. Well yields are generally adequate for residential development. The average residential well is more than 250 feet deep and can be much deeper if low yields require additional storage capacity. There are also sections of New Braintree with underlying deposits of sand and gravel, which can produce higher yields of water.

#### SURFICIAL GEOLOGY

The deposits from mile-high glaciers that covered New England during the Pleistocene Epoch (10 – 15,000 years ago) created the surficial geology that determines the topography, soils, and hydrology of New Braintree. River and stream patterns of today are influenced by landforms created from north to south travel of the glacier. Large deposits of sand and gravel were created by the outwash of glacial meltwater, and the ice lifted large boulders from outcrops of bedrock. These outcroppings of bedrock are now dispersed across Town.

Most of New Braintree is covered by unsorted rocks, stones, and "till" soils that formed on materials deposited as the glacier melted. Where the glacier scoured the surface, bedrock outcrops remain. And where the glacier slid over loose materials on top of bedrock, rounded hills, called "drumlins", were formed. Depressions carved out by the glacier also created many of our ponds, bogs, wetlands, and stream





valleys. Wind and water erosion continued to add deposits along flood plains. Spaces within the sand and gravel deposits that lie underneath Ware and Winimussett valleys fill with water and are potential sources of drinking water.

## SOILS

Most of the soils in the Town of New Braintree are in the Woodbridge-Paxton-Charlton association, and are somewhat useful for forestry and pastureland. These are characterized as shallow to deep, well drained to poorly drained soils in glacial till uplands. Slopes range from 3 to 35 percent, and stones cover over 3 to 15 percent of the surface. Limitations in these soils are related to wetness, slow permeability in the substratum, slope, and stoniness. Slow permeability can limit site development capabilities for septic systems. New Braintree has many small areas of Woodbridge or Paxton fine sandy loam, with slopes less than 8 percent. This type of soil is considered prime farmland.

The Hinckley-Merrimac association is found in the valleys of the Ware River, Winimusset Brook, and Meadow Brook. Merrimac soils are well drained and were formed on the leveled portions of glacial outwash plains. Permeability is moderately rapid to rapid. Typically, these soils have 2 feet of loamy material underlain by sand and gravel. The content of gravel averages less than 35 percent. Hinckley soils are excessively drained and have a loamy surface layer underlain by stratified sand and gravel. These soils were formed on the ridges of glacial outwash plains and have permeability that is rapid or very rapid.

Hinckley-Merrimac soils are suited for agricultural and forestry uses, though tree seedling mortality can be high due to a lack of available moisture. Slope, drought, and low nutrient content can be limiting factors for farming. Steep slopes can be a limitation for buildings and roads because the sides of excavations are unstable and can collapse. Poor filtering capacity of these soils is a severe limitation for septic tank absorption fields. In these types of soils, effluent from septic tank absorption fields can pollute groundwater.

The Soils and Geographic Features Map on page 27 the associated soils which are useful for the planning and management of an area. A custom Soils Report for the Northwestern Part of Worcester County, made available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, has more details on the soils described above and can be found in Appendix B.

## *Soils and Agriculture*

The Town of New Braintree has very productive soils. The soils range from sandy along the Ware River to heavy clay types located on the hillsides. Both types of soils produce excellent crops of hay, corn, vegetables, fruits, and nursery plants such as Christmas trees and woody ornamentals.

Farmers in Town over the years, reaching back generations, have improved the soils by using good maintenance practices. In times past and to the present day, farmers have spread manure and lime on the





fields to keep the soil fertile. Other horticultural practices such as removing rocks have added to the quality of the soil. Crop rotation and no-till methods have protected the soil from erosion.

Commercial farms dominate New Braintree's landscape and generate many products that are shipped throughout the state and New England. Fresh vegetables and fruits make their way from New Braintree fields to local markets and farm stands. These high-quality agricultural products provide vital income to the Town's farming families.

The high-quality soils keep productive farmers in Town and help shape the character of New Braintree as an agricultural community. At harvest time, the bounty from the soil is very apparent. Corn neatly stored in trench silos, barns full of hay, and truckloads of vibrantly colored pumpkins, squash, and apples attest to the productivity of the soil.

The challenge New Braintree faces as a farming community is preventing the loss of these soils through both residential and commercial development. Historically, it was common practice during development to strip the topsoil off the land to expose the commercially valuable gravel and sand. The topsoil, gravel, and sand would then be sold and removed from Town. Recognizing that if this trend continued, then there would be less soil available and the Town's unique character would change, the residents of New Braintree decided to enact a bylaw to protect these features. The Removal of Topsoil, Loam, Sand, or Gravel Bylaw (Chapter 4) states that no person shall remove any topsoil, loam, sand, or gravel from any land in Town not in public use unless such removal is authorized by a special permit issued by the Planning Board. It further specifies that no native topsoil or loam shall be removed from the limits of the Town of New Braintree. Violation of this bylaw could result in fines not less than ten dollars (\$10) per cubic yard or as determined by the Select Board.

Generations of New Braintree farmers have always cherished their farms' most vital asset – the soil. Farmers who have nourished and protected their soil have prospered. Each farming generation has passed down this legacy to the next farmer in line. This unbroken stewardship of the soil benefits all the residents of New Braintree.

## TOPOGRAPHY

The Town of New Braintree has many hills with steep grades leading to winding valleys of small streams. There are some areas in the central part of Town with relatively level land, which include small wetlands. Elevations in Town range from 549 feet above sea level at the surface of the Ware River to 1167 feet at the top of Tufts Hill. Slopes range up to 45% with 8-15% slopes predominating. Slopes greater than 15% are more susceptible to soil erosion and can have severe limitations for septic systems and buildings



\* The DEP Oil or Hazardous Materials Sites with Activity and Use Limitation (AUL) datalayer is a statewide point dataset containing the approximate location of oil or hazardous material release/disposal sites where an AUL has been filed. The sites mapped in this datalayer represent only a subset of the total reported release sites tracked by MassDEP BWSC.

An AUL provides notice of the presence of oil and/or hazardous material contamination remaining at the location after a cleanup has been conducted pursuant to Chapter 21E and the MCP.

--Description From MassGIS website <http://www.mass.gov/mgis/aul.htm>. Data current as of 12/2019

\*\*Location data contained in this datalayer are based on MassDEP staff interpretation of information provided by PRPs and their LSPs. Point features in this datalayer should ONLY be considered as an "approximation" or "best estimate" of site locations based on the information submitted to the MassDEP BWSC. The accuracy and completeness of the information submitted has not been verified by MassDEP. ----Description From MassGIS website

See the MassGIS data layer description page for full data disclaimer. <http://www.mass.gov/mgis/c21e.htm> Data current as of 12/2019

# SOILS & GEOLOGIC FEATURES MAP

## Town of New Braintree, Massachusetts

**Legend**

Town Boundaries

Major Road

Local Road

Active Railroad

Water Bodies

Streams

AUL Location\*

MassDEP Tier 21E Sites\*\*

Prime Farmland Soils (NRCS Soils-WORC. NW)

**NRCS SSURGO-Certified Soils (WORC. NW)**  
(Dominant Drainage Class)

Excessively drained

Somewhat excessively drained

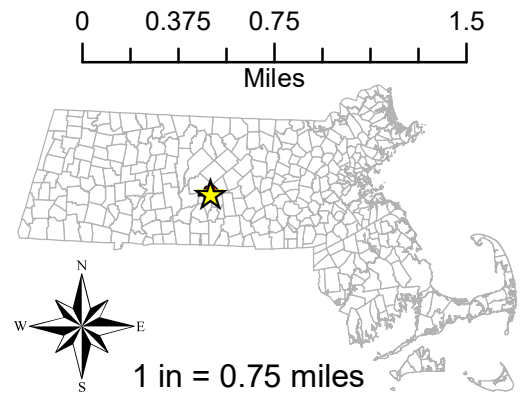
Well drained

Moderately well drained

Poorly drained

Very poorly drained

Not Classified



Source: Data provided by the Town of New Braintree, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by

CMRPC

One Mercantile Street, Suite 520 Worcester, MA 01608



## B. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Town of New Braintree's terrain of rolling hills, small ponds, babbling brooks and the Ware River valley is largely forested. Working farms and historic homes add to the beauty of the Town, and the Winimusset Wildlife Management Area provides opportunities for diverse outdoor recreation activities. Winding, stonewalled roads and fields contribute pastoral charm to New Braintree's landscapes. Scenic views of the surrounding countryside can be seen from several hills in Town.

New Braintree has one of the lowest population densities in the State and retains its agricultural heritage. Most people who live in New Braintree do so because they value these rural qualities. The Town is growing slowly, and proactive planning is increasingly important to preserve the many special landscapes that Town residents enjoy and cherish.

## C. WATER RESOURCES

Water resources in New Braintree take their forms in many ways, both above and below the surface. Rivers and streams, ponds, wetlands, and aquifers are all important to the community. New Braintree's drainage networks of surface and groundwater resources are the direct result of its topography and soils. These networks can be divided into drainage basins, also known as watersheds. A watershed is the land from which rain or snowmelt flows into a waterway. These drainage areas can be subdivided into smaller sub-watersheds of the tributaries to a larger river system. All of New Braintree lies within the Chicopee River Basin. The Chicopee River Basin is the largest of the 27 major drainage basins located in Massachusetts. Though the Chicopee River itself is only 18 miles long, the basin drains more than 720 square miles of central Massachusetts. The basin incorporates the Swift, Ware, and Quaboag River systems. In New Braintree, the lands in the northern and western parts of Town drain to the Ware River Watershed, and the lands in the southern part of Town drain into the brooks that flow into the Quaboag river Watershed. Details on these watersheds and on the other water resources listed below can be viewed on the Water Resources Map (Part 1), located on page 32.

### SURFACE WATER

#### *Ware River*

The Ware River enters New Braintree from Barre, north of Wheelwright's Hardwick village where it forms the Town boundary with Hardwick. From this point it flows south and out of New Braintree near the Hardwick village of Gilbertville. A short section of the river lies in the part of New Braintree between the Towns of Hardwick and Ware. This major river is one of the largest rivers in Worcester County.

The Wheelwright pool is that section of the Ware River north of the dam in the Hardwick village of Wheelwright. This impounded area has extensive associated wetlands important to a variety of wildlife, most significantly waterfowl and aquatic mammals. The 2016 Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters





classified this area of the Ware River as a Category 5, meaning that these waters are impaired or threatened for one or more uses and require a TMDL (total maximum daily load). This section of the Ware River was classified a Category 5 for the presence of *E. coli*. The Town is also in the process of working with the owner of the Wheelwright Pond Dam to evaluate the impacts of removing the dam on the Ware River. If the dam were removed, it could have positive impacts on both the recreation and environmental health of the Ware River. Removal of the dam could improve the flow of nutrients down the river, and thus improve the riverine ecosystem.

Below Wheelwright the river gradient increases and the river becomes characterized by pools separated by riffle sections. Here the river flows through a mixture of dairy farms and woodland and is met by a number of tributaries. There are few wetlands associated with this stretch of river. Beaver, mink, and otter are common through this section. Because of the abundant fish in this section, it is heavily utilized by fish eating birds including kingfishers, green and great blue herons, migrating ospreys, and bald eagles.

Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife surveys indicate that the Ware River has one of the most diverse fish communities in Massachusetts. This is due to its variety of habitats and the overlapping geographic distribution of a number of species. In neighboring Towns, the Ware River is heavily stocked with brook, brown, and rainbow trout.

### *Winimusset Brook*

Winnimusset Brook rises in wetlands near Padre and West Roads flowing in a northern direction through the relatively undeveloped Winimusset valley. The mid and upper sections are characterized by fairly high gradient while the lower section below Wine Road is of low gradient flowing through a variety of wetlands dominated by beaver ponds. The brook flows under Hardwick Road and ends at the Ware River. Much of the flow of Winimusset Brook is provided by groundwater.

Impoundments along this brook are generally maintained by beavers with the exception of a small pond just north of West Road. This small pond is located on land owned by the State Department of Fish and Game and used to be stocked with trout but no longer is. The numerous beaver ponds provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife including a nesting site for great blue herons.

### *Sucker Brook*

Sucker Brook begins as the outflow of Cusky Pond and flows in a southwesterly direction. The Brook flows under Route 67 and Utley Road and passes through a section of North Brookfield where it meets Meadow Brook. With the exception of beaver impoundments this brook has a relatively high gradient.

Surveys by Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife indicate a diverse fish population dominated by various minnow species. In spite of the warming influence of beaver ponds, groundwater flows allow brook trout to be present in many sections.





### *Meadow Brook*

Meadow Brook begins in New Braintree at the confluence of Sucker Brook and an unnamed stream. It flows in a westerly direction crossing West Brookfield and Madden Roads and enters West Brookfield in the vicinity of Barr Road.

The section of the Brook in New Braintree is dominated by beaver ponds. Large areas of wetlands in the vicinity of West Brookfield Road provide excellent wildlife habitat. The proximity of meadow and corn fields make this area especially valuable for waterfowl.

The steeper stream gradient below Barr Road provides habitat for a variety of fish species. Stream surveys by Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife in the vicinity of Barr Road show an especially productive fish population dominated by various minnow species. Wild brook trout are present. Meadow Brook used to be stocked by the Department of Fish and Wildlife but no longer is.

### *Cusky Pond*

Cusky Pond is located off Worcester Road. This pond of about twenty-eight acres and provides habitat for a large variety of wildlife. It is heavily used as a roosting site for local and migrant Canada geese, as well as a variety of other waterfowl. According to the 2016 Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters, Cusky Pond is classified as a Category 3, meaning that no uses were assessed. The fish population is dominated by chain pickerel, yellow perch, and bullheads.

### *Aquifers*

The major aquifer in New Braintree is in the Ware and Winimussett valleys. This area of subsurface water holds a large volume of clean water, an asset of great importance to the Town. Because the ground water is replaced by water filtering down through the soil overlying the aquifer, protection of this aquifer is very important. Currently this aquifer is tapped by a well that is off West Road, which provides water for the police academy and the elementary school. The Gilbertville Water District also obtains water from the aquifer for Hardwick residents.

## **FLOOD HAZARD AREAS**

The major area of flood hazard is along the Ware River. Flood control is provided by the Army Corps of Engineers' flood control dam at Barre Falls. As mentioned above, the Town is discussing the possibility of removing the Wheelwright Pond Dam. If this dam were removed, the flood hazard caused by the dam could be significantly decreased.

## **WETLANDS**

New Braintree contains a variety of wetlands throughout the Town. This wetland resource has remained somewhat stable in recent decades as protective wetland regulations and regulated growth have served to limit wetland loss. These wetlands provide water purification and a rich biological diversity, as well as





being of critical importance for flood control.

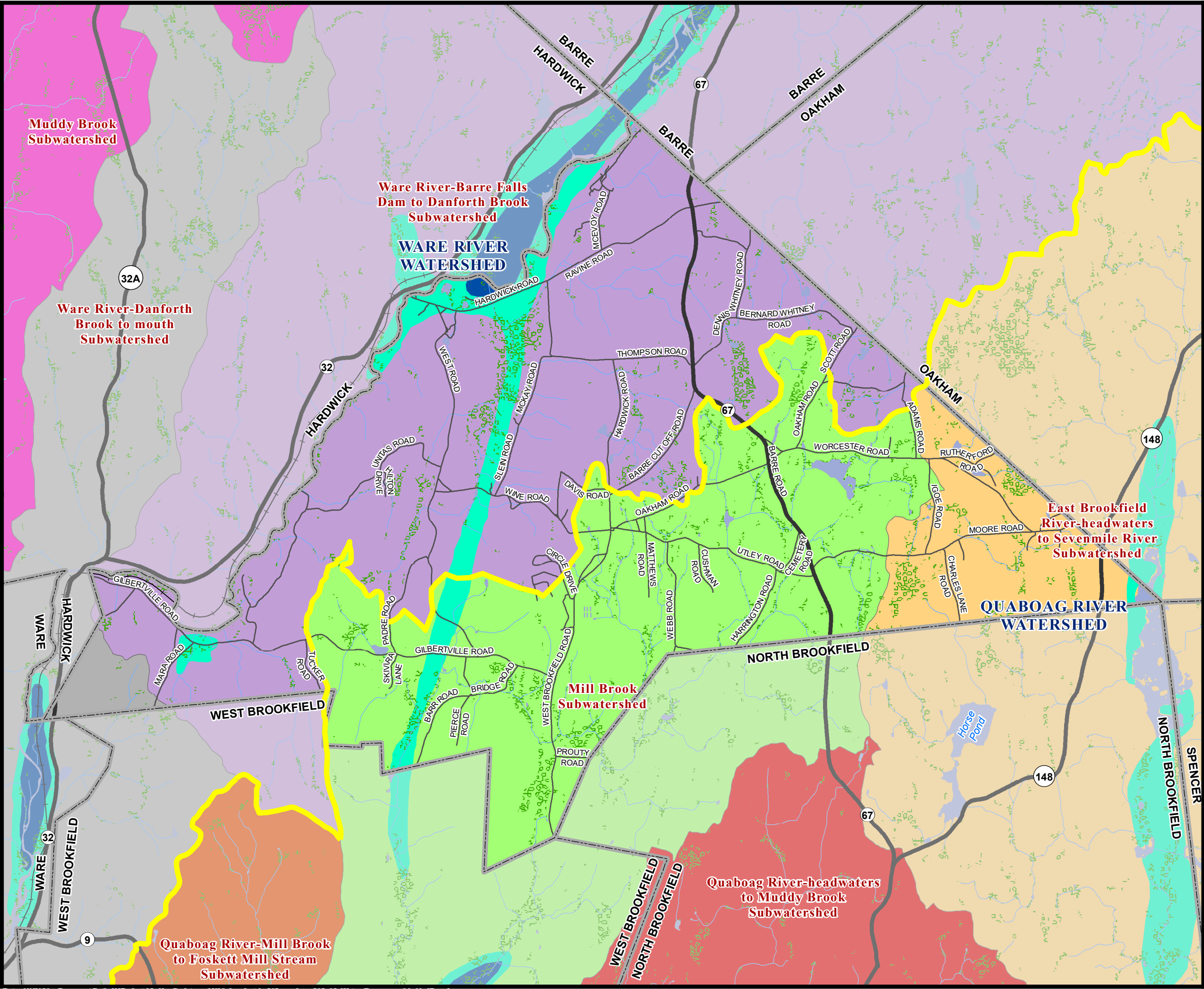
Beaver activity has created new wetland areas over the past decade. Wherever a suitable site exists, beavers may build dams. The flooding of water behind beaver dams and their cutting of trees near their ponds creates areas where there are no live trees. The increased sunlight and water promote the growth of wetland species of plants. After several years at one site, the available food is usually consumed, and the beavers move to a new place. Gradually the dams rot away, the wetland dries up, and another succession of vegetative types moves toward a mature forest. Beavers usually return and begin the cycle again before a fully mature forest develops. This process maintains a rich and varied wildlife habitat next to streams and provides all the other benefits of wetlands as well. Managing water levels in wetlands created by beaver activity, which encroaches upon villages and roadways (especially from blocked culverts), is an ongoing challenge for the Town.

Land use and development patterns determine the quality of the waters that flow out of New Braintree and affect the health of rivers, ponds, and water supplies in downstream communities. State agencies such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation can provide information to help the Town prevent damage to its water resources. Additionally, the Massachusetts Audubon Society and the East Quabbin Land Trust can be a valuable source of wetland protection information.

## WATER SUPPLY

There is no public water supply and no sewer system in New Braintree. Individual private wells, drilled or dug, provide water for houses and other uses. The New Braintree Board of Health has adopted well regulations that help to ensure that all new houses have an adequate supply of good water. In addition to private wells, there is a deep well located off West Road that supplies water for the Massachusetts State Police Academy and the New Braintree Elementary School. The Water Resources Map (Part 2) on page 33 displays the water supply infrastructure in New Braintree.



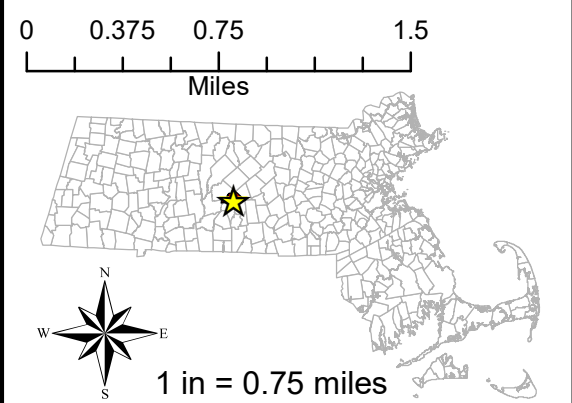


# WATER RESOURCES MAP (Part 1)

Town of New Braintree,  
Massachusetts

## Legend

- Town Boundaries
- Major Road
- Local Road
- DEP Wetlands
- Active Railroad
- Water Bodies
- Streams
- Aquifers
  - High Yield ( > 300 gpm)
  - Medium Yield (100-300 gpm)
  - NRCS HUC Subbasin Boundary
  - NRCS HUC Watershed Boundary
- NRCS HUC Subwatersheds
  - East Brookfield River-headwaters to Sevenmile River
  - Mill Brook
  - Muddy Brook
  - Quaboag River-Mill Brook to Fosskett Mill Stream
  - Quaboag River-headwaters to Muddy Brook
  - Ware River-Barre Falls Dam to Danforth Brook
  - Ware River-Danforth Brook to mouth



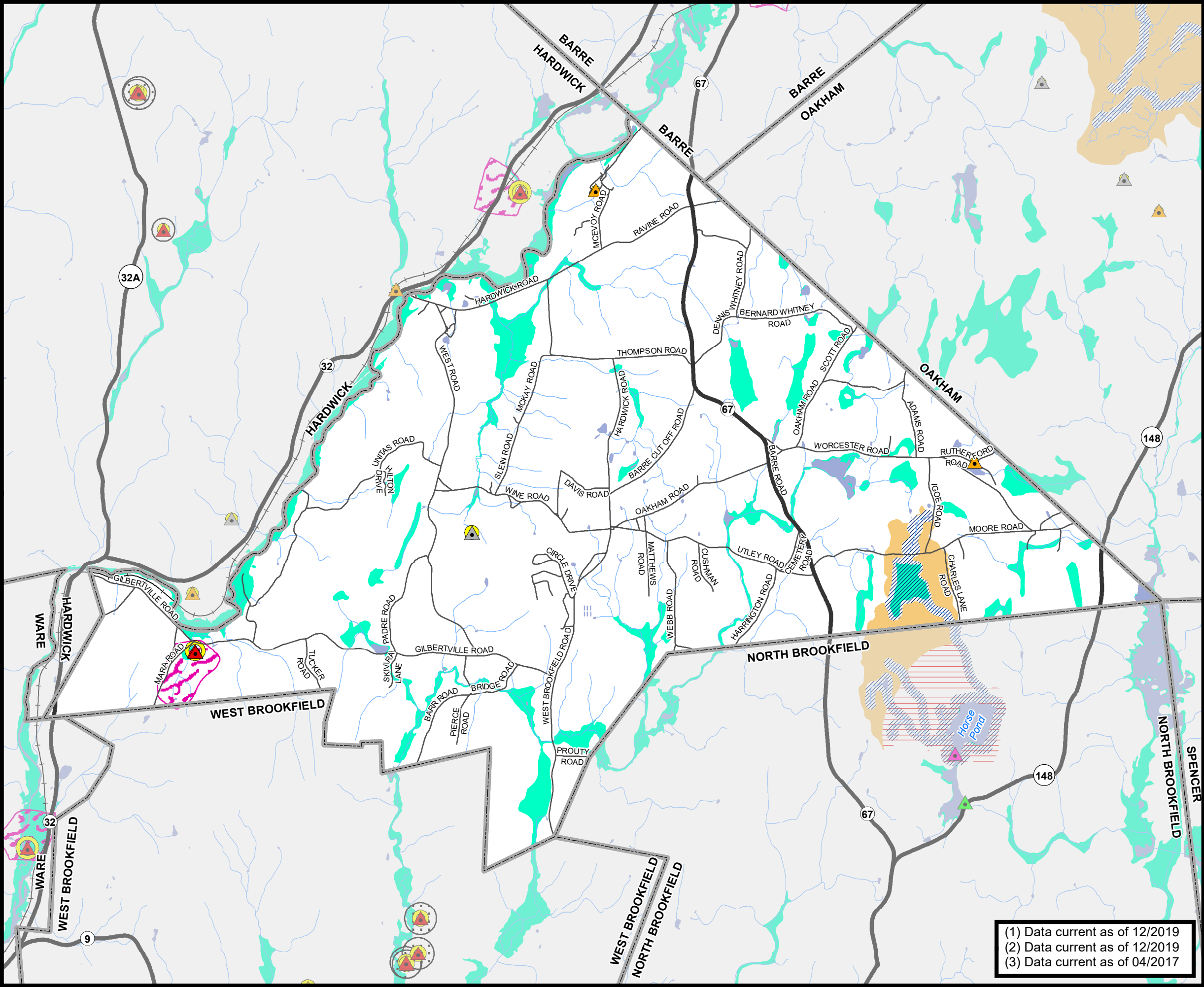
Source: Data provided by the Town of New Braintree, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by  
**CMRPC**  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

One Mercantile Street, Suite 520 Worcester, MA 01608





# WATER RESOURCES MAP (Part 2) Town of New Braintree, Massachusetts

## Legend

- Town Boundaries
- Active Railroad
- Major Road
- Water Bodies
- Local Road
- Streams

### Public Water Supplies (1)

- Emergency Surface Water
- Community Groundwater Well
- Non-Transient Non-community
- Community Surface Water Source
- Transient Non-Community

### DEP Approved Zone I (2)

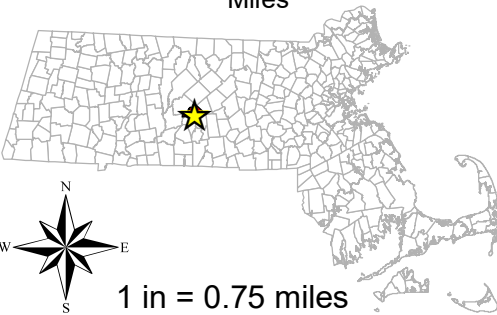
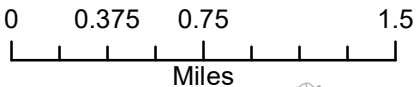
- Approved Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone II) (2)

### Interim Wellhead Protection Areas (2)

- Surface Water Supply Protection Area Zone A (3)
- Surface Water Supply Protection Area Zone B (3)
- Surface Water Supply Protection Area Zone C (3)

### FEMA Q3 Flood Zones (Pre-DFIRM)

- 100-year Flood Area



Source: Data provided by the Town of New Braintree, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by



One Mercantile Street, Suite 520 Worcester, MA 01608

(1) Data current as of 12/2019  
(2) Data current as of 12/2019  
(3) Data current as of 04/2017



## D. VEGETATION

Land use, climate, elevation and aspect, and soils determine the vegetation in every community. New Braintree is situated in the Lower Worcester Plateau ecosystem, which includes diverse wildlife habitats. Secondary growth forests have grown back from times when nearly all of the land was cleared for agriculture and dominated the Town landscape. Most of these forests are on upland sites that are fairly dry and well drained. Deciduous trees, such as oak and hickory; and conifers, such as white pine and hemlock, are common in upland forests. Understory shrubs include witch hazel, striped maple, blueberries, and a variety of herbaceous plants. In addition to upland sites, forested wetlands are found throughout the Town.

The large expanses of agricultural areas in Town offer important habitats for songbirds and waterfowl. Species like bobolink and killdeer rely on open fields for nesting sites. Many declining populations of songbirds use recently abandoned cropland for nesting. These areas provide cover and food sources. Since most of these open lands are privately owned, working with their owners is important to sustaining these resources.

This combination of open and wooded land adds to the rural beauty of the Town. Many forest lands are actively managed by the state or by private owners under the Chapter 61 program. Forestry is an important part of the regional economy.

The Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) protects rare species and their habitats by prohibiting the “take” of any plant or animal species listed as Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern. And the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) maintains this list of rare species. According to the NHESP, the New England Blazing Star, a vascular plant listed as Special Concern, can be found in New Braintree.

## E. FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Habitat type and availability regulates wildlife diversity and abundance. For example, areas that support a variety of wildlife contain plant species that are diverse in age, density, and height. Accordingly, the diversity of wildlife and plants is greatest where large tracts of unfragmented forest meet open farmlands, wetlands, streams, and river valleys. New Braintree is rich in high quality wildlife habitat because of its rural nature, active agriculture, numerous wetlands, and extensive forested areas. The variety of habitat types provides for an abundance and diversity of wildlife.

This diversity of species and habitats provides numerous opportunities for hunting, fishing, photography, bird watching, and other forms of passive wildlife-related activities. Pheasants are stocked at the Winimasset Wildlife Management Area, providing hunting opportunities not provided by native species. Trout are stocked in the Ware River in surrounding Towns, providing expanded fishing opportunity. These



activities are enjoyed by residents as well as numerous visitors drawn by New Braintree's abundant wildlife resource.

Mammals found in abundance in Town include: white-tailed deer, coyote, red fox, raccoon, fisher, mink, bobcat, striped skunk, porcupine, opossum, eastern cottontail rabbit, beaver, muskrat, along with squirrels, moles, voles, bats, shrews and mice. Moose and black bears are increasing in number. Reptiles, including various snakes and turtles, are common, as well as frogs and other amphibians. Many species of birds are abundant, including game birds (such as ruffed grouse and woodcock), waterfowl (such as wood duck and Canada geese) and an array of songbirds. Fishing birds such as osprey, kingfisher and great blue heron frequent the waters of the Town.

## FISHERIES

New Braintree's streams and ponds offer excellent fishing for Town residents and visitors. Stocking programs of the Department of Fish and Game annually release trout into the Ware River in neighboring Towns. Smaller wild brook trout can be found in backwoods streams with a little effort. Most ponds are not stocked, but these fertile water bodies provide good fishing for warm-water species such as bass, pickerel, perch, sunfish, and horned pout.

## RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

As mentioned above, the NHESP is the state agency responsible for the conservation and protection of rare species. The NHESP indicates that four birds, one reptile, one mussel, one vascular plant, and one dragonfly have been observed in New Braintree. Each of these species are detailed in the table below.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Taxonomic Group	MESA Status	Most Recent Observation
Grasshopper Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus</i> <i>savannarum</i>	Bird	T	2006
American Bittern	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	Bird	E	2017
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Bird	T	1990
Sedge Wren	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>	Bird	E	1955
Wood Turtle	<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>	Reptile	SC	2014
Spine-crowned Clubtail	<i>Gomphus abbreviatus</i>	Dragonfly/Damselfly	SC	2016
New England Blazing Star	<i>Liatris scariosa</i> var. <i>novae-angliae</i>	Vascular Plant	SC	1939
Creeper	<i>Strophitus undulatus</i>	Mussel	SC	2017

Table 2. Endangered, Threatened, and species of Special Concern in New Braintree, MassWildlife's NHESP



## VERNAL POOLS

These small ponds appear in early spring and usually dry up in summer. Vernal pools host a unique biotic community because they are fish-less and allow salamanders, frogs, and other species to breed undisturbed by aquatic predators. Additionally, animals that live entirely on land drink from these pools and also use the emergent vegetation for food and nesting materials. These temporary pools form in depressions on frozen ground and store water, which slowly percolates into the soil to replenish the ground water. Certification of pools by the State enables these habitats to be protected from impacts of land development. The NHESP relies on local investigation of vernal pools and has published guidebooks to assist Town boards and residents in documenting their existence. The Town of New Braintree has several Certified Vernal Pools, and even more Potential Vernal Pools all throughout Town.

## MANAGEMENT

Wildlife and fish are impacted by the loss or degradation of their habitats. The Town can have a positive effect by protecting habitats, including wetlands that are important for many animals and birds. By storing water, wetlands also reduce flooding and keep stream flows at higher levels during the dry times, improving the habitats of fish and other aquatic species. The wetlands and river protection review process offers a key means to avoid unnecessary damages to New Braintree's water resources from proposed land uses.

As it grows, New Braintree will be faced with the challenge of meeting the increasing recreational needs of its population. In addition to acquiring land to preserve habitat and provide outdoor recreation opportunities, steps can be taken to manage these resources. These include enhancement of existing habitats, water management practices, stabilization of streams, pollution abatement, and other conservation measures. Guidance and information on these matters is available from many state and federal agencies, as well as non-profit organizations.

## F. SCENIC RESOURCES AND UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS

The Town of New Braintree is fortunate to contain many unique and scenic features that set the Town apart from neighboring communities. The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) database lists 193 sites of historical or cultural importance in New Braintree, MA. The table below gives a breakdown of the various resource types, and the following sections describe these features in further detail. The Unique Features Map, located on page 42, shows these sites, and a more detailed MACRIS report can be viewed in Appendix C.



Resource Type	Amount
Airports	6
Business-Related	9
Cemetery	5
Camps and Schools	12
Farm-Related	61
Houses	80
Municipal	2
Commemorative Plaques/Memorials	2
Religious	2
Structures	3
Undefined Properties	9

*Table 3. New Braintree cultural sites, 2020 MACRIS Database*

## ROADWAYS

The unspoiled beauty of New Braintree’s rural environment is easily identified by any who travel the many roads leading to and from the Town. Route 67, known as the Barre Road is characterized on regional maps as a scenic roadway and is the main concourse through Town. Historically, it exhibited all of the features that the Town hoped to preserve. However, in recent years, a solar field was installed at the corner of Route 67 and Old Turnpike Road. Solar arrays disrupt the scenic landscape present a unique challenge for preserving open space in New Braintree.

Entering the Town from the south on this roadway, there is a tree farm adjacent to the Town line. Contiguous to it is the extensive property of the Merkel family, with cleared fields and stone walls. Immediately beyond is the Howland farm, with 200 acres of open fields, pasture, cattle, and woodland, offering one of the most scenic roadway views in the region. Over the years, artists could be seen painting and sketching the panoramic landscape to the west. The Small family farm abuts to the west and adds to the large tract of cultivated land seen from the roadway. Adjacent is the Evergreen Cemetery, tucked away between pasture and open fields, one of 5 cemeteries beautifully maintained in their characteristic rural settings. The Pollard’s, whose house and barn are visible from Barre Road, have over 200 acres of productive farmland and operate a farm stand that attracts many visitors annually. Immediately to the west, sharing a boundary on Pollards is the Ash Lane Farm, which provides riding lessons, grazing, and stabling for horses.

Continuing north and abutting the Pollard land is the Stillman farm with over 180 acres, providing produce to markets in the region as well as maintaining cattle and other farm animals. The extensive property features a house of historic interest as well as prominent and unspoiled views to the west. The highway marker on the east side of the road indicates the general location of “Wheelers Surprise” to the west. Another substantial working farm is located immediately to the north, Misty View Farm, owned by David





and Rhonda Howe, is part of the panorama indicated by the road marker. The Howes grow plants and produce as well as maintaining a large red deer herd on the property, which attracts many viewers passing through on this roadway.

Further on is more open land owned by Bowman, representing a considerable acreage and featuring a farm stand. The views from this location continue to provide a panorama of the hills and valleys of central Massachusetts. Leaving New Braintree, at the Barre Town line is the Prospect farm, which shares the same vistas to the west and offers viewers entering New Braintree from the north a typical introduction to the agricultural community that continues to operate farms as it has done for 250 years. Every other roadway that enters the Town reflects the same rural, agricultural environment as Route 67, and each represents a dramatic change from the adjacent areas in the surrounding Towns that abut New Braintree.

From West Brookfield, the landscape changes upon entering Town, to a tract of open fields surrounding Walkers farm, with its large acreage and picturesque eighteenth-century house and barn. Continuing north, at the intersection of Prouty Road is the Wespalis Farm and Taylor Farm, the fields of which extend to both sides of the roadway and up to the Gilbertville Road.

From Oakham on Old Turnpike Road, an eighteenth-century salt box in an open field setting is the first house encountered and almost straddles the Town line. As mentioned above, a solar field was constructed along this section of Old Turnpike Road across from this historic home. Worcester Road shares similar woodland and open areas as well as corn fields, and is the access road to Camp Putnam, a fresh-air summer camp serving children from the city of Worcester. Moore Road, approaching from the east, has wetlands visible from the road as well as open farmland and passes the historic house situated on the Hunter farm, the land of which was deeded during the 18th century. It still retains its rural and agricultural link to the past.

From Hardwick, the Ware River serves as a boundary and runs through farmland and forest, parallel to Hardwick Road, offering access to water recreation as well as a beautiful scenic view.

From Gilbertville, immediately upon crossing the boundary from that mill Town, the landscape changes to rural and soon presents open land and the Long Hill Farm which is one-fifth of a mile from the line. The farmhouse and barns overlook the river valley and are surrounded with cleared fields and stone walls. A quarter mile further is situated the Riverside Farm, with 200 acres, barns and outbuildings. The Ware River runs its course paralleling the road for a mile or more, offering a scene of natural beauty, undisturbed by modernization.

## SCENIC LANDSCAPES

New Braintree's various roadways, narrow and winding, penetrate every area of remote backland, revealing fields, wetlands and forests abounding with wildflowers in the spring, crops in the summer,





dramatic color variations in the autumn and large tracts of snow- covered openness during winter. Additionally, many privately held lands have been registered under Chapter 61, and the improvements to forests and fields are significantly altering the landscape in a positive way, reflecting the overall interest and enthusiasm of the Town residents for preserving the natural resources under their stewardship.

### IMPORTANT PEAKS, HILLTOPS AND LANDMARKS

Identified here are some of the region's most notable mountains and natural landmarks, many of which many be viewed from the elevations of the Town's highest peaks.

- Mt. Monadnock, which may be viewed from Tufts Hill (elevation 1167 feet), Howland's Hill (1117 ft.), and land adjacent to the north side of Worcester road.
- Mt. Greylock, which can be viewed from Hunt's Hill (elevation 1103 feet).
- Mt. Wachusett, which is seen from several vantage points at Schur's Farm on Moore Road.
- Ragged Hill, which is viewed from numerous elevations around the Town.
- Ware River, which may be viewed from Hardwick and Gilbertville roads, Sibley Road, and various open areas along its course.
- Ware River Valley, which is seen from Ravine Road and other prominent elevations.

### LOCAL PANORAMIC VIEWS

Additionally, many other locations are accessible to the public and afford wide ranging regional as well as local views of forest, fields, farms, stone walls and prominent landmarks in the immediate vicinity of the Town of New Braintree including the following vantage points:

- Cushman Hill with views to the east and west, including a panorama of the center of Town.
- "Rattlesnakes rocks" with expansive views to the east.
- New Braintree center with views of working farmland to the north, south and east.
- West Brookfield Road, looking north, commanding a picturesque scene of the Town center with its surrounding fields, farms, and open space.

### BODIES OF WATER

The Ware River serves as a natural boundary between Hardwick and New Braintree and it is the only river in the Town. It offers residents and visitors opportunities for canoeing and fishing, as well as providing habitat for the many birds and mammals indigenous to the region. New Braintree has many small ponds





within its boundaries, which include Cusky, Hall's, Hibbard's, Lily, and Mason ponds. Most are man-made and contribute significantly to the environment and biodiversity of the area.

## HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

The center of New Braintree is quaint, picturesque, and historic and remains essentially unaltered from two centuries ago. The Congregational Church, initially built in 1801, renovated later in the century, and rebuilt after being destroyed by fire in 1911, is a "classic" New England wood frame structure with tall steeple and pillars. It sits astride the highest point in the Center, and its steeple can be identified from as far away as the Quabbin Tower in BelcherTown. Directly behind the church is an early cemetery, which exhibits many old slate and stone markers. The Town Common faces the church, and the landscape surrounding the center reflects the continued commitment to agriculture and the rural way of life so treasured by its residents. Views from the Center are sweeping: a large acreage tree farm which abuts the Common, hay fields, corn fields and a fruit tree orchard. Cattle graze on the nearby hills, and historic homes line the roads.

Other historic places include the wealth of archaeological sites in New Braintree. These sites are protected by state law. Three modern buildings have been constructed in the past decade, the Town Hall, New Braintree Grade School, and Leroy Pollard Memorial Library, all of which have been designed to reflect the architectural style of the colonial New England period.

## MARKERS AND MONUMENTS

A road sign on Route 67 indicating an historic event, along with a small monument on West Road has been dedicated to the Pilgrim century battle between settlers and Indians called "Wheelers Surprise", which took place in New Braintree in 1675. Another marker placed alongside Hardwick Road indicates the burial place of a young child, Sarah Rolandson, who was killed by Indians during King Phillips War and is thought to be buried near the site. Both represent significant events in the history of the settlement of this region. There is a marker for King Philip's (alleged) site at Winimusset Management Area. There is also a marker indicating the site of an Indian village at the east end of Bernard Whitney Road.

The Town's five cemeteries were established early in its history and are situated in locations north, south, east, and west as well as in the center of Town. Maintaining their rural character, all remain in a scenic environment, are well cared for and exhibit early and historically interesting markers.

## ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

Native Americans inhabited the New Braintree area dating back approximately 9,000 years, with a regional camp site located beside or near the Ware River. Consequently, there are many archeological/Native American sites located in New Braintree. These sites contain numerous artifacts that provide significant clues about the lives of Native Americans. Stone implements can still be found in these sites, such as





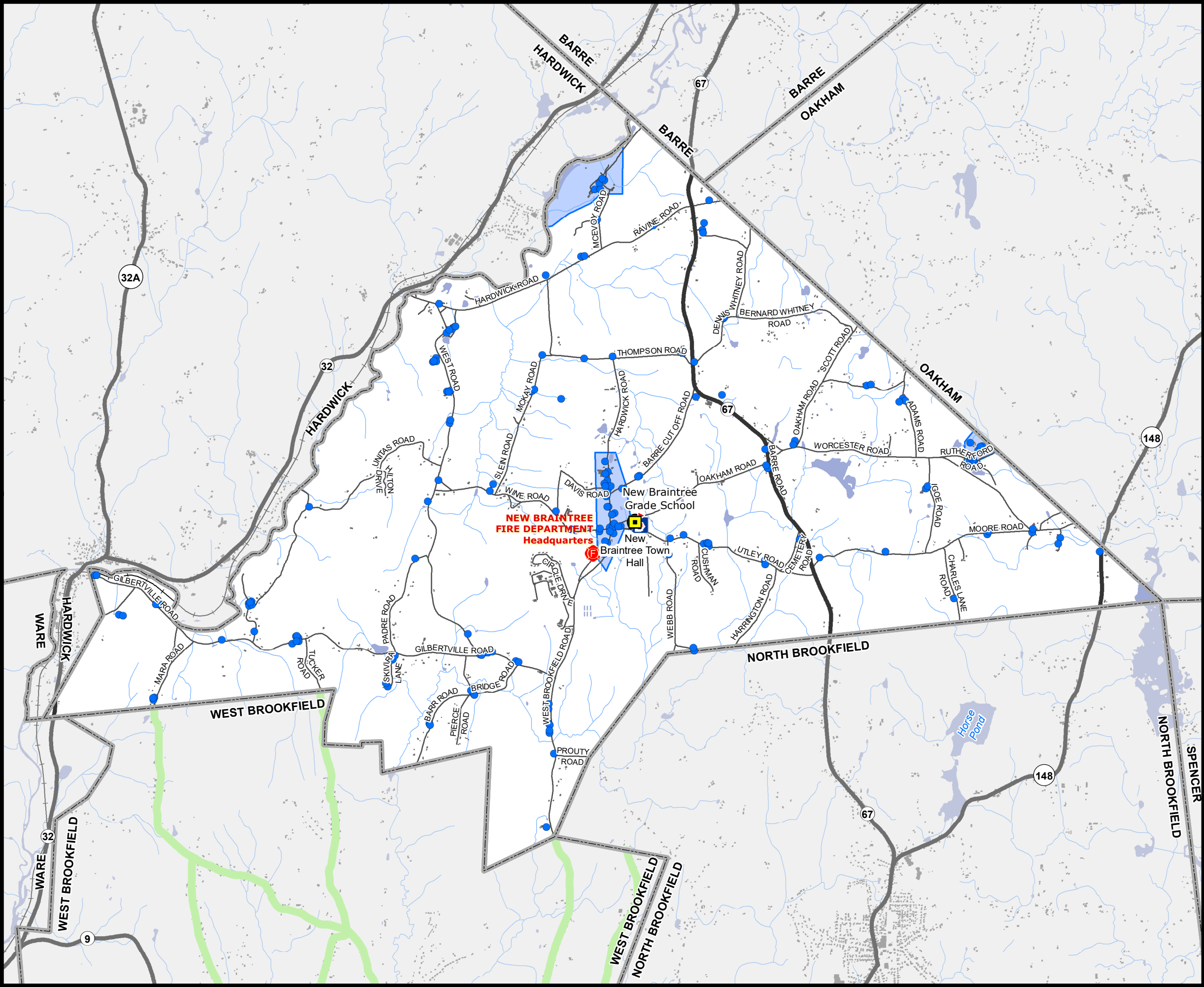
arrowheads, spear points, scrapers, mortise stones, hand hammers, and drills.

Native American archeological sites located on state land are protected and removal of artifacts is prohibited under current state law. Sites on private land do not have protection. Private collectors have obtained permission from private landowners to search for these artifacts. Some of these collectors have donated their collections to the Springfield Museum of Natural History, for all to enjoy.

It should be noted that these donated collections from private hobbyists were not collected in any systematic or scientific manner. The secrets of the origins of Native Americans can only be ascertained by what they left behind. More information about the ancient inhabitants of New Braintree could be better obtained with an organized, official dig. Undisturbed sites should remain protected until such official digs can be planned for the present. Some sites should be preserved for future exploration when new archeological techniques become available.

New Braintree's archeological sites are at risk because they are often located on land that is susceptible to development, and without protection will be lost forever.





# UNIQUE FEATURES MAP

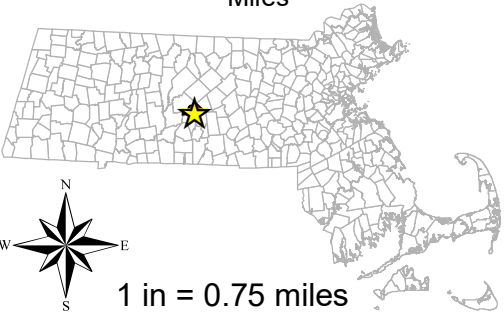
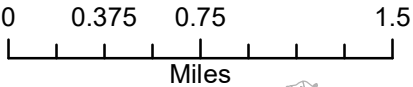
Town of New Braintree,  
Massachusetts

## Legend

- Town Boundaries
- Major Road
- Local Road
- Active Railroad
- Water Bodies
- Streams
- Town Hall
- Public
- Public Library
- Police Station
- Fire Stations

### MHC Historic Inventory

- Inventoried Property
- Inventoried Area



Source: Data provided by the Town of New Braintree, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by



One Mercantile Street, Suite 520 Worcester, MA 01608





## UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, through the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Program developed BioMap2 in order to protect the state's biodiversity. The BioMap2 identifies Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape. Core Habitat notes key areas that are important for long-term persistence of rare species, as well as areas that contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. Critical Natural Landscapes identify large areas of natural landscape that are minimally impacted by development. In New Braintree, there are 1,242 acres of Core Habitat and 162 acres, or 13.1%, of Protected Core Habitat. There are also 1,149 acres of Critical Natural Landscape and 165 acres, or 14.4%, of Protected Critical Natural Landscape.

### *Core Habitat*

The Core Habitat identified in New Braintree is comprised of one Exemplary or Priority Natural Community, five Wetland Cores, four Aquatic Cores, five Vernal Pool Cores, and five Species of Conservation Concern Cores. Aquatic Cores are described as intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur. They delineate integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic Species of Conservation Concern. Wetland Cores are defined as the least disturbed wetlands in the state within undeveloped landscapes. They have intact buffers, little fragmentation or other stressors associated with development, and are most likely to support and maintain critical wetland functions. And Vernal Pool Cores are defined as small, seasonal wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat, especially for amphibians and invertebrate animals. The Core Habitat in New Braintree are described below:

#### **Core 1677 (Aquatic Core)**

This 146-acre Aquatic Core is located in the southern part of New Braintree near Meadow Brook.

#### **Core 1689 (Wetland Core and Vernal Pool Core)**

This 157-acre habitat features located along the border of New Braintree and North Brookfield, near Route 67, features both Wetland and Vernal Pool Core.

#### **Core 1690 (Wetland Core)**

This 14-acre Wetland Core is located in the southern part of New Braintree at the North Brookfield border.

#### **Core 1695 (Wetland Core)**

This 32-acre Wetland Core is located in the southeastern part of New Braintree on the border of North Brookfield near North Brook.

#### **Core 1712 (Wetland Core)**

This 46-acre Wetland Core is located in the southeastern part of New Braintree near Moore Road.





#### **Core 1744 (Vernal Pool Core)**

This 136-acre Vernal Pool Core is located in the eastern part of New Braintree just above Core 1712.

#### **Core 1748 (Species of Conservation Concern)**

This 38-acre Core Habitat features habitat ideal for Northern Harriers and is located in the central part of New Braintree near Wine Road.

Northern Harriers are hawks and establish nesting and feeding territories in large shrublands with nearby wet meadows, grasslands, and abandoned fields. They are listed as Threatened in Massachusetts and are very sensitive to human disturbance.

#### **Core 1750 (Species of Conservation Concern)**

This 41-acre Core Habitat is located in the central part of New Braintree just west of Core 1748 and is also ideal for Northern Harriers.

#### **Core 1767 (Species of Conservation Concern)**

This 20-acre Core Habitat is also ideal for Northern Harriers and is located in the central part of New Braintree just north of Core 1748 and 1750 near Winimuset Brook.

#### **Core 1770 (Vernal Pool Core)**

This 101-acre Vernal Pool Core is located in the eastern part of New Braintree near Oakham Road.

#### **Core 1794 (Vernal Pool Core and Priority & Exemplary Natural Communities)**

This 210-acre Core Habitat, located in the eastern part of New Braintree on the border of Oakham, features both Vernal Pool Core and Black Gum Swamp, a Priority Natural Habitat. Black Gum Swamps are characterized as forested hummocky peatlands that occur in poorly-drained basins. Black gum is usually an abundant or dominant canopy tree in this habitat, with some red maple, growing on the hummocks. This results in a relatively open canopy. This particular Black Gum Swamp is of excellent quality, with no invasive exotics, and is in a good landscape setting.

#### **Core 1802 (Vernal Pool Core)**

This 73-acre Vernal Pool Core is located in the eastern part of New Braintree, next to the Oakham border, north of Core 1770 and northwest of Core 1794.

#### **Core 1807 (Priority & Exemplary Natural Communities)**

This 5-acre Core Habitat, located in the northern part of New Braintree on the Hardwick border near Ware River, features Level Bog, a Priority Natural Community. Level Bogs are dwarf-shrub peatlands, and generally have pronounced hummocks and hollows in sphagnum moss. These wetland communities are very acidic and nutrient-poor because the peat isolates them from nutrients in groundwater and streams. This particular Level Bog is located around a pond in a wetland/upland complex divided by a railbed and





road and has good species diversity.

#### **Core 1824 (Vernal Pool Core)**

This 143-acre Vernal Pool Core is located in the eastern part of New Braintree on the Oakham border just north of Core 1802.

#### **Core 1837 (Aquatic Core, Wetland Core, and Species of Conservation Concern)**

This 1,010-acre Core Habitat, located in the northern part of New Braintree near the Ware River and east of Core 1807, features Wetland Core, Aquatic Core, and is considered ideal habitat for Creepers, Triangle Floaters, Arrow Clubtail, Larvae of Spine-crowned Clubtail, Zebra Clubtail, American Bitterns, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Northern Harriers. Creepers are freshwater mussels that inhabit low-gradient reaches of small to large rivers with sand or gravel substrates. They are listed as a species of Special Concern in Massachusetts. Triangle Floaters are freshwater mussels also commonly found in low-gradient river reaches with sand and gravel substrates. Arrow Clubtail are large dragonfly whose aquatic nymphs inhabit medium to large, swift-flowing sandy-bottomed rivers and occasionally large lakes. The larvae of Spine-crowned Clubtail dragonflies are aquatic and burrow just under the top of silty to sandy bottom sediments in medium to large rivers. Spine-crowned Clubtail are listed as species of Special Concern in Massachusetts. Zebra Clubtail dragonflies inhabit sand-bottomed streams and small rivers with riffles as larvae, and adults feed over the same streams. Surrounding upland forests provide protection while adults reach sexual maturity. American Bitterns are heron-like birds that nest primarily in large cattail, tussock, or shrub marshes. They are listed as Endangered in Massachusetts and are very sensitive to disturbance. And Grasshopper Sparrows nest in dry grasslands. They are listed as Threatened in Massachusetts and are very sensitive to changes in plant composition.

#### **Critical Natural Landscape**

The Critical Natural Landscape identified in New Braintree is comprised of one Landscape Block, five Wetland Core Buffers, and three Aquatic Core Buffers. Landscape Blocks are large areas of intact predominately natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds. Pastures and power-line rights-of-way are also included in landscape blocks. Large Landscape Blocks are more likely to maintain dynamic ecological processes.

#### **CNL 856 (Aquatic Core Buffer, Landscape Block, and Wetland Core Buffer)**

This 2,158-acre Critical Natural Landscape, that is located in the southwestern part of New Braintree along the border of West Brookfield, features Aquatic Core, Wetland Core Buffer, and a Landscape Block.

#### **CNL 860 (Wetland Core Buffer)**

This 57-acre Wetland Core Buffer is located in the southern part of New Braintree along the North Brookfield border.





#### **CNL 867 (Wetland Core Buffer)**

This 99-acre Wetland Core Buffer is located in the southeastern part of New Braintree right on the border of North Brookfield.

#### **CNL 872 (Aquatic Core Buffer)**

This 27-acre Aquatic Core Buffer is located in the western part of New Braintree on the border of Hardwick and Ware.

#### **CNL 874 (Wetland Core Buffer)**

This 162-acre Wetland Core Buffer is located in the southeastern part of New Braintree just north of the North Brookfield border.

#### **CNL 897 (Wetland Core Buffer)**

This 12-acre Wetland Core Buffer is located in the northern part of New Braintree near the Ware River.

#### **CNL 903 (Aquatic Core Buffer and Wetland Core Buffer)**

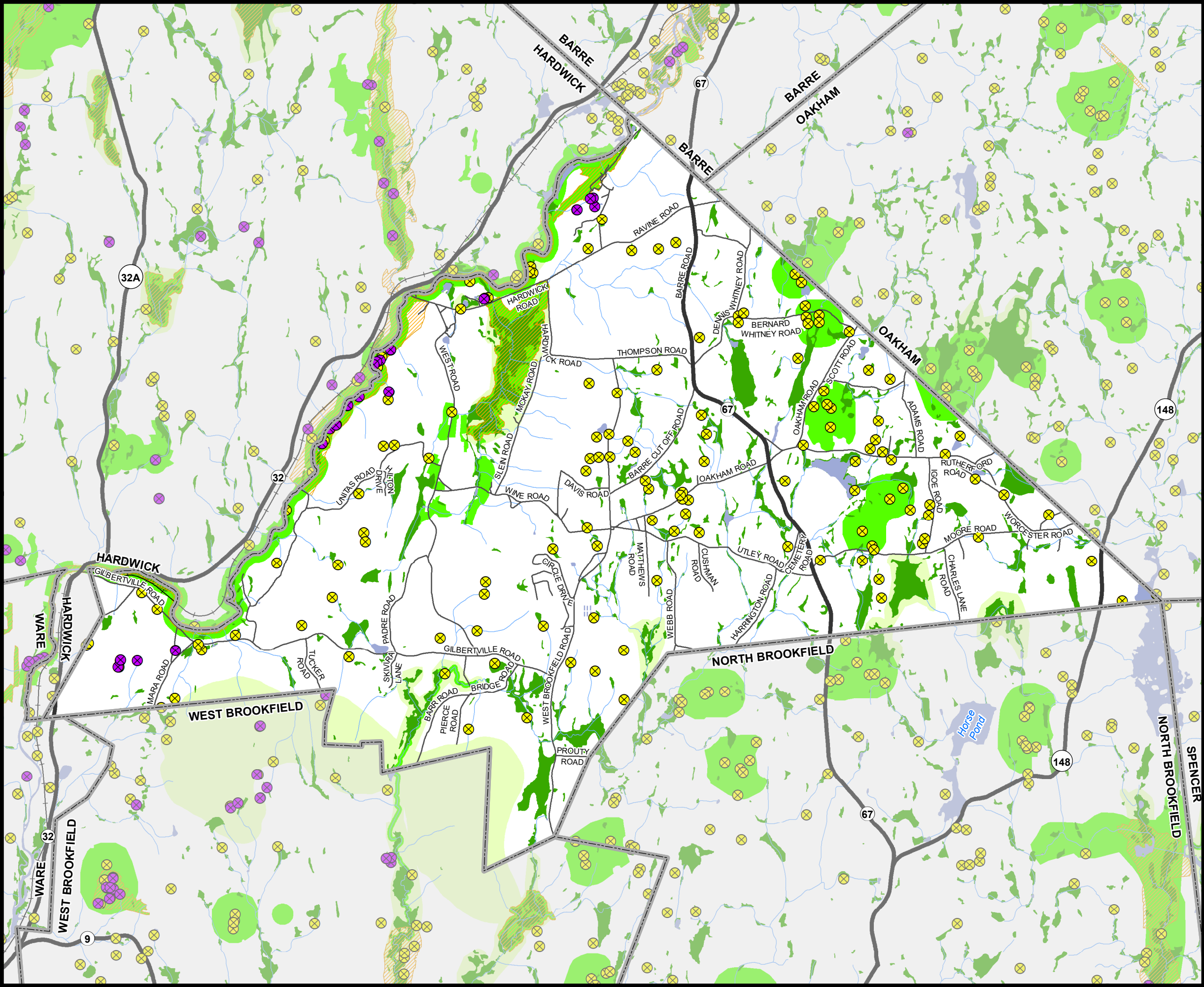
This 560-acre landscape is located in the central part of New Braintree below the Ware River and features Aquatic Core Buffer and Wetland Core Buffer.

New Braintree's identified Core Habitat areas represent a biodiversity of forests, wetlands, rivers, and streams. These areas include Pierce Hill, Ragged Hill, and woodlands along the Ware River. These tracts provide wildlife corridors and habitat for many species that would vanish without access to these natural areas.

Wetland habitats identified on the BioMap2 are located along Sucker Brook and Meadow Brook. These areas also provide a sanctuary for migrating waterfowl. All the wetlands in Town provide an often-unrecognized benefit to downstream areas by filtering the run-off from heavy rains and functioning like a sponge to mitigate floods. Wetlands also store water during periods of drought.

The New Braintree side of the Ware River contains a 200-foot buffer zone that is almost intact. There is very little development along this zone. This outstanding and unique environmental resource provides recreational opportunities for fishing and canoeing. The high-quality water in the Ware River supports many species of game fish including brown, rainbow and brook trout. The Habitat Features Map on the following page shows these unique environments in more detail, and the New Braintree BioMap2 report can be found in Appendix D.



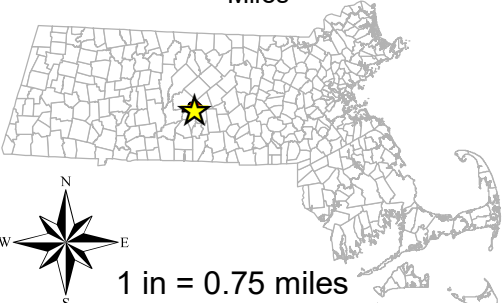
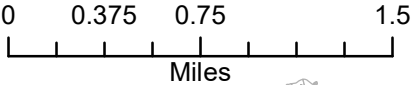


# HABITAT FEATURES MAP

Town of New Braintree,  
Massachusetts

## Legend

- Town Boundaries
- Major Road
- Local Road
- NHESP Certified Vernal Pools
- NHESP Potential Vernal Pools (1)
- NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare (2017)
- MassDEP Wetlands
- NHESP/TNC BioMap2 Core Habitat
- NHESP/TNC BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape
- Active Railroad
- Water Bodies
- Streams
- (1) NHESP Potential Vernal Pools:  
Not equivalent to Certified Vernal Pools



Source: Data provided by the Town of New Braintree, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by  
**CMRPC**  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

One Mercantile Street, Suite 520 Worcester, MA 01608





## G. ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

### SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

New Braintree does not have an active landfill or transfer station. Waste disposal is handled by a number of private trash collectors. Recycling is offered to residents by fee at the Hardwick recycling center.

### OLD DUMP SITES

At least one old dump site is known to exist off of West Road. No known environmental problems have been associated with this site. Many former private sites are associated with older homes. These were generally household or farm related dumps, and no specific problems have been noted.

### UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS (UST)

USTs in New Braintree are generally associated with farms. No problems with active or abandoned USTs have been reported in recent years.

### EARTH REMOVAL

A permit from the Planning Board is required for the removal of topsoil, loam, sand, or gravel. No native topsoil or loam shall be removed from the limits of the Town of New Braintree.

### UNREGISTERED MOTOR VEHICLES

Unregistered, stored motor vehicles are not only unattractive, but can create environmental problems as well. The Town Bylaw allows for no more than one unregistered motor vehicle unless they are stored out of sight.

### NONPOINT POLLUTION SOURCES

Nonpoint source pollution is pollution that enters from a variety of sources which are difficult to identify. Nonpoint sources in New Braintree include: 1) motor oil, gas and salt from roadways; 2) agricultural runoff that can transport pollutants such as animal manure, fertilizers, pesticides, and eroded sediments; 3) household runoff which may include a variety of pollutants.

Animal manure is of concern due to the nitrogen content of the manure. Erosion and deposition of sediments contributes to the filling of water bodies, as well as the carrying of pesticides, fertilizers, and other harmful materials to the water with sediment particles. Involvement of New Braintree citizens to help reduce nonpoint pollution includes: responsible use of chemicals, reduction of chemical use, erosion control practices, and proper storage and application of animal manure. The federal Natural Resources Conservation Service provides information and support to farmers regarding best management practices and Integrated Pest Management.





## POLLUTION CONCERNS RELATED TO PREVIOUS INDUSTRY

The historic industries in New Braintree were generally not associated with long term pollution concerns. These industries included milling, cheese-making, broom-making, and similar activities. Pollution sources related to these or other historic industries have not been noted. There are two potential sites of concern in the Hardwick village of Wheelwright, which may have some effect on the Ware River.

## STATE POLICE ACADEMY

The increased traffic and general uses at the Academy have raised a number of issues that have been addressed by the Town and State Police. These include light pollution from perimeter lighting and noise pollution from the firing range.

## OFF ROAD VEHICLE USE

Due to the rural nature of New Braintree, the use of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles is a primary source of recreation. Problems associated with use of these vehicles include erosion, noise and air pollution, animal harassment, and property damage. Education of users and enforcement of state and local regulations are key to reducing impacts.

## WILDLIFE

Beaver activities have become a source of considerable property destruction. Flooding of agricultural areas, woodlands, and roads has had considerable economic impact to property owners and the Town.

Growing populations of coyote, moose, and bear may also become concerns in the future if these animals visit residential backyards, thereby increasing their contact with humans and domestic animals. This contact is encouraged by Town residents feeding the wildlife or inadvertently through outdoor composting and birdfeeders, which may lead to dangerous interactions for either people or their pets. Another wildlife concern is the potential for contracting Lyme disease from deer ticks during outdoor activities.

## WASTEWATER TREATMENT

Most sewage disposal systems in New Braintree are septic tanks with leach fields. In general, each house or business has its own individual septic system. Many areas of New Braintree are not well suited to septic systems because there is either ledge or groundwater near the surface.

Septic tanks should be pumped out every two years. Previously, septage pumped from local septic tanks could be dumped in approved septage drying beds. Tighter regulations now require septage to be trucked farther away, and the higher cost may discourage people from doing this as frequently as necessary even though good maintenance is cheaper than replacing a failed septic system. To help prevent problems, the Town can provide information that encourages homeowners to properly maintain their septic systems.





## CLIMATE CHANGE

As the climate continue to change, New Braintree will be faced with more frequent and intense flooding events, winter storms, and high wind events, as well as increased periods of drought. All of these hazards could have disastrous effects on New Braintree's residents, open spaces, and infrastructure. The Town of New Braintree is not a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Community. The Town should consider utilizing the MVP grant program in order to become a more climate resilient community.





---

INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION  
AND RECREATION INTEREST

---

Section Five

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



## SECTION 5: CONSERVATION AND RECREATION LANDS

New Braintree's conservation areas and extensive agricultural lands enhance its rural character and environmental quality. These areas offer Town residents recreation opportunities, provide essential habitat for wildlife, and help maintain the health of streams, ponds, and water supplies. This section provides an overview of these lands, and the Open Spaces Inventory Map on page 60 displays a visual of these areas. Table 4 summarizes the total amount of conservation and recreation lands according to ownership.

Open spaces in Town can be categorized as either protected or unprotected. Fully protected lands are permanently committed for conservation and recreation uses, while other areas may have only limited or temporary protection. Table 5 breaks down the amount of protected and non-protected conservation land by ownership.

Owner Type	Acres	%
(N) Private Non-profit	43.205085	0.01839
(P) Private for profit	1408.3984	0.59933
(S) State	898.33994	0.38228
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2349.9434</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 4. Conservation and recreation land in New Braintree, CMRPC

Owner Type	Acres	%
<b>(N) No Protection</b>	<b>43.56</b>	<b>1.85%</b>
(N) Private Non-profit	43.21	1.84%
(P) Private for profit	0.35	0.02%
<b>(P) Protected</b>	<b>2,306.38</b>	<b>98.15%</b>
(P) Private for profit	1,408.04	59.92%
(S) State	898.34	38.23%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,349.94</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 5. Protected and non-protected conservation land, CMRPC

### A. CONSERVATION AND PASSIVE RECREATION AREAS

#### STATE PROPERTIES

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game own many properties throughout New Braintree. These properties are listed in the table below and are described further in the following sections.

Owner Type	Acres	%
Cusky Pond Access	23.69929	2.6%
Oakham WMA	51.769301	5.8%
Sucker Brook WMA	1.717504	0.2%
Ware River WMA	138.00044	15.4%
Whortleberry Hill WMA	1.71901	0.2%
Winimusset WMA	681.43439	75.9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>898.33994</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 6. State-owned conservation land in New Braintree, CMRPC





### *Cusky Pond Access*

The Cusky Pond Access is a parcel managed primarily for providing recreational access to Cusky Pond.

### *Oakham Wildlife Management Area (WMA)*

The Oakham Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 742-acre property located within New Braintree and Oakham. Based on MassGIS data, approximately 52 acres of the Oakham WMA is in New Braintree off Worcester Road. The field are mowed annually and some of the fields are active in agriculture through lease agreements. The upland hardwood forest habitat provide opportunity to hunt white tailed deer, wild turkey, grey squirrel, ad cottontail rabbit. There are also many opportunities to hunt waterfowl and trap aquatic furbearers, particularly at Wolf Meadow. Ring-necked pheasants are also stocked at the property. During pheasant season, all hunters are required to wear a “hunter orange” hat, except with night hunting or while hunting waterfowl from within a blind or boat. Visitors are not allowed to hunt before sunrise or after sunset, except for the hunting of racoons and opossums between 9 pm and 3 am. In addition, this property provides many great birding opportunities. There are nest boxes on the property to help monitor wood duck productivity.

### *Sucker Brook Wildlife Management Area (WMA)*

The Sucker Brook Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 103-acre property located in New Braintree and North Brookfield. About 2 acres of the Sucker Brook WMA lie within New Braintree. The property has hardwood ridge and active agricultural fields. There are some small overgrown fields and old apple trees mixed into the habitat. Parking for this property is located on Murphy Road and can accommodate two vehicles. The Sucker Brook WMA is a small compared to the other WMA and only has limited hunting opportunities. Beaver and other aquatic animals around Sucker Brook and the beaver impoundment areas can be viewed

### *Ware River Wildlife Management Area (WMA)*

The Ware River Wildlife Management Area is a 185-acre property within the Towns of New Braintree and Hardwick. The portion of the Ware River WMA that lies within New Braintree is approximately 138 acres of heavily wooded uplands. The parcel slopes steeply from Unitas Road to the Ware River and is bisected by the Ware River and an active railroad. The habitat is dotted with hardwoods and eastern hemlock stands that give way to agricultural fields. Access to the WMA in New Braintree can be obtained from Unitas Road, though there is no designated parking.

This property has an active agriculture lease on the fields, so the Ware River WMA is currently being farmed. In addition to agricultural uses, the Ware WMA also provides opportunities for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Hardwood ridges and agricultural fields provide habitat for white-tailed deer, coyote, and grey squirrel hunting. The river’s edge and wetland areas also provide opportunities for American woodcock and racoon hunting. While stocking currently does not occur within New Braintree, the Department of Fish and Wildlife stock other areas along the Ware River with trout annually. The





river frontage also provides good opportunities to view aquatic animals and waterfowl.

### *Winimusset Wildlife Management Area (WMA)*

The Winimusset Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a 681-acre property within New Braintree. It is located off Hardwick, Ravine, and Slein Roads. The Winimusset WMA is a diverse property containing fields, apple trees, hardwood lined ridges, conifer stands, and a large beaver meadow. Extensive areas of shallow march and beaver ponds exist along the course of Winimusset Brook, which follows the western border of this property. There is a paved parking lot for ten vehicles available near the intersection of Hardwick Road and Ravine Road that allows access to the northwest section of the property. Parking for another ten vehicles is located near the intersection of Hardwick Road and Thompson Road, and this grants access closer to the center of the property.

The habitat at the Winimusset WMA has been managed to reclaim overgrown fields and release crowded apple trees. Some of these fields are leased annually for agriculture. Additionally, hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities are plentiful at this property. The hardwood ridges provide habitat for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and gray squirrels, and the open fields provide opportunities to hunt upland birds, gray and red fox, and eastern coyote. Waterfowl, American woodcock, and racoon can also be hunted in the beaver meadow.

The Winimissuet WMA also stocks pheasant on the property each year. During pheasant season, all hunters are required to wear a “hunter orange” hat, except with night hunting or while hunting waterfowl from within a blind or boat. Visitors are not allowed to hunt before sunrise or after sunset, except for the hunting of racoons and opossums between 9 pm and 3 am.

### *Whortleberry Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA)*

The Whortleberry Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA), also known as the West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area (WMA), is a 324-acre property within New Braintree and West Brookfield. The Whortleberry WMA is primarily in West Brookfield, with less than 2 acres lying in New Braintree. The land consists of hardwood ridges, open fields, and reclaimed fields. Mill Brook flows through the WMA. Parking is located on Wickaboag Valley Road and can accommodate up to four vehicles. The land has been managed to reclaim overgrown fields and for open space. Active agriculture is leased on these fields. The Whortleberry WMA also provides hunting opportunities for whitetail deer, wild turkey, grey squirrel within the hardwood ridges, and American woodcock within the river edge and open fields. This WMA also stocks Ring-necked Pheasants during the open pheasant season. During pheasant season, all hunters are required to wear a “hunter orange” hat, except with night hunting or while hunting waterfowl from within a blind or boat. Visitors are not allowed to hunt before sunrise or after sunset, except for the hunting of racoons and opossums between 9 pm and 3 am.



### *Massachusetts State Police Academy*

The Academy lies entirely in New Braintree, and it is located off West Brookfield, Gilbertville, and Wine Roads. West Brookfield Road divides the property into east and west sections. The east section consists of diverse habitat with mixed hardwood forest predominating. Other habitat includes agricultural and abandoned fields, wetland and beaver ponds, and some areas of pine forest. Wildlife includes whitetail deer, red and gray fox, coyote, cottontail rabbit, and beaver. Game birds include ruffed grouse, woodcock, pheasant (stocked) and various waterfowl. The east section is informally open to the public and recreation uses include hunting and hiking. The west section includes the police academy training area. This area and associated property are closed to public access. Habitat here is similar to the east section with more extensive agricultural activity.

### **PRIVATE LANDS**

New Braintree contains private lands that are significant due to size, agricultural, commercial, or recreational use. Some of these lands have important natural resources. Private landowners can take advantage of the tax benefits of the Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B programs, which encourage owners to keep land in large parcels. Specific uses of private lands of interest in New Braintree are described below.

### *Agricultural Lands*

A significant number of acres are used for a variety of agricultural purposes in New Braintree. The view from the center of Town is a panorama of pastures, fields, orchards, and Christmas trees. There are two working dairy farms in Town. Each farm produces milk, hay, and feed corn. These farm acres contain fields, forests, brooks, and wetlands that provide habitat for wildlife.

New Braintree has a number of truck farms that produce a variety of vegetables and fruits. These products are sold at various markets in central Massachusetts. One of these farms has a green- house production facility that grows annuals and perennials, also for sale in local markets. Two farms grow large hay crops for sale to local farms and other regional markets. In addition,

Owner Type	Acres	%
Bures MLCT APR	111.5928	0.08543
Howe Charles F APR	122.5548	0.09382
Howe David E APR	60.8491	0.04658
McCarthy	200.0257	0.15312
Morin APR	96.91154	0.07419
Murray	128.3957	0.09829
Pollard Farm APR	170.7744	0.13073
Small	113.4706	0.08686
Stillman	15.64693	0.01198
Stillman Farm	15.82252	0.01211
Walker Farms APR	38.59582	0.02955
Waugh APR	44.22978	0.03386
Waugh Farm	86.46205	0.06619
Waugh Raymond A APR	100.976	0.0773
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1306.308</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7. Farmland with Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, CMRPC



there are two orchards that produce apples and peaches, and another farm that produces cranberries.

Nursery products are grown on three farms in Town. One farm grows Christmas trees and its grounds include a maple syrup production facility and a retail farm stand. A second farm grows a variety of in-ground trees for residential and commercial markets. The third farm is a container nursery growing a variety of woody ornamentals and other stock for residential, commercial, and conservation restoration markets. Some farmlands have Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR). There are fourteen parcels that are protected by the state Agricultural Preservation program. Table 7 on the previous page lists these parcels and their acres.

### *Forested Lands*

Uninterrupted tracks of woodlands dot the landscape of New Braintree. Some of these forested lands abut wildlife management land and provide wildlife corridors for various species. The backyards of many private homes are located next to these forested acres affording the homeowners privacy and easy access to wooded trails and glens that are just a few short steps from the back door.

Owners manage forests for harvest and produce fine logs, cord wood and fiber products for local and regional markets. Cutting plans detailed by the District Forester ensure continued production. These forests are complete native ecosystems that provide habitats for wildlife and protect several important watersheds.

### *Water Resource Lands*

The Gilbertville Water District well and the State Police Academy well are located on high-yield aquifers that are important areas for protection. Part of the Horse Pond watershed is located on protected land in New Braintree. The Ware River corridor is another multi-purpose water resource.

### *Chapter 61 Lands*

Some landowners participate in voluntary Chapter 61 programs that benefit forestry, agriculture or open space uses. The table below displays the amount of acreage characterized as Chapter 61 land. Owners of ten acres or more who manage their land for forestry uses can enroll in Chapter 61, which allows a 95% reduction in property taxes. Owners of five or more acres can enroll in Chapter 61A if they use their land for agriculture, or they can enroll in Chapter 61B if their land is used for open space and recreation purposes.

Owner Type	Acres	%
CH61	718.93	10.18%
CH61A	5,765.36	81.61%
CH61B	580.63	8.22%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7,064.92</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Table 8. Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B lands, CMRPC*

Land in Chapter 61A is assessed at its value for agricultural or horticultural uses, which results in property tax reductions (the state Department of Revenue determines values for 61A land). Table 8 breaks down the acreage of Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B lands in New Braintree.





Chapter 61B programs allow a 75% reduction in property taxes. Communities have the right of first refusal on Chapter 61 lands if owners sell their properties or convert the land to residential, commercial, or industrial uses (unless it is a residential use for a family member). Many parcels in Town are assessed under Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B. Owners who sell their property for development must pay the Town a portion of the lower taxes paid while participating in Chapter 61. Private stewardship of lands preserves open fields, productive forests, and stream valleys throughout Town. Often, Chapter 61 lands have been owned by families for generations and have important places in New Braintree’s history. The Town’s right of first refusal is an important conservation opportunity. To be prepared, the Town should have a policy and a well-defined process for working with a Chapter 61 landowner who decides to divest the property.

B. ACTIVE RECREATION AREAS AND FACILITIES

TOWN PROPERTIES

Active recreation in the Town has been traditionally centered on the school and adjacent playing field. At present the only permanent equipment is located on the baseball field that attracts both school and non-school related baseball. Adjacent swings, two gymnastic climbing bars and a small basketball court are available for use by the community but require upgrading. Newly added seating provides areas for convenient viewing of these activities. The absence of facilities for sports, such as tennis, volleyball, and football, has not been emphasized by the Townspeople in past surveys and is not apt to be supported by New Braintree’s limited budget. The limited amount of Town owned land that is allocated for organized recreation, such as team sports, issues a challenge to the community. The table below depicts the amount of Town-owned open space and recreation lands in New Braintree.

Name or use	Managing Agency	Est. Acres	Current Uses	Recreation Potential	Condition	Public Access	Zoning	Status
Cemeteries	Cemmetery Commission	9.8	6	None	Good	Yes	ARR	Unprotected
Town Common	Select Board	0.2	20	Limited	Good	Yes	ARR	Protected
New Braintree Grade School	School Department	1	15	Limited	Excellent	Yes	ARR	Unprotected
Town Office Building	Select Board	7.9	20	High	Good	Yes	ARR	Unprotected
Highway garage	Select Board	2.6	20	None	Good	No	ARR	Unprotected





Recreation activities, such as the Town’s occasional Fair, could be enhanced and expanded in order to take advantage of and draw attention to our agricultural base while continuing to utilize the Town’s playing fields. This potential should be explored by a subcommittee focused on Agricultural events. Recreation in the Town focuses on the use of trails, open space, hunting and fishing, and boating on the Ware River. The lack of activities for seniors was indicated in the survey, and this shortcoming may be addressed by formalizing and expanding the regional trail system. Additional educational programs, stressing nature-based activities, could be very helpful to seniors who cannot participate in winter sports on the open space available in the Town. Programs of this type are low cost, could cover many interesting topics, and could facilitate senior participation in outdoor activities. These educational programs could be presented in the school at various times throughout the year.

The establishment of a “trails” sub-committee helped provide information about the historical Bay Path Trail system that passes through New Braintree. Matters of access through private lands and potential funding for the clearing of inaccessible links on the trails has been researched by this sub-committee. The Bay Path rail is in need of signage throughout Town.

Another activity to be coordinated by the Open Space committee includes the preparation of information on the many archeological sites within the Town’s boundaries. Many pre-historic as well as more recent Native American settlement locations have been identified and still yield relics of the past.

Finally, the Historical Commission and Society are very active and hold the key to the Town’s past, its monuments, and important sites. Community interest in the preservation of interesting buildings, places and past events often leads to participation in activities that enhance the quality of life in Town.

## PRIVATE RECREATION LANDS

The open fields, productive forests, sheltered glens, brooks, streams, and the Ware River are home to diverse fish and wildlife and provide ample hunting and fishing opportunities for avid sports enthusiasts. The Ware River offers canoeing and kayaking for individuals and families.

### *The Mass Central Rail Trail*

The Mass Central Rail Trail is close by and many hikers take advantage of this scenic trail. In October 2015, the East Quabbin Land Trust opened up a full three-mile section of the Mass Central Rail Trail. This particular section of the rail trail is available for passive recreational uses and to allow access to the Ware River. Many species of wildlife can be observed along the trail including otter, deer, bear, and coyotes. Parking at the Mass Central Rail Trail is located at the location of the former New Braintree train station and the intersection of Hardwick and West Roads.

The Mass Central Rail Trail is close by and many hikers take advantage of this scenic trail. Many of the survey respondents listed the Central Mass Rail Trail as one of their favorite areas for accessing open space





and recreation. Other hiking trails that meander through New Braintree offer additional recreational fun.

### *Camp Putnam*

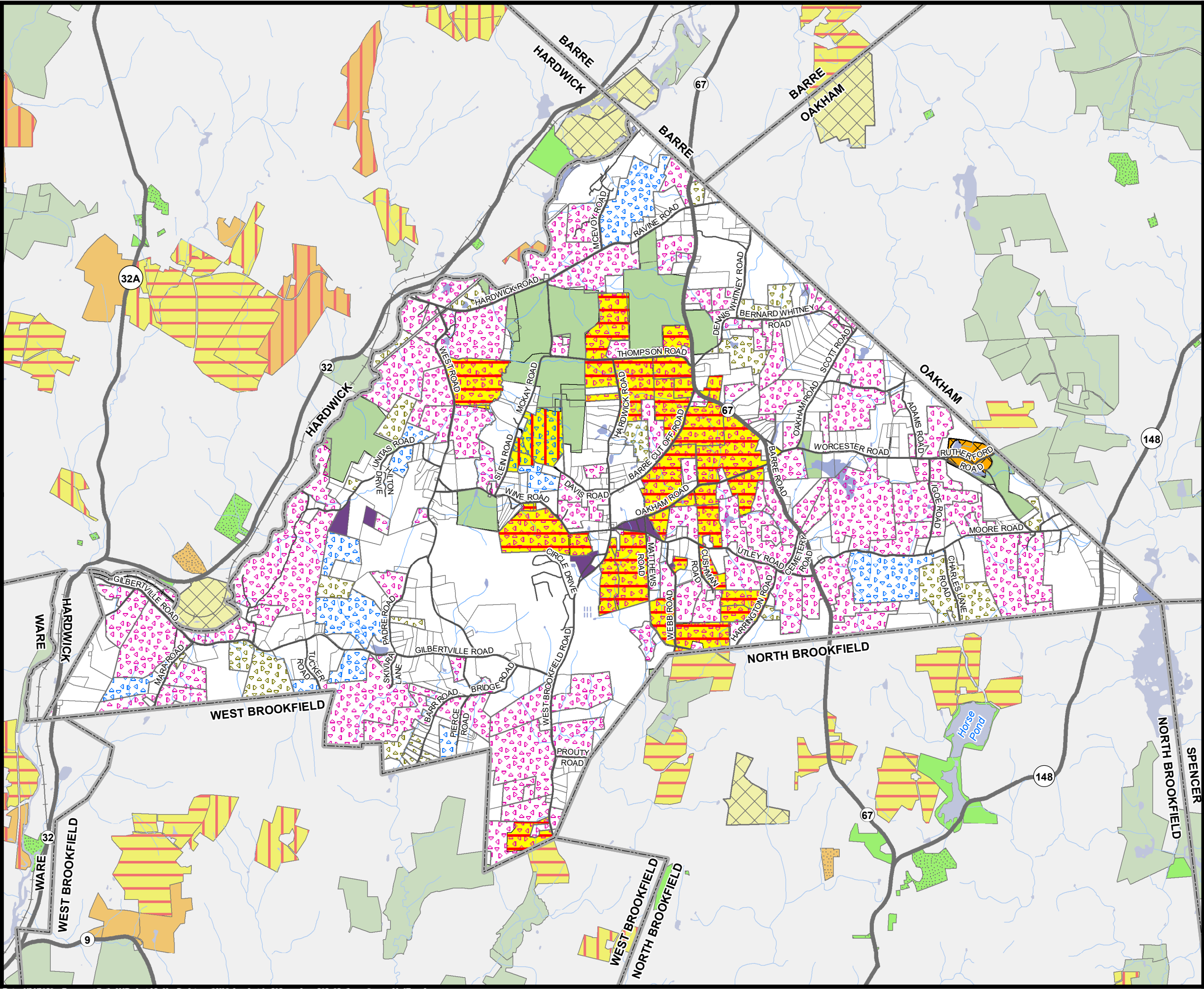
Camp Putnam is a private summer camp that has been serving the children of central Massachusetts for over 70 years. Camp Putnam provides children a true camp experience that encourages and promotes emotional, social, intellectual, and personal discovery in a safe and structured environment. Recreation activities include boating, outdoor sports, arts and crafts, and swimming.

### *Commercial Uses of Private Lands*

Commercial land use in New Braintree includes some interesting and innovative industries. Equestrian centers, a commercial deer farm, gravel pits, an airport, and several farm stands are a few examples of the types of businesses in Town. Many landowners invested in tracks of land in years past. As land values increase, these investments are paying off as landowners sell three-acre house lots to families that are eager to build homes and enjoy small Town living.

The unique character of New Braintree benefits from privately owned lands that offer recreational, commercial, and agricultural prospects now and in the future.





# OPEN SPACE INVENTORY MAP

Town of New Braintree,  
Massachusetts

- |                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Open Space Ownership</b> | <b>Level of Protection</b> |
| Federal                     | Perpetuity*                |
| State                       | Limited                    |
| Municipal                   | None                       |
| Private                     |                            |
| Non-Profit                  |                            |
- \* Open space listed as "Perpetuity" will only show a solid Ownership color.

- Open Space data from MassGIS and current as of 02/2020
- |                      |                                       |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Chapter Lands</b> | Conservation Restriction              |
| Chapter 61           | Agricultural Preservation Restriction |
| Chapter 61A          | Municipal Owned Land                  |
| Chapter 61B          | Major Road                            |
| Town Boundaries      | Local Road                            |
| Water Bodies         | Active Railroad                       |
| Streams              |                                       |
- 0 0.375 0.75 1.5  
Miles



Source: Data provided by the Town of New Braintree, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), massDOT and the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division.

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

Produced by  
  
One Mercantile Street, Suite 520 Worcester, MA 01608





---

## COMMUNITY VISION

---

### Section Six

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



## SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION

### A. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

This Open Space and Recreation Plan is intended to serve as the comprehensive guide on matters of conservation and recreation for Town boards and New Braintree citizens over the next five years. The Plan also enables New Braintree to be eligible to apply for state and federal financial assistance to accomplish Town conservation and recreation projects.

This planning process enhances the Town's long-term commitment to the conservation and recreation needs of Town residents. In May 2020, the Open Space Committee published a 22-question survey on the Survey Monkey platform that focused on open space and recreation issues. Links to the survey were posted on the Town's website and on various social media pages. In addition, the Committee distributed the survey through a Town-wide email blast. Flyers were also mailed to all 429 households in New Braintree. These flyers included a description of the survey, a link to the survey, and a QR code that, when scanned, would pull up the survey on a smart phone. Paper copies of the survey were delivered to residents on an as needed basis. The survey was open to collect responses from May 1<sup>st</sup> – May 31<sup>st</sup>. A total of 87 residents returned their surveys, representing approximately 8% of New Braintree's population. Survey responses were tabulated, and answers to open-ended questions were compiled and reviewed.

The Open Space Committee carefully reviewed survey results and used this information to identify the Open Space and Recreation Goals below, as well as to assess the community needs described in the next section of this Plan.

### B. STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS

A pastoral landscape of rolling farmlands and forests combined with its small-Town character makes New Braintree an attractive community. Respondents to the 2020 Open Space and Recreation survey strongly agree that the Town's rural qualities and natural resources are important. More than 90% of respondents believe that it is either very or somewhat important to preserve historic places and sites, farmlands, forests, wildlife habitats, and scenic areas. Open space for motorized vehicle trails was deemed unimportant by the majority of respondents.

More than 76% of respondents indicated that they would favor zoning changes that protect open space and more than 71% of respondents would vote to allocate Town funds to acquire or otherwise conserve more open space. Additionally, more than half of the respondents would vote to pay 1-2% more in real estate taxes to fund open space protection.

Approximately 85% of survey respondents were either very or somewhat supportive of protecting open



space in New Braintree to preserve the Town's rural character, to preserve unique scenic areas, to preserve historic sites, and to provide areas for passive recreation. Respondents were also supportive of preserving the Town's water resources and protecting habitat for the wide diversity of flora and fauna in New Braintree.

Analysis of the responses suggests that residents favor small businesses, such as arts and crafts, farming, and home-based enterprises, which complement the Town's character. Approximately 99% of respondents favor or strongly favor farming, nurseries, and forests.

New Braintree residents seemed satisfied with existing recreation opportunities. However, over 60% of the survey respondents felt that recreational opportunities were less-than-adequate for teenagers and disabled persons. More than 80% of respondents agreed that additional hiking and skiing trails and conservation areas are needed in New Braintree. Additional biking trails, picnic areas, playgrounds, and hunting and fishing areas were also deemed favorable.

This community input helped the New Braintree Open Space Committee to identify four broad goals for the 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan:

- ❖ Preserve the rural character of New Braintree.
- ❖ Protect farmlands, forest resources, wetlands, and wildlife habitats.
- ❖ Improve recreation opportunities for all age/demographic groups.
- ❖ Protect valuable water resources from adverse impacts.





---

## ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

---

### Section Seven

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



# SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

## A. SUMMARY OF RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS

Resource protection is based upon the need to preserve natural and cultural resources that are finite in quality, such as wetlands, rivers, aquifers, historic places, and scenic areas. When these resources are damaged, they are not easily replaced. Responses to the 2020 Open Space and Recreation survey strongly favor the preservation of the New Braintree’s rural character and environmental quality.

In order to preserve open space in New Braintree, survey respondents indicated that they are willing to:

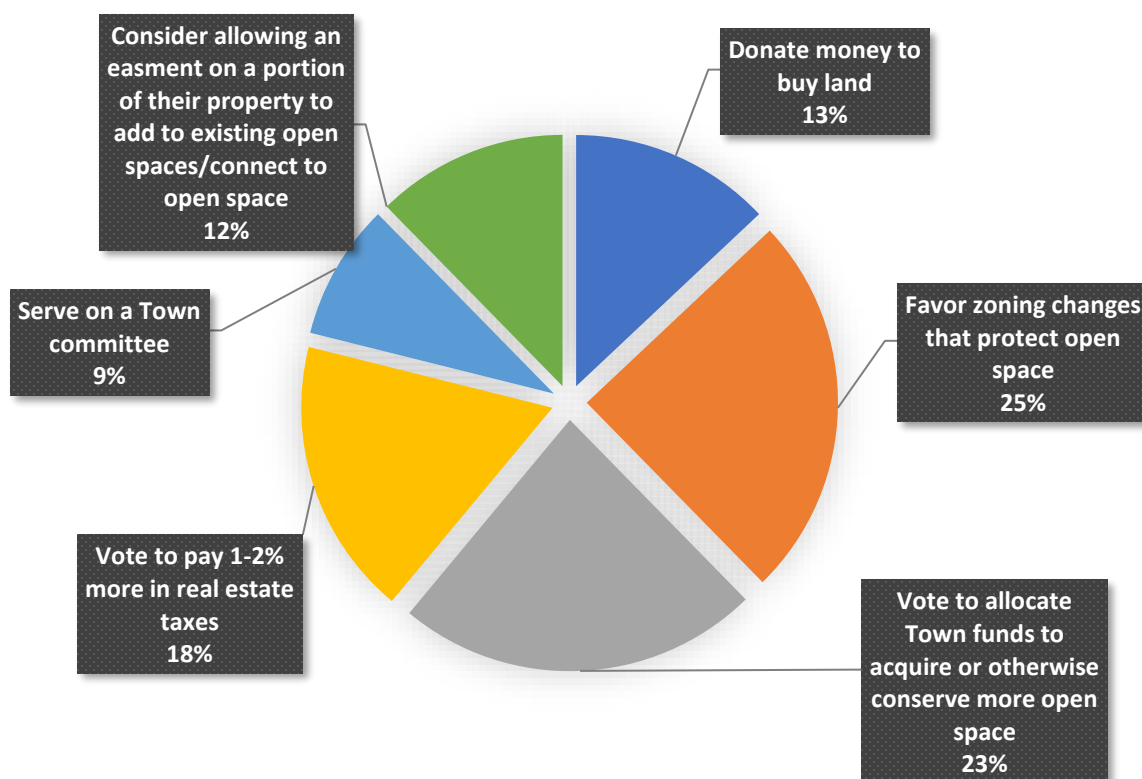


Figure 5. Actions to preserve open space, 2020 OSRP Community Survey

The majority of survey respondents want to protect the health of local streams, ponds, and water supplies. The preservation of natural buffers along waterways protects water quality, as well as the wetlands, wildlife habitats, and floodplains, which are closely linked with aquatic ecosystems. Vegetated “riparian corridors” reduce pollution and keep streams cooler - thus sustaining oxygen levels and more diverse ecosystems. The health and abundance of fish is directly related to the presence of these stream buffers.





Amphibians and mammals also need undisturbed riparian corridors to travel through their home territories, migrate seasonally, and reproduce successfully. To address this need, the Town can carefully administer the Wetlands Protection Act and the Rivers Protection Act to preserve lands beside waterways.

Some ponds have weed problems that are partly due to nutrient loading and sedimentation from street runoff and other pollution sources. Streamside buffers will slow the eutrophication process that affects ponds and reduce the potential long-term costs for weed control. There are ongoing needs for information to help residents prevent common sources of nutrients, as well as to advise pond abutters about techniques to manage aquatic vegetation. The state's Lakes and Ponds Program offers expertise and funding that can help improve the health of water bodies.

Watershed lands that replenish local brooks and the groundwater that supplies drinking water for Town residents are potential resource protection concerns. Prevention of road drainage problems can avoid damages to valuable water resources. In addition, community information programs can help homeowners to maintain their private wells and their septic systems.

Preservation of farmlands is another need identified by the community survey. The historic Wespalis Farm was noted as farmland suitable for preservation. The Wespalis Farm has over 30 acres of prime agricultural soils and contains a wildlife corridor and interior forest habitat.

Likewise, forest land adds to the Town's economy and scenic character. The Town can assist private owners to enhance their stewardship of open lands that sustain the rural character, water quality, and wildlife habitats in Town. As part of this effort, parcels eligible for state Agricultural Protection Restrictions or for preservation by private land trusts need to be identified.

Additionally, preservation of New Braintree's scenic and historic resources is another community concern. The Town can designate local "scenic roads", as well as work with the neighboring Towns to retain the rural qualities of Route 67 and the Ware River Valley. Historic buildings and sites contribute greatly to New Braintree's charming character, and nearly all of the survey respondents favor the protection of these community resources.

## B. SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

New Braintree residents enjoy their open spaces and recreation resources. Local attractions include: the school fields and playgrounds, the Winimuset Wildlife Management Area, and the Ware River. Hiking trails on private lands are also popular, and the farms in Town are enjoyed by both residents and tourists, especially during fall foliage season. Other conservation and recreation areas are less frequented, which suggests that people may be less familiar with these resources.

The Town should consider recreational facilities that serve all age groups. Less than half of the survey





respondents feel recreational opportunities are adequate for senior citizens, and two-thirds feel that teenagers and physically challenged residents have less-than-adequate recreational opportunities.

Preservation of open spaces affords opportunities to address recreation needs of Town residents. For example, the acquisition of land beside the Ware River can preserve access to this popular waterway, in addition to protecting water quality and wildlife habitat.

A conservation/recreation complex can preserve important habitats and provide hiking trails, fishing, and other facilities that can attract visitors to Town. Tourism is becoming the largest sector of Massachusetts' economy. The availability of open spaces and recreation can create greater opportunities for arts and crafts, agriculture, and home businesses, which are favored by more than 90% of the community survey respondents.

## C. MANAGEMENT NEEDS, POTENTIAL CHANGE OF USE

At present, there are few maintenance and management needs due to the small extent of Town lands. Nearly all of the conservation and recreation lands in New Braintree are managed by state agencies or private owners. If the Town acquires lands in the future, there may be needs to provide handicapped access, as well as to install signage that identifies the locations and the permitted uses of conservation and recreation areas.

New funding sources are important for the acquisition of open spaces and the development of recreation facilities. To address residents' strong interests, New Braintree can consider adopting the Community Preservation Act or other mechanisms that can provide the financial resources to preserve special places. The Community Preservation Act is tool that can be used to help communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. The Town can also consider working closely with the East Quabbin Land Trust and other conservation groups to help implement this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

In addition to acquiring land, the Town can use tax-title parcels to address open space and recreation needs. Options include the transfer of tax-title lands for recreation uses, and the designation of funds from the sale of tax-title properties for acquiring and maintaining Town conservation and recreation areas.

Zoning offers another means to protect open space and recreation resources. Most of the survey respondents favor zoning changes to preserve open spaces in New Braintree. As part of these efforts, the Town needs to evaluate potential conservation areas to ensure that significant natural resources are protected.

Private stewardship is also important to the preservation of the farmlands, forests, wildlife, and other community resources that are highly valued by residents. The Town needs to have a policy and well-





defined process for working with Chapter 61 landowners who decide to sell their property or convert it to more intensive uses.

Lastly, numerous volunteer Town boards and committees are enthusiastically working on a challenging variety of important community issues. There are always opportunities to improve communications and unify visions among Town boards, committees, and community organizations in order to coordinate efforts for preserving open spaces and enhancing recreation resources.





---

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

---

### Section Eight

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



## SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Proposed goals and objectives are based on the community survey and the needs analysis that is discussed in the preceding section. Objectives are listed under the most closely related goal, but some objectives overlap with other goals. The goals below were introduced in the Community Vision section of the Plan.

### GOAL: PRESERVE THE RURAL CHARACTER OF NEW BRAINTREE.

Objective 1.1 – Protect the scenic qualities of Route 67 and the Ware River Valley.

Objective 1.2 - Preserve historic resources and scenic roads in Town.

Objective 1.3 - Develop tools to manage Town growth.

Objective 1.4 – Foster community participation in conservation and recreation projects.

### GOAL: PROTECT FARMLANDS, FOREST RESOURCES, WETLANDS AND WILDLIFE HABITATS.

Objective 2.1 - Protect wetlands, vernal pools, and rare wildlife habitats.

Objective 2.2 - Preserve private farmlands and forest lands.

Objective 2.3 – Develop financial plan to acquire and maintain conservation lands.

Objective 2.4 – Acquire and enhance conservation lands in Town.

### GOAL: IMPROVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGE/DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.

Objective 3.1 - Increase awareness and enjoyment of recreation resources in Town.

Objective 3.2 - Provide additional recreation programs and facilities for all demographic groups.

Objective 3.3 - Develop financial plan to support recreation improvements.

### GOAL: PROTECT VALUABLE WATER RESOURCES FROM ADVERSE IMPACTS.

Objective 4.1 – Manage watersheds that replenish the brooks and ponds in Town.

Objective 4.2 - Preserve the lands beside rivers and streams.

Objective 4.3 - Protect the Town's ground water supply.





---

## FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

---

### Section Nine

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



## SECTION 9: FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Open Space Plan Committee proposes the following actions to address New Braintree's open space and recreation needs. While each action is shown below according to a specific objective outlined in Section 8, the action will often serve to benefit multiple objectives.

The proposed schedule of actions offers a flexible framework, which should be reviewed annually and modified as needed to respond to special opportunities and resources available to implement this Five-Year Plan.

### GOAL: PRESERVE THE RURAL CHARACTER OF NEW BRAINTREE

#### OBJECTIVE 1.1 – PROTECT THE SCENIC QUALITIES OF ROUTE 67 AND THE WARE RIVER VALLEY.

- Identify priorities and methods to retain character of Route 67 (Planning Board, Years 2-3).
- Establish ad-hoc committee to identify priorities and methods to preserve the Ware River corridor (Conservation Commission, Years 2-3).

#### OBJECTIVE 1.2 - PRESERVE HISTORIC RESOURCES AND SCENIC ROADS IN TOWN.

- Designate scenic roads in Town (Planning Board and Historical Commission, Years 1-2).
- Nominate historic areas for National Register of Historic Places (Historical Commission, Year 1).
- Protect Archaeological sites (Planning Board and Historical Commission, Year 1).

#### OBJECTIVE 1.3 - DEVELOP TOOLS TO MANAGE TOWN GROWTH.

- Form ad-hoc committee to study zoning and other measures designed for rural communities, including "low impact development" bylaws (Planning Board, Years 2-3).

#### OBJECTIVE 1.4 – FOSTER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CONSERVATION AND RECREATION PROJECTS.

- Publicize and distribute this Plan to all Town boards (Open Space Committee, Year 1).
- Form Open Space Committee to carry out proposed actions and schedule annual meeting among Town boards and other agencies, in order to coordinate implementation of Open Space and Recreation Plan (Selectboard, Year 1).
- Work with news media to publicize conservation and recreation issues, including information about beaver management (Open Space Committee, Years 2-5).
- Begin planning process to update Open Space Plan (all Town boards, Year 4).





## GOAL: PROTECT FARMLANDS, FOREST RESOURCES, WETLANDS, AND WILDLIFE HABITATS.

### OBJECTIVE 2.1 - PROTECT WETLANDS, VERNAL POOLS AND RARE WILDLIFE HABITATS.

- Continue enforcement of Wetlands Protection Act (Conservation Commission, Years 1-5).
- Form citizen committee to work with MA Natural Heritage Program to preserve vernal pools and habitats of rare wildlife and plants (Conservation Commission, Year 1).
- Provide guidance on proposed land uses to help owners, developers, and civil engineers to maintain health of wetlands, riparian corridors and rare habitats (all Town boards, Years 1-5).

### OBJECTIVE 2.2 - PRESERVE PRIVATE FARMLANDS AND FOREST LANDS.

- Apply for a LAND grant to acquire the Wespalis Farm and preserve it with either an Agricultural Preservations Restriction or a Conservation Restriction (Conservation Commission, Years 1-2).
- Work with Worcester County Conservation District to help land stewardship and habitat improvements by private owners (Conservation Commission, Years 4-5).
- Identify additional prime farmlands and support applications for Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, Conservation Restrictions, and Chapter 61 programs (Open Space Committee, Years 2-5).
- Define policy and process for working with landowners when Town has the right of first refusal on Chapter 61 lands (Selectboard & Conservation Commission, Year 1).

### OBJECTIVE 2.3 – DEVELOP FINANCIAL PLAN TO ACQUIRE AND MAINTAIN CONSERVATION LANDS.

- Form ad-hoc committee to research options for acquiring and maintaining conservation areas (Finance Committee & Open Space Committee, Years 1-2).
- Ask Town residents for donations of land, funding, and services (Selectboard, Years 3-5).
- Consider adopting Community Preservation Act and/or other funding sources for land acquisition (Selectboard, Finance Committee & Conservation Commission, Years 1-2).

### OBJECTIVE 2.4 – ACQUIRE AND ENHANCE CONSERVATION LANDS IN TOWN.

- Work with landowners and land trusts to identify priorities and to preserve lands through bargain sales, donations, and conservation restrictions (Open Space Committee, Years 4-5).





- Coordinate with state Department of Fish & Game to protect wildlife habitats, hunting, fishing, and conservation areas (Conservation Commission, Years 2-5).

## GOAL: IMPROVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGE/DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.

### OBJECTIVE 3.1 - INCREASE AWARENESS AND ENJOYMENT OF RECREATION RESOURCES IN TOWN.

- Consider creating information display at Town Hall or Library (Library Committee, Year 3).
- Form ad-hoc committee to expand recreational programs and events (Open Space Committee, Year 2).

### OBJECTIVE 3.2 - PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RECREATION PROGRAMS & FACILITIES FOR ALL DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.

- Form trails committee to develop trails connection plan, improve trails and work with agencies on trail links with other Towns (Open Space Committee, Year 1).
- Provide ADA compliant access to recreation facilities (ADA coordinator, Years 1-5).

### OBJECTIVE 3.3 - DEVELOP FINANCIAL PLAN TO SUPPORT RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS.

- Form ad-hoc committee to research options for acquiring and improving recreation areas (Open Space Committee, Years 2-3).
- Research and transfer tax-title parcels for recreation uses (Assessors, Selectboard, Years 4-5).

## GOAL: PROTECT VALUABLE WATER RESOURCES FROM ADVERSE IMPACTS.

### OBJECTIVE 4.1 – MANAGE WATERSHEDS THAT REPLENISH THE BROOKS AND PONDS IN TOWN.

- Encourage private owners to participate in land stewardship programs (Conservation Commission, Years 3-5).
- Require Best Management Practices (BMPs) to prevent and remedy pollution from proposed land uses and road runoff – obtain technical assistance from Worcester County Conservation District and MA Dept of Environmental Protection (all Town boards, Years 1-5).
- Create high visibility information display at Library about waterways, ponds, wetlands and wildlife habitats in New Braintree (Library Committee, Year 2).





#### OBJECTIVE 4.2 - PRESERVE THE LANDS BESIDE RIVERS AND STREAMS.

- Continue careful enforcement of the Rivers Protection Act to provide vegetative buffers beside streams (Conservation Commission, Years 1-5).
- Identify priorities and methods to protect riverfront lands and public access to the Ware River (Conservation Commission establish ad-hoc committee, Years 2-3).

#### OBJECTIVE 4.3 - PROTECT THE TOWN'S GROUND WATER SUPPLY.

- Create high visibility information display at Town Hall and Library about private wells, septic systems, and underground storage tanks (Library Committee, Year 1).
- Form ad-hoc committee to distribute information on pesticide/herbicide uses and manure (Conservation Commission, Years 1-2)





---

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

---

### Section Ten

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*





## SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENTS

This Open Space and Recreation Plan will be distributed to the Selectboard and Planning Board to be reviewed. Letters of approval from each of these bodies will be included in Appendix F. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission has already reviewed and submitted their letter of approval, which can be located in Appendix F. Other Town boards, such as the Historical Commission, Board of Health, and Conservation Commission, as well as the East Quabbin Land Trust will also be reviewing this plan and will submit additional letters of approval.





---

## REFERENCES

---

### Section Eleven

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*





## SECTION 11: REFERENCES

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. 2000. Development Framework: 2020 Growth Strategy for Central Massachusetts. Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, Worcester, MA.

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. 2001. Buildout Analysis, New Braintree, Massachusetts. Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, Worcester, MA.

Cartographic Associates, Inc. 2003. Property Maps, New Braintree, MA. Assessors' Office, Town of New Braintree, MA.

Division of Conservation Services, MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. 2001. Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements. EOEA/DCS, Boston, MA (available online at [www.state.ma.us/envir](http://www.state.ma.us/envir)).

Division of Conservation Services, MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. 2001. The Open Space Planner's Workbook: Companion to the Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements. EOEA/DCS, Boston, MA (online at [www.state.ma.us/envir](http://www.state.ma.us/envir)).

Fiske, Jeffrey H. 1998. History of New Braintree. Town of New Braintree, MA. Hartel, K.E., D.B. Halliwell and A.E. Launer. 2002. Inland Fishes of Massachusetts. Massachusetts Audubon Society, Lincoln, MA.

MA Department of Housing and Community Services. 2003. Community Profile Web Page: New Braintree, Worcester County, MA ([www.state.ma.us/dhcd/iprofile/140.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/iprofile/140.htm)).

National Cooperative Soil Survey, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. 1998. Soil Survey of Worcester County, MA, Northeast Part. Worcester County Conservation District, Holden, MA.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. 2000. A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools. MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Westborough, MA.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. 2001. MA Natural Heritage Atlas: 2000-2001 Edition.





MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Westborough, MA.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. 2003. Natural Heritage Program Web Page ([www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhenviro.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhenviro.htm)).

Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MAS GIS), MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. July 2000. EOE/MassGIS Base Map Data and Environmental Data, Boston, MA.

Town of New Braintree. 2003. Bylaws and Zoning of the Town of New Braintree, Massachusetts. Town of New Braintree, MA

University of Massachusetts. 2003. MISER Demographic Information Web Page: New Braintree Town, Worcester County, MA ([www.umass.edu/miser/population](http://www.umass.edu/miser/population)).

U.S. Census Bureau Tables. 2000. Selected Social, Labor Force, Income, Housing and Population Characteristics: New Braintree Town, Worcester County, MA.





---

## APPENDIX

---

*New Braintree  
2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan*



# APPENDIX

- A. 2020 Open Space and Recreation Survey
  - Questionnaire
  - Flyer
  - Survey Results
- B. Soils Report for the Northwestern Part of Worcester County
- C. Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System Report, New Braintree
- D. New Braintree BioMap2 2012 Report
- E. ADA Self-Evaluation Forms
- F. Letters of Approval
- G. Maps