OXFORD

2017 – 2027 Master Plan

Oxford Planning Board

Endorsed Draft – July 2017

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Welcome to the 2017 Master Plan for Oxford, Massachusetts! The Master Plan is intended to guide the current and future:

- physical development of Oxford, and
- economic development of Oxford, and
- overall quality of life in the community.

By implementing strategies that can make Oxford a better place in the future, we will make Oxford a better community for all of us.

> **We hope you will join with us in implementing the Master Plan!**

"If you don't know where you're going, you'll wind up somewhere else."

**Yogi Berra,
Baseball Legend
Renowned Punster**

Plan Organization

The Master Plan contains five main sections:

Conditions And Trends	An overview of planning, conditions and trends affecting Oxford, and resident's concerns
Conservation-Related Strategies	Strategies to protect the things that Oxford residents have indicated are important to them (natural resources, open space, community character, etc.)
Development-Related Strategies	Strategies to guide growth or change in ways that will help make Oxford a better community in the future (Downtown, business development, residential development, etc.)
Infrastructure-Related Strategies	Strategies related to services and facilities that will help make Oxford a better community in the future (community facilities and services, transportation, infrastructure, etc.)
Implementation	A future land use plan illustrating the desirable future configuration of the community and a chapter promoting implementation of the Master Plan recommendations.

Things On Our Mind …

1. **<u>Will We Grow Or Not?</u>** - Oxford is at or near a point in its history where the number of residents may grow more slowly (or even decline) due to the aging of existing residents and changing housing preferences among younger generations. At the same time, Oxford has an affordable housing stock and is well located for people and businesses. The net effect of these trends will play out in the near future.

2. **<u>Room For Growth</u>** - Oxford has room for additional residential and business growth so the Master Plan focuses on how this land is zoned and used since this influence the future of the community.

3. **<u>Resident's Concerns</u>** - In a community-wide survey, residents indicated they wanted to:
   - encourage things that contribute to or enhance their quality of life (community facilities, open space, business development).
   - maintain community facilities and services and address transportation and congestion.

Things We Want To Preserve Or Protect

4. **<u>Protect Natural Resources</u>** – Oxford will continue efforts to protect natural resources and will remain focused on protecting water quality since so much of the community relies on wells and septic systems.

5. **<u>Preserve Open Space</u>** – The amount of undeveloped land in Oxford leaves the impression that there is a lot of "open space" even though much of this land could be developed in the future. Oxford will continue efforts to preserve open space to preserve important natural resources and the overall character of the community.

6. **<u>Enhance Community Character</u>** – Oxford will seek to protect resources that contribute to community character and ambience:
   - historic resources (buildings and sites),
   - farms and farming,
   - undeveloped land,
   - scenic views and scenic roads, and
   - community spirit.

   Oxford will also seek to promote community character by more carefully reviewing building and site design as part of new development and by helping address maintenance of residential and business property.

How We Want To Guide Growth Or Change

7. **Enhance Oxford Center** – Oxford will seek ways to strengthen the downtown area and enhance its "sense of place" including:
   - establishing a new zoning district along main streets to encourage mixed use development (business and residential) in a pedestrian-friendly configuration.
   - encouraging residential development in and near the downtown core in order to support a vibrant downtown and meet housing needs.
   - address traffic issues at the intersection of Main Street, Charlton Street, and Sutton Avenue.

8. **Guide Business And Economic Development** – Oxford intends to encourage and promote business and economic growth that benefits the community (jobs, goods and services, tax base). Some areas will be investigated for expansion of business or industrial zoning in order to take advantage of Oxford's locational advantages.

9. **Guide Housing Development** – Oxford intends to guide residential development to protect existing neighborhoods and address future housing needs. Open space development patterns that preserve more open space will be encouraged in outlying areas. The area where _new_ two-family homes can be built will be reduced and a special approval process will be used to make sure that such uses fit in that location. Multi-family development will be encouraged in and near the downtown core in order to support a vibrant downtown and meet housing needs (seniors and younger persons/families).

10. **Promote Sustainability And Resiliency**– Oxford intends to guide growth and change in ways that will make it a more sustainable community (i.e. – "greener") and a more resilient community (i.e. – more adaptable).

Enhance Oxford Center	Guide Business And Economic Development	Guide Housing Development

Services Or Facilities We Want Or Need

11. **Address Community Facilities**– Oxford intends to provide community services and facilities that meet community needs and enhance the quality of life as cost-efficiently as possible. Some municipal facilities (such as the Community Center and the Building Maintenance Facility) are highlighted for more immediate attention. Needs for improvements at other facilities are also identified so that the needs can be addressed as funding permits.

12. **Improve Transportation Systems**– Oxford intends to address transportation issues in order to address problem areas and enhance the overall quality of life in the community. This includes the lack of connecting roads, problem intersections, and other roadway conditions. The Master Plan also encourages pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements.

13. **Improve Utility Infrastructure**– Oxford intends to encourage the provision of adequate utility infrastructure to meet community needs. This includes the expansion and improvement of water supplies and the expansion of sewer services, especially since the same porous area in the center of Oxford is being used for water supply and septic disposal.

How We Will Make It Happen

14. **Implement The Plan**– Oxford intends to implement the Master Plan as time and resources permit. Many recommendations can and will be implemented for little or no expense. Oxford is considering establishing a "Plan Implementation Committee" made up of representatives of local boards and commissions as a way to promote and coordinate implementation of Master Plan strategies and recommendations.

15. **Preliminary Priorities**– Participants in the Master Plan process identified the following strategies as ***the highest priorities*** for implementation:
    - Encourage Economic Development (page 64)
    - Maintain and Enhance Piped Utilities (page 108)
    - Address Community Facility Needs (page 84)
    - Implement The Plan (page 117)
    - Guide Business Development (page 65)
    - Strengthen And Enhance Downtown (page 54)
    - Protect Water Quality / Water Resources (page 25)
    - Guide Industrial Development (page 66)
    - Address Overall Roadway Circulation (page 92)
    - Address Downtown Traffic Issues (page 56)

INTRODUCTION
1

Overview

Welcome to the 2017 Master Plan for Oxford, Massachusetts!

This Master Plan reflects an overall vision for the future of Oxford based on a comprehensive planning process undertaken in 2016 and 2017. This Master Plan is an advisory document intended to guide conservation, development, and infrastructure activities in Oxford over the next decade or so.

The Master Plan recommends policies and action steps to help attain the overall vision for the future. While circumstances and priorities may change over time, these policies and action steps are things that the community can do to enhance the community and the quality of life in Oxford in the future.

The Plan summarizes the overall consensus of what was considered desirable for Oxford and its residents. The Master Plan was prepared by a Master Plan Update Committee made up of representatives from local boards as well as residents of the community. These efforts were guided by a community survey and a number of community meetings conducted to get input and feedback from residents and businesses.

"Long-term planning [is] crucial in tipping outcomes to-wards success or failure."

Jared Diamond
Author

Conservation-Related Strategies	Development-Related Strategies	Infrastructure-Related Strategies

Smart Growth

The following icon is used throughout the Master Plan to identify strategies considered "smart growth" by the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance.

SMART GROWTH

Food For Thought

The following icon is used throughout the Master Plan to identify issues which may be emerging or which may require further thought or investigation.

food for thought

As indicated, the preparation of a master plan is required under State law.

**EXCERPTS FROM MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS CHAPTER 41 –
Section 81 D – Master Plans**

A Planning Board shall …

- make a master plan of such city or town or such part or parts thereof as said board may deem advisable and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan.

- conduct an interactive public process, to determine community values, goals and to identify patterns of development that will be consistent with these goals.
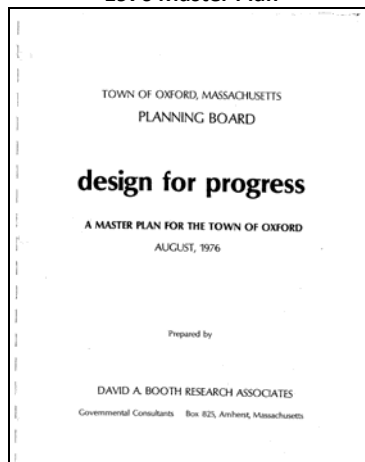
The Plan shall …

- be a statement … that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality.

- be internally consistent in its policies, forecasts and standards.

Oxford has a history of preparing Master Plans over the years. However, the most recent _**overall**_ Master Plan dates to 1984 (some individual elements were updated over the years) and much has changed in Oxford and the world since that time. As a result, it was considered time for Oxford to better understand opportunities and constraints affecting:
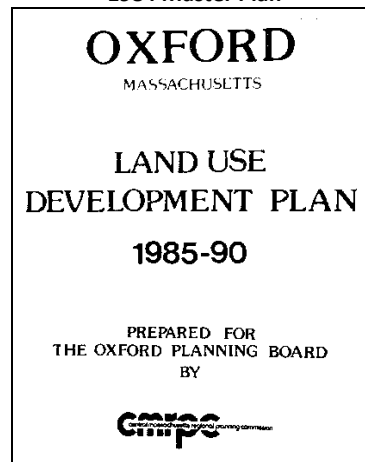- the physical development of Oxford,
- the economic development of Oxford, and
- the overall quality of life in the community.

The Master Plan process was configured to help identify important issues, consider alternatives, and select approaches and outcomes that were beneficial for the community. By implementing such strategies, we will make Oxford a better place for residents and businesses.

1976 Master Plan

TOWN OF OXFORD, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD

design for progress

A MASTER PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF OXFORD
AUGUST, 1976

Prepared by

DAVID A. BOOTH RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Governmental Consultants   Box 825, Amherst, Massachusetts

1984 Master Plan

OXFORD
MASSACHUSETTS

LAND USE
DEVELOPMENT PLAN
1985-90

PREPARED FOR
THE OXFORD PLANNING BOARD
BY

cmrpc

Master Plan Organization

Massachusetts General Laws identify certain elements to be addressed in a Master Plan.

The following chart illustrates how the statutory elements are addressed in Oxford's Master Plan. A solid circle (●) identifies the key chapter addressing this element while a gray circle (○) indicates another chapter that is relevant to this element.

|		Elements Identified In Massachusetts General Laws								
		Goals and policies	Land use	Housing	Economic development	Natural / cultural resources	Open space / recreation	Services and facilities	Circulation	Implementation program
Introduction	**Introduction**									
	Conditions And Trends		○	○	○					
	Community Concerns And Goals	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Conservation (things Oxford wants to preserve or protect)	**Protect Natural Resources**	○	○			●				○
	Preserve Open Space	○	○				●			○
	Enhance Community Character	○				●				○
Development (how Oxford wants to guide future growth or change)	**Enhance Oxford Center**	○	○	○	○					○
	Guide Business / Economic Development	○	○	○	●					○
	Guide Housing Development	○	○	●						○
	Promote Sustainability / Resiliency	○								○
Infrastructure (facilities and services Oxford wants or needs)	**Address Community Facilities**	○	○				●	●		○
	Improve Transportation Systems	○	○						●	○
	Improve Utility Infrastructure	○	○							○
Conclusion	**Future Land Use Plan**		●							
	Implementation									●
	Conclusion									

Plan Format

Each of the _**policy chapters**_ of the Master Plan (the chapters within the Conser-vation, Development, and Infrastructure sections of the Master Plan) contains an _**overall goal**_ which reflects the consensus on how Oxford should address this topic (a blue-shaded box on the first page of the chapter).

Then, within each chapter, there are one or more recommended _**strategies**_ for the community. The strategies are a "big picture" direction for Oxford to move towards to help accomplish the goal.

Each strategy may also have two types of recommendations:

- **Policies** – Policies are intended to be _**on-going positions**_ of the Town of Oxford about how to evaluate and act upon local issues and actions. Policies do not lend themselves to measurement or recognition as being complete.

- **Action Steps** – Action steps are _**discrete tasks or activities**_ which can and should be undertaken to accomplish Master Plan recommendations and policies. Action steps can be measured and recognized as being complete. Over time, it is envisioned that additional action steps will be identified by the Town of Oxford to help implement recommended poli-cies.

Policy Chapter · Strategy · Plan Recommendations · Overall Goal · Policies and Action Steps
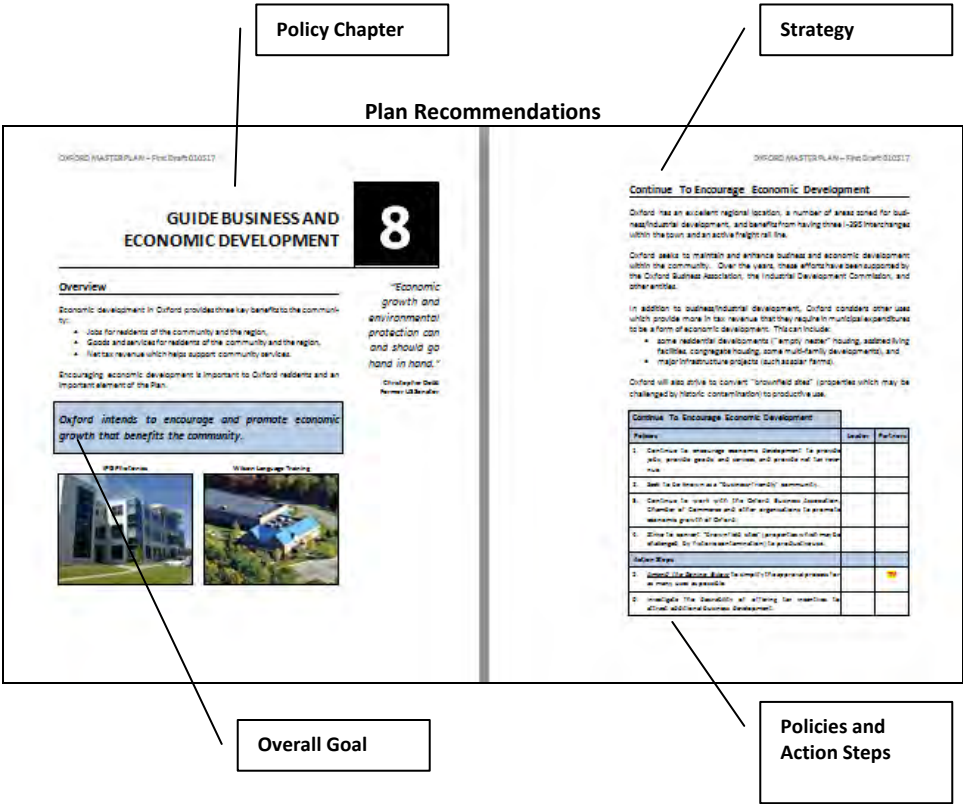
CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

2

Overview

This section of the Master Plan summarizes the conditions and trends affecting Oxford at the time the Plan was being prepared.

History of Oxford

The landscape of the area we now know as Oxford evolved over millions of years as a result of massive geologic forces. The advance and retreat of glaciers and the cumulative effects of drainage and erosion created an undulating land-form surrounding a riverine floodplain. While there is no written record of their early habitation, Native Americans of what is called the Nipmuck tribe are believed to have inhabited parts of this area about 10,000 years ago.

European Discovery and Settlement

By the year 1500, explorers had documented their visits to North America and competition began among European nations for newfound territories. In 1620, a ship called the *Mayflower* landed at what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts with a number of religious pilgrims and economic opportunists from England. With help from the Native Americans, the first settlers survived the winter.

Native Americans may not have fully understood the European concept of land ownership and disagreements eventually led to conflicts. Over time, the strength of Native American tribes was weakened by European diseases and their resistance was overcome through armed conflict.

More Europeans followed and new settlements were established in coastal areas of Massachusetts and elsewhere in "New England." Settlement expanded along the coast north and south from Plymouth and moved inland over time as people sought new opportunities.

The religious freedom offered by the new world was noticed elsewhere. During the mid-1600s, French Protestants (a religious minority) were being persecuted by the Catholic majority and forced into hiding or to convert to Catholicism.

"If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do and how to do it."

Abraham Lincoln, American President

The persecution of one Protestant sect known as the Huguenots was particularly harsh and many Huguenots emigrated from France during the mid-1600s. Some relocated to England, Denmark, and Holland, and others ventured overseas where they were accepted and allowed to worship freely. One group of Huguenots came to Massachusetts seeking an area to settle.

Conveniently, some land investors/speculators in Boston had obtained a provisional land grant in 1680 for what was considered a remote area and were having trouble meeting the condition that 30 families had to live there within a certain time period. Once the two parties met each other, the die was cast. The Huguenots ventured into the wilderness to establish a new settlement free of religious persecution and the Boston investors were able to meet the conditions of the land grant. The Huguenot settlers arrived in this area in 1686 and soon built a fort to enhance their safety.

However, the settlers did not receive any deeds to the land and this was a sticking point over time after they devoted many years to farming the land. In 1696, they abandoned the settlement after some disagreements with the land owners and skirmishes with some Native Americans .

Drawing of Huguenot Fort

Site of the Huguenot French Fort on Mayo's Hill or Fort Hill

Permanent Settlement

Some settlers occasionally ventured back to this area but it was not until conflicts with Native Americans subsided that permanent settlement returned. The municipality of Oxford was officially incorporated in 1713. Records indicate that residents voted in 1714 to build a meetinghouse as the first public building.

As population grew over time, settlers moved further out to create their own homesteads. Sawmills, blacksmith shops, and other communal amenities were established along the French River and other brooks and streams to support the economy of the area.

Eventually, the population in the outlying areas grew to the point where people no longer wished to travel to Oxford for religious services, militia training, or for town meetings. In 1731, the Town of Dudley was set off as a separate municipality. Charlton was set off in 1755 and "Ward" was set off in 1770. In 1831, the Town of Webster was incorporated. There were some additional lands added or subtracted over the years but the addition of the "North Gore" area in 1838 appears to be the last official modification resulting in the Town of Oxford as we know it today.

Economic Growth

Early residents supported themselves with subsistence agriculture. Over time, the economy grew and diversified. Water power generated by local brooks and rivers enabled the establishment of local mills. Early industries included scythe-making, potash, and bar iron.

Regional Roles

Oxford serves two regional roles.

First, Oxford is a residential community with over 13,000 residents and over 5,000 housing units. Most of the land area in Oxford is zoned, used and planned for residential use.

Oxford is also a regional employment center. Over 3,700 jobs are located in Oxford and these jobs help support residents of Oxford and the larger region.

Re-Enactment Of Colonial Agriculture

Re-Enactment Of Colonial Mill

In the 1800s, the economic opportunities provided by the Industrial Revolution came to Oxford and mills were created to support the manufacture of cottons, woolen, thread, flannel, broadcloths, and shoes and boots. This growth was supported by the introduction of steam trains and the establishment of a rail line from Norwich, Massachusetts to Worcester in the mid-1800s.

As a result of economic activity, the population of Oxford (which had been hovering around 2,600 residents) grew to over 4,600 residents by 1940.

Spread Of The Automobile

Following World War II, the proliferation of the automobile and expansion of paved roadways supported the continued growth of Oxford.

Oxford experienced the same surge of growth that affected other communities in the area. A cultural trend toward suburban living and the flexibility offered by the automobile supported the growth of Oxford. Former farms were subdivided and developed and population doubled between 1940 and 1960. Construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) and Interstate 395 encouraged suburban residential development of Oxford and other areas.

By 2010, Oxford had grown to be a community of over 13,700 people and the overall pattern of the community had become established.

Oxford's Population

1790	1,000
1800	1,237
1810	*1,399*
1820	1,562
1830	*1,835*
1840	*2,107*
1850	2,380
1860	3,034
1870	2,669
1880	2,604
1890	2,616
1900	2,677
1910	3,301
1920	3,820
1930	3,943
1940	4,623
1950	5,851
1960	9,282
1970	10,345
1980	11,680
1990	12,588
2000	13,352
2010	13,709

	UMass	*CMRPC*
2020	*13,578*	*14,466*
2030	*12,902*	*15,170*
2040	*12,411*	*15,601*

US Census data for 1790 to 2010. Data for 1810, 1830, and 1840 was not found and has been interpolated. Projections are in italics. Red projections are from the UMass Donahue Institute cohort component model (2015). Green projections are from the CMRPC Population projections (2015).

Oxford's Population

According to the Census, Oxford had a year 2010 population of 13,709 persons. This represents an increase of 357 persons from the 13,352 persons reported in the 2000 Census. The chart shows Oxford population growth since the 1790 with a range of population projections to the year 2040 (the black line represents the average of the two).

Oxford's Population (1790 – 2040)

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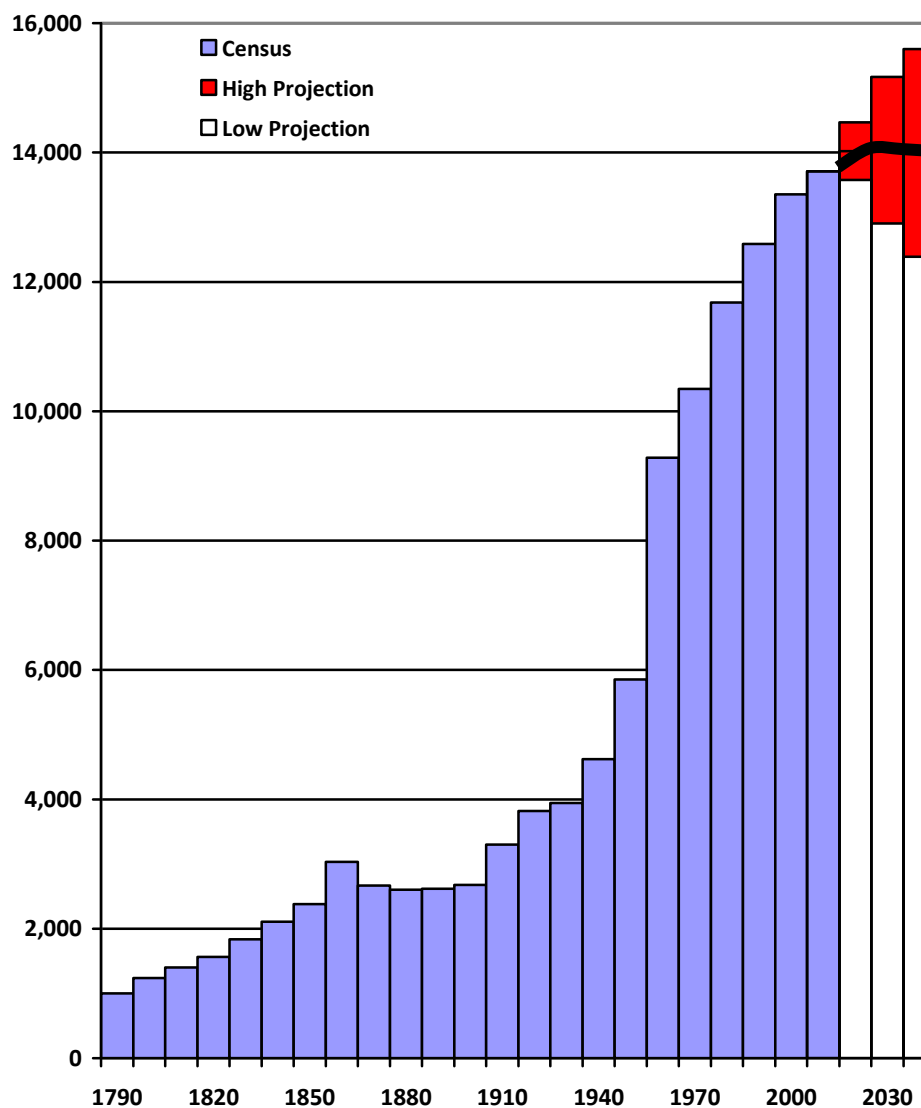
Over the next several decades, the main demographic changes affecting Oxford are expected to be as follows:

Anticipated Demographic Changes	Rationale
The number of older residents is expected to increase significantly	The "baby boomers" (a large demographic group born between 1945 and 1965) are starting to reach retirement age and will swell the number of older residents in Oxford and elsewhere.
Oxford's population is expected to grow slowly (or decline)	The Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts projects that Oxford's population may decline in the future due to: • a lower number of births (due to lower birth rates and fewer women of child bearing age), • changing locational preferences of certain households, • an aging population since households headed by older people tend to have fewer residents, and • other factors. Of course, these are projections based on continuation of recent trends and changes could occur if housing construction accelerates or larger households replace smaller households.

To help illustrated the changing age composition of Oxford, the "population pyramids" below show the number of people in 5-year age groups in 2000, 2020, and 2040. The orange bars in each pyramid show people in the "baby boom" (people born between about 1945 and about 1965).

2000	2020	2040
13,352 residents	13,578 residents	12,411 residents
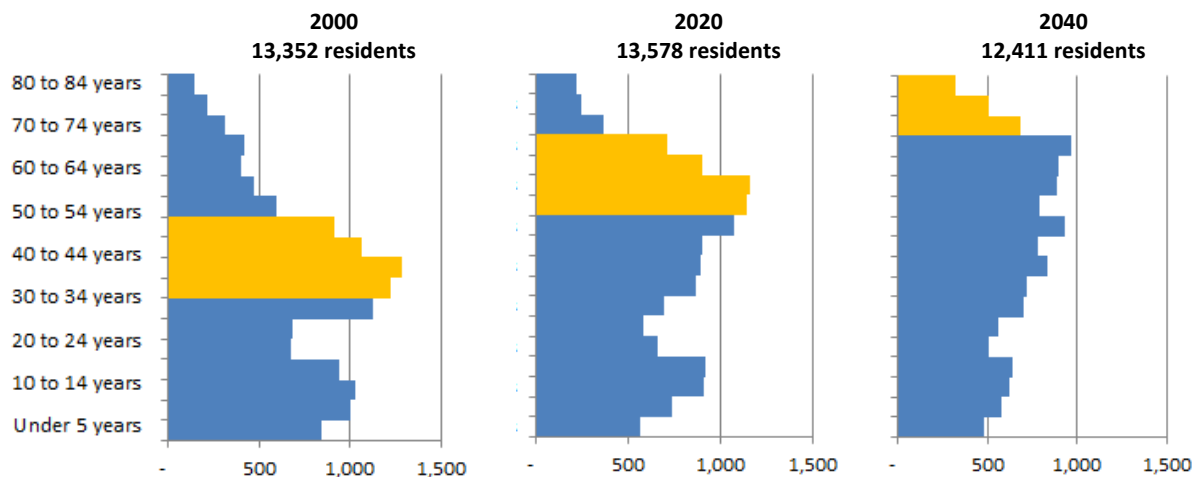
Housing Units	
1960	2,589
1970	2,905
1980	3,948
1990	4,655
2000	5,281
2010	5,541

US Census. Previous Oxford Plans, CMRPC

Median Sale Price	
Sutton	$358,000
Charlton	$322,700
Douglas	$311,800
Millbury	$281,000
Leicester	$262,900
Dudley	$253,800
Auburn	$252,600
Oxford	**$252,200**
Webster	$240,400

2010 US Census.

'Affordable Housing'	
Oxford	**7.3%**
State	9.3%

Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (12/5/14)

Oxford's Housing

Oxford had about 5,541 housing units in 2010. This is an increase of 260 units (about 5 percent) from the 2000 Census. Housing growth slowed significantly between 2000 and 2010 due to overall economic conditions and changing market preferences.

The housing stock in Oxford consists primarily of single-family detached homes. The vast majority of homes in Oxford (77%) are owner-occupied.

Median house value (as reported in the 2010 Census by the occupant) is lower than most surrounding communities. The availability of housing that is more affordable than in surrounding communities is a differentiating factor. As shown on the map below.

About 7.3 percent of the housing units in Oxford are considered "subsidized housing" according to Massachusetts standards. Since less than 10 percent of the housing units are considered subsidized housing, Oxford is potentially vulnerable to developer-proposed subsidized housing developments (codified in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B).
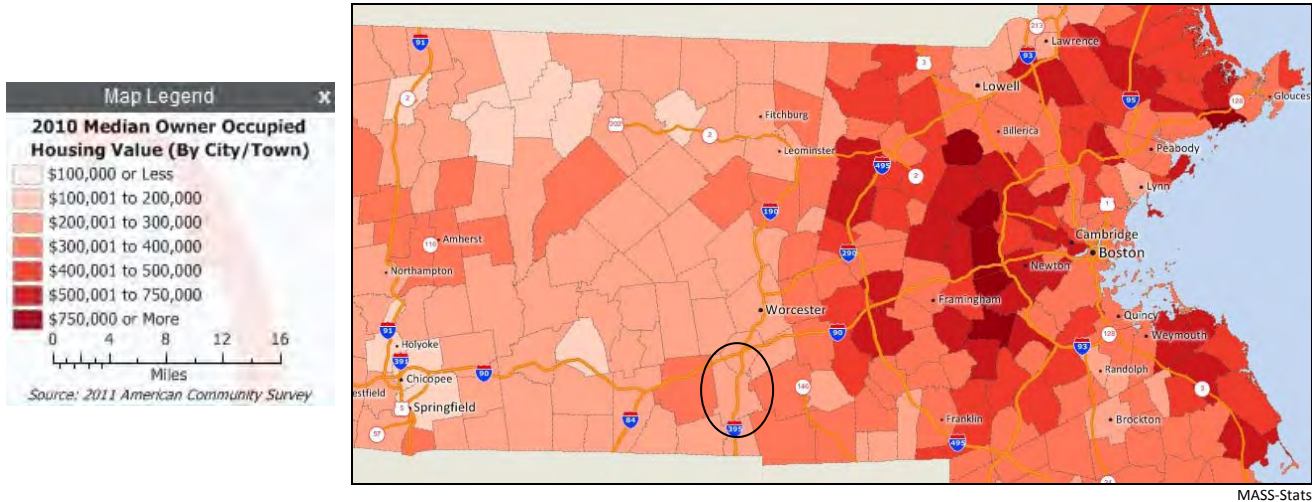
Single-Family House

Multi-Family Building

Median House Value

MASS-Stats

Oxford's Economy

There were over 3,700 jobs in Oxford in 2010. These jobs help support residents of Oxford and the surrounding region.

Oxford benefits from its location on Interstate 395 (3 exits) and near the Massachusetts Turnpike (no exits). Oxford also benefits from the rail line which provides freight service in the corridor. Oxford has available land zoned for business and industrial use.

Median household income is one way to gauge the size or strength of the local economy. According to data from the American Community Survey (compiled by MASS-Stats), some of the communities adjacent to Oxford have higher median household incomes.

Jobs In Oxford

2000	3,532
2010	3,760
2020	*4,336*
2030	*4,513*
2040	*4,691*

CMRPC, MassDOT Projections from MassDOT in italics

Median Household Income

Sutton	$107,500
Charlton	$91,653
Douglas	$81,000
Millbury	$77,883
Auburn	$73,559
Dudley	$72,500
Leicester	$72,471
Oxford	**$68,567**
Webster	$49,621

MASS-Stats, American Community Survey.

Office Building

Industrial Building

Median Household Income

MASS-Stats

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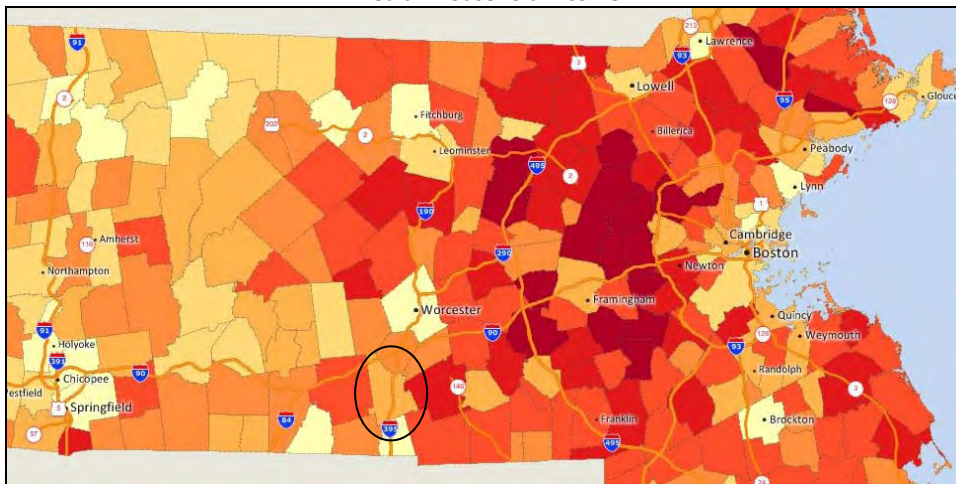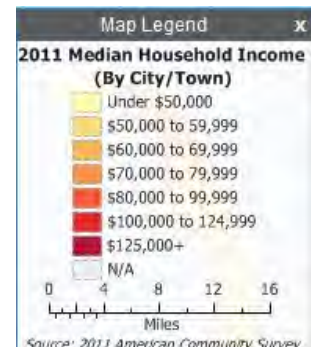
Land Use In Oxford

Use Of Land In Oxford

According to digital mapping of the community, Oxford contains approximately 17,551 acres of land.

Based on the Assessor's database, about two-thirds of the land area in the community was occupied for residential, commercial, or institutional use or was dedicated to a specific purpose such as public land or protected open space. Conversely, about one-third of the land area in town was vacant or uncommitted to a specific use (this includes parts of over-sized lots excess to the minimum lot size requirement and potentially developable in the future).

Land Use
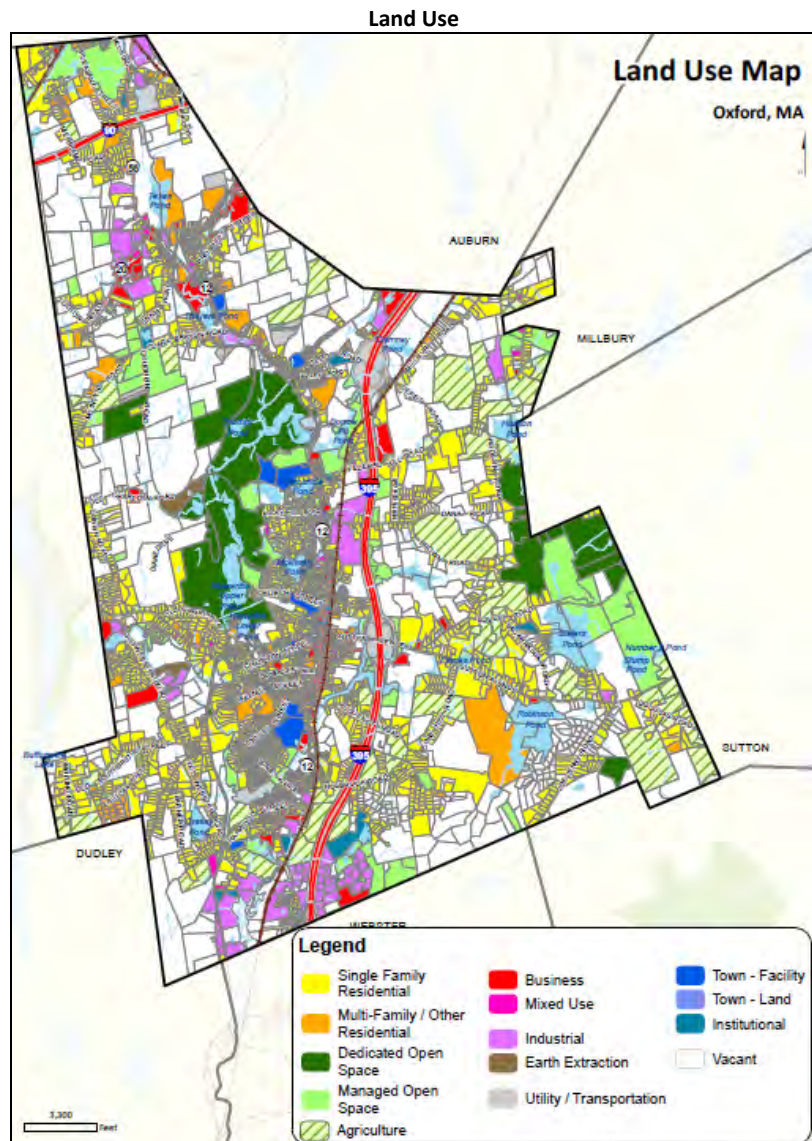
Zoning Of Land In Oxford

As can be seen from the zoning map, most of the land in Oxford is zoned for residential use. Business and industrial zones are located along certain parts of Route 20 and Route 12 and near highway interchanges.
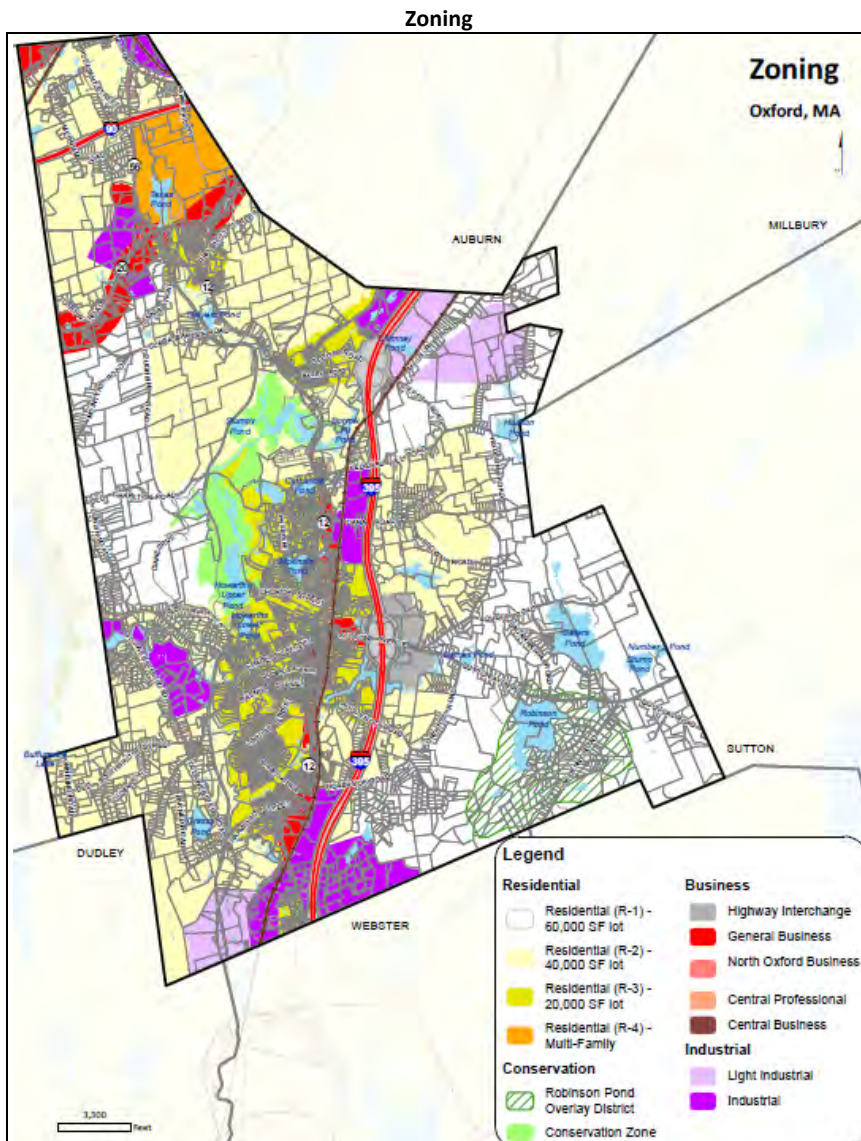
Zoning

Buildout Limitations

A buildout analysis is not a prediction. It is an estimate of the total development potential of a community if every parcel was developed to its maximum extent under current zoning.

The analysis considers environmental constraints as they are understood today.

A buildout analysis does not attempt to predict the rate of future development, or how quickly buildout will be reached.

This information is adapted from the Oxford Comprehensive Wastewater Management Report (2009).

Buildout Estimate

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) prepared a buildout analysis for Oxford in the mid-2000s. A buildout analysis estimates the buildout potential of a community if all the buildable land was developed in accordance with the current zoning. The results of this analysis are summarized below:

Zone	Estimate Of Developable Land	Estimated Residential Buildout Potential	Estimated Business Buildout Potential
Highway Interchange	120 acres		657,059 SF
General Business	267 acres		1,083,716 SF
Industrial	539 acres		3,035,895 SF
Light Industrial	316 acres		1,776,650 SF
Rural Residential (R-1)	3,859 acres	1,677	
Suburban Residential (R-2)	3,838 acres	2,554	
Residential (R-3)	375 acres	476	
Multi-Family Residential (R-4)	280 acres	345	
Total	**9,594 acres**	**5,052 lots 5,397 units About 28,000 people**	**6,553,320 SF**

Source: CMRPC / EOEA Buildout Analysis.

With an average of about 26 new dwelling units being built per year, it may take over 200 years for Oxford to reach the residential buildout potential. On the other hand, if growth returns to the levels seen in the 1970s, it may take about 50 years for Oxford to reach this residential buildout potential. The timeframe for reaching the business buildout potential is much harder to estimate due to changing economic factors both regionally and internationally.

Still, the buildout scenario for Oxford as estimated by EOEA suggests the following:
- buildout could roughly double Oxford's population.
- this growth would increase the demand for water and sewage disposal, schools and other public services, and solid waste disposal.
- this would result in a considerable increase in traffic volumes on local roads.

Fiscal Overview

Tax Base

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Oxford's per capita equalized tax base (the estimated market value of all property in town compared to the population) in 2010 was a little lower than surrounding communities.

In terms of the tax base diversity, Oxford is fortunate to have a strong tax base which is not as reliant on residential taxes as in some adjacent communities.

Municipal Expenditures

On a per capita basis, Oxford is roughly in the middle in terms of total expenditures. Spending on education on a percentage and per capita basis is lower than some surrounding communities.

	Total Spending Per Capita	Education Spending Per Capita	Education Share Of Spending
Douglas	$2,675	$1,432	54%
Sutton	$2,628	$1,533	58%
Auburn	$2,435	$1,325	54%
Millbury	$2,379	$1,317	55%
Oxford	**$2,353**	**$1,178**	**50%**
Leicester	$2,300	$1,395	61%
Webster	$1,706	$1,054	62%
Charlton	$1,513	$789	52%
Dudley	$1,082	$556	52%

MA Department of Revenue (2010)

Per Capita Tax Base

Sutton	$148,943
Auburn	$126,347
Charlton	$118,694
Douglas	$118,327
Millbury	$113,894
Webster	$103,093
Oxford	**$102,427**
Leicester	$93,634
Dudley	$88,709

MA Department of Revenue (2010)

Non-Residential Tax Base

Auburn	38.0%
Millbury	22.9%
Webster	22.6%
Oxford	**19.8%**
Charlton	13.5%
Sutton	11.2%
Leicester	10.7%
Dudley	7.7%
Douglas	6.2%

MA Department of Revenue (2010)

Per Capita Expenditures

MASS-Stats

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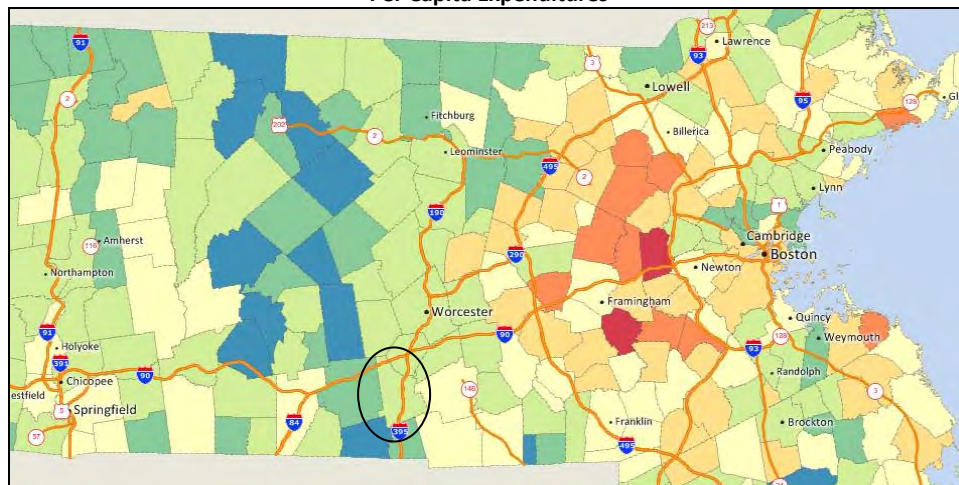
Municipal Revenue

Oxford is much less reliant on taxing real property than surrounding communities. According to MASS-Stats, only about 45% of local revenue is raised from the tax levy on real property. Other revenue comes from State aid, local receipts, and all other sources (user fees, investment income, etc.). Oxford is fortunate to receive more state aid than some surrounding communities.

	Revenue From Tax Levy	Revenue From State Aid	State Aid Per Capita
Auburn	66%	16%	$504
Charlton	66%	5%	$93
Sutton	61%	22%	$696
Millbury	53%	22%	$618
Dudley	53%	10%	$134
Leicester	45%	45%	$1,088
Webster	45%	30%	$711
Oxford	**45%**	**32%**	**$926**
Douglas	45%	38%	$1.215

MASS-Stats

State Aid Per Capita
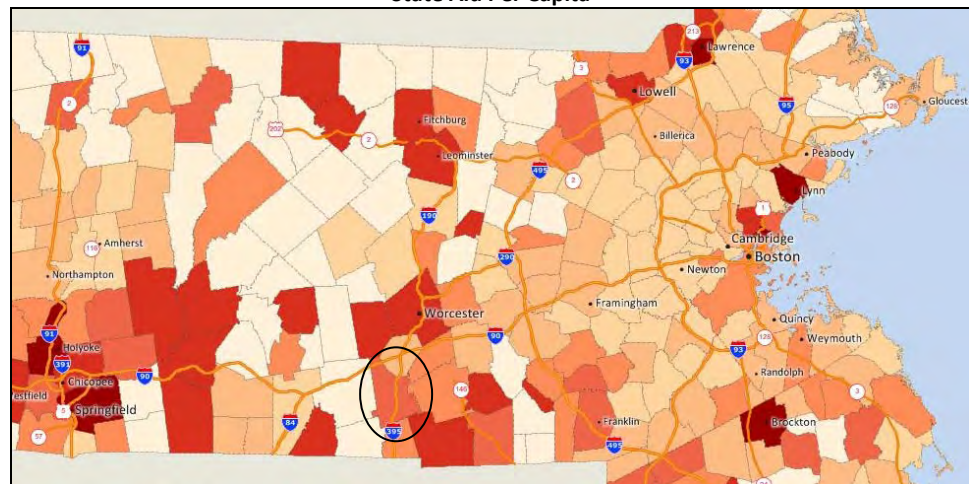
COMMUNITY CONCERNS AND GOALS

3

Overview

A number of exercises were conducted as part of the planning process in order to involve the community in the Master Plan and get feedback as the Master Plan was being refined and adopted.

Information from the following exercises was incorporated into preparation and review of the Master Plan:

Public Meetings	• An introductory public meeting for Oxford residents • A public meeting to get feedback on the draft Master Plan • A public hearing on adoption of the Master Plan
Working Meetings	• Meetings of the Plan Update Committee • Meetings with the Planning Board • Meetings with the Board of Selectmen
Research	• Interviews with Town staff • Meetings with interested residents and organizations • Field trips / site visits / community meetings
Surveys	• A community survey distributed with the annual town-wide census • A survey of members of other local boards and commissions • A survey of Town department heads

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

Margaret Wheatley
Writer

Survey   **Public Meetings**   **Research**

Word Cloud

Some survey responses are summarized here by a "word cloud." All responses to this question were pasted into an application (worditout.com) that counted the words and then repeated the words most commonly found.

In the graphic, a larger font reflects a word more often found in the responses.

Town-Wide Survey

In January 2016, a survey form was circulated to all Oxford households as part of the annual town-wide census. The survey questions were designed to get input to the Master Plan update process. Over the next month or so, ___more than 2,200 completed surveys___ were mailed back to the Town and then tabulated by Town staff and several volunteers.

Responses to some of the questions are summarized below and other responses are included in the Plan chapters where they are most applicable:

- 96% of respondents rated the overall quality of life in Oxford as good or very good.

- While 47% indicated there had been no change in the overall quality of life in Oxford, 37% felt it was improving.

- As seen by the following "'word cloud" (see sidebar), the Oxford school system and taxes were seen as the most important issues facing the Town at the time the survey was conducted.
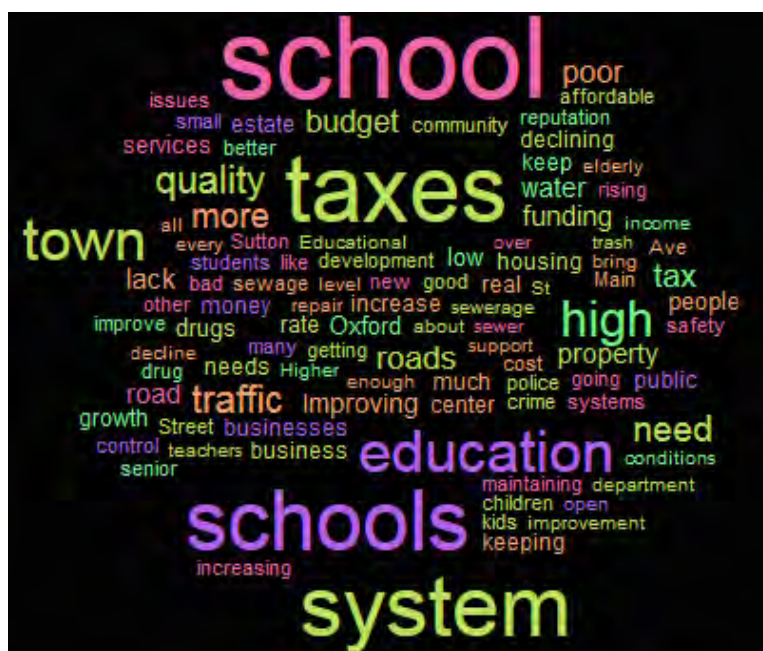
- 45% of respondents indicated they ***would not support*** a one-time over-ride of the statutory limitation on annual tax increases although 42% of respondents indicated don't know / unsure / no response.

- When asked what might cause people to pay slightly higher taxes, schools seemed best represented in the "word cloud" of the responses.
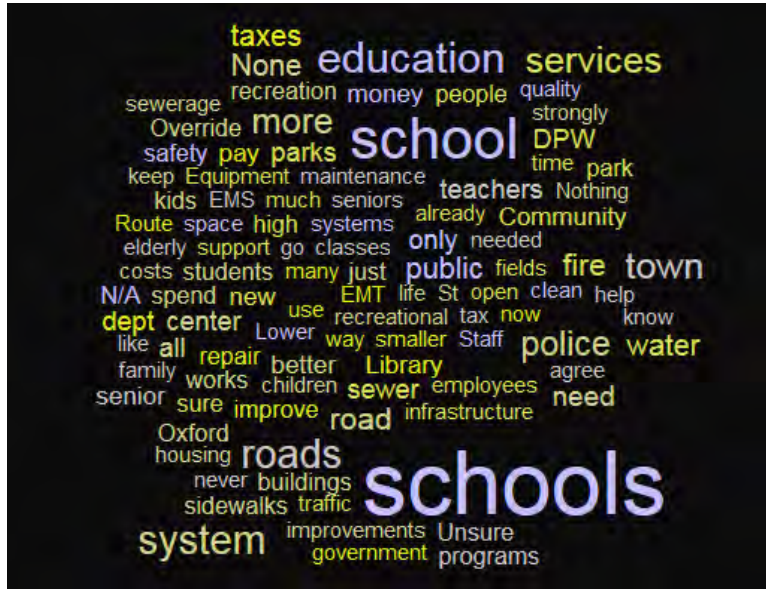
- When asked for other thoughts, the "word cloud" suggests that schools and taxes were the most often mentioned
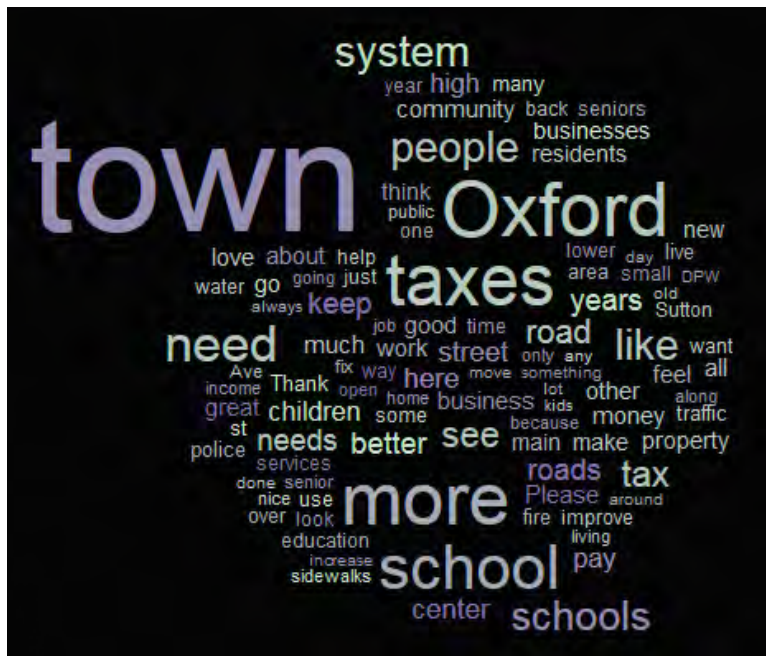
Detail of Prouds

Conservation-Related	**107**
Natural Resources	3
Open Space	48
Community Character	27
Historic Resources	29
Development-Related	**55**
Village Centers	17
Business Development	38
Housing / Residential	0
Sustainability	0
Infrastructure-Related	**162**
Comm. Fac. (schools)	28
Comm. Fac. (other)	133
Vehicular Trans.	1
Ped. / Bike / Bus	0
Utility Infrastructure	1
Miscellaneous	**24**

Community Scoping Meeting

In February 2016, a community workshop meeting was held at Oxford High School to get input from Oxford residents. About 140 people from all parts of Oxford attended the meeting and participated in the exercises described below.

"Prouds" Exercise - People attending the meeting were asked to identify things in Oxford they were proud of by putting dots on a map and writing it on a card. The responses to this exercise are presented in the sidebar.

Sorrys - People attending the meeting were then asked to place a "red dot" on a map to identify things in Oxford they were sorry about. They were also asked to write these "sorrys" on a card and submit it at the meeting. The responses to this exercise are presented in the sidebar.

Map of "Prouds"   **Map of "Sorrys"**

Planning Points - People attending the meeting were given 50 "planning points" to allocate among 12 boxes representing topics typically addressed as part of a Master Plan. Residents were asked to allocate the planning points (one @ 20 points, two @ 10 points each, and two @ 5 points each) to reflect what they felt was important for Oxford to address as part of the planning process. The results of this exercise were presented at the meeting and the remainder of the time available was devoted to discussing the topics that received the most points.

Public Meeting Notification

Public Meeting Notification

Summary Of "Sorrys"

- **School Facilities** – participants indicated they were sorry about certain aspects of the school system

- **Community Facilities** – participants indicated they were sorry about the Community Center, maintenance of some recreation facilities, Town Hall, and the lack of youth programs

- **Transportation** – participants indicated they were sorry about the traffic congestion in the Town Center and the overall condition of the roads in Oxford

Participants In The "Prouds" Exercise

Participants In The "Sorrys" Exercise

"Planning Points"

"Ballot Boxes"

Detail of Sorrys

Conservation-Related	27
Natural Resources	3
Open Space	6
Community Character	18
Historic Resources	0
Development-Related	52
Village Centers	13
Business Development	25
Housing / Residential	14
Sustainability	0
Infrastructure-Related	174
Comm. Fac. (schools)	69
Comm. Fac. (other)	43
Vehicular Trans.	43
Ped. / Bike / Bus	2
Utility Infrastructure	17
Miscellaneous	17

Community Participation

Note Taking

The main issues expressed as part of the discussion are presented below. This information was also used in preparing the policy sections of the Master Plan.

Conservation	
Natural Resources	• We need to be sure to protect water quality • Oxford has some incredible ecosystems
Open Space	• We need to define the term "open space" • We should try to create an overall system
Community Character	• We should identify what contributes to character and then protect it • Oxford needs more community events

Development	
Oxford Center	• Downtown is very important to our character • Do we have the right rules in place?
Business / Economic Dev.	• Business would help reduce the tax burden • How can we be more "business-friendly"?
Housing / Residential Dev.	• We need more senior housing
Sustainability / Resiliency	• Can we use resources more wisely? • Can we be more sustainable?

Infrastructure	
Community Facilities	• We need to reverse the school decline • The community center needs attention • Recreation facilities need work
Traffic and Circulation	• Congestion is a huge problem in downtown • Road maintenance is an issue town-wide
Walking / Biking / Bus / Train	• People will use sidewalks and trails if they are maintained
Water/ Sewer / Utilities	• We should extend sewers to more areas • The water system has been an ongoing issue

Plan Preparation

Based on this information, the Master Plan Update Committee began reviewing and discussing plan chapters, including goals, strategies, policies and action steps. Following review and refinement, the proposed Master Plan was forwarded to the Planning Board for consideration and adoption.

PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

4

Overview

Conserving natural resources helps promote overall environmental health, preserve environmental functions, enhance community character, and enhance the overall quality of life. For the purposes of the Master Plan, the phrase "natural resources" is considered to include:

- water resources (including surface water and groundwater),
- land / soil resources,
- air resources, and
- biologic resources (plants and animals).

At the community meeting held at the start of the planning process, residents identified the following natural resource issues as being important to them:

- protection of water quality.
- protection of the overall eco-system.

"Conservation is a state of harmony between [people] and land."

Aldo Leopold, American Ecologist

Oxford intends to protect important natural resources and their environmental functions.

| **Water Resources** | **Land Resources** | **Biologic Resources** |

4.1   Protect Water Quality / Water Resources

Protection of water quality is the most important natural resource protection strategy for Oxford.

While water is important to overall environmental health and sustaining plant and animal life, Oxford residents rely on wells (either public or private) for water supply. Protection of water quality has been identified as an important conservation strategy in Oxford dating back to the 1976 Master Plan.

Most water resources in Oxford meet State standards for water quality. The major threats to water quality come from:
- **Direct Discharges Of Pollutants** (including accidental spills) - The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) database identified 133 such "sites" in Oxford although most have been addressed and the remainder are being monitored by MassDEP.
- **Septic Failures** – Unaddressed septic failures can significantly affect water quality.
- **General Stormwater Runoff** - which picks up pollutants from roads and parking areas and nutrients from land use activities.

Oxford has a number of regulations and programs related to the protection of water resources:
- Chapter 65 - Discharges To The Municipal Storm Drain System
- Chapter 66 - Stormwater Management And Land Disturbance
- Chapter 67 - Stormwater Management Requirements
- administration of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protect Act
- no Disturb / No Build Policy adopted by the Conservation Commission

Management of water quantity is also an issue to be monitored. Direct discharge of stormwater can overwhelm drainage channels, exacerbate flooding, diminish base stream flow, and divert water from recharging aquifers.

Oxford will seek to protect water resources and improve water quality.

Groundwater Resources

Oxford, MA

N

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

WEBSTER

DUDLEY

I-90

56

20

12

Texas Pond

Thayers Pond

Clara Barton Road

Stumpy Pond

Carbuncle Pond

Mckinstry Pond

Howarths Upper Pond

Howarths Lower Pond

Grass Pond

Chimney Pond

Borrow Pit Pond

Hudson Pond

Slaters Pond

Number 2 Pond Stump Pond

Robinson Pond

Eames Pond

Buffumville Lake

395

12

PLEASANT STREET

MERRIAM ROAD

MILL ROAD

ASHWORTH DRIVE

PROSPECT STREET

ENNIS ROAD

COUGHLIN ROAD

OXBOW ROAD

MCINTYRE ROAD

OLD CONLIN ROAD

OLD CHARLTON ROAD

DIANE DRIVE

DEPOT ROAD

BAILEY ROAD

MILLBURY ROAD

DEPOT ROAD

FEDERAL HILL ROAD

HERITAGE ROAD

HUDSON ROAD

DANA ROAD

BROWN ROAD

ROCKY HILL ROAD

CHURCH STREET

OLD HOWARTH ROAD

CHARLTON STREET

QUOBAUG AVENUE

WALNUT STREET

LOCUST STREET

SUNSET AVENUE

HARWOOD STREET

OLD WEBSTER ROAD

LARNED ROAD

SOUTHBRIDGE STREET

OLD SULLIVAN ROAD

WHITING ROAD

SUTTON AVENUE

HUGUENOT ROAD

HOLBROOK ROAD

FORT HILL ROAD

SUTTON AVENUE

LOVETT ROAD

SACARRAPPA ROAD

JOE JENNY ROAD

DOUGLAS ROAD

Legend

- Watercourses
- Aquifer Protection Areas
- Defined Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone II)
- Interim Wellhead Protection Areas

3,300 Feet

- Brownfield Remediation

4.1	Protect Water Quality / Water Resources	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A.	**Policies**	**Leader**	**Partners**
1.	Continue to protect water resources such as: a. wetlands, watercourses, and waterbodies (and riparian buffers adjacent to them). b. vernal pools (both certified and potential). c. aquifers and wellhead protection areas (both Zone II and interim).	CC	PB Town
2.	Continue to promote the use of "low impact development" (LID) strategies (such as vegetated buffers, infiltration basins and other LID techniques) to: a. minimize water quality impacts from development. b. promote groundwater recharge and minimize storm-water runoff.	CC	PB Town
3.	Given that most of Oxford will continue to rely on wells and septic systems in the future, continue to relate land use intensity to the natural capabilities of the land.	PB	BOH
4.	Maintain the Robinson Pond Protection District and other tools, as appropriate, to protect water quality.	PB	CC
5.	Continue to support MassDEP in terms of responding to and remediating pollutant discharges and addressing contaminated sites ("brownfields").	Town	CC
6.	Continue to support the Oxford Board of Health in terms of responding to and remediating septic failures.	Town	BOH
B.	**Action Steps**		
1.	Require that septic pumping reports include information on the condition of the septic tank and the septic field.	BOH	
2.	Consider additional steps (tank pumping, field inspection, etc.) to ensure septic systems are appropriately maintained.	BOH	
3.	Consider adopting wellhead protection regulations to more closely regulate land use activities near public supply wells.	PB	CC TM
4.	Undertake education programs to inform property owners of the importance of protecting water quality.	CC	

4.2   Respect Soil Capabilities

Most areas of Oxford (residential, institutional, business, and industrial) rely on septic systems to treat wastewater. This approach has worked for years.

To ensure this approach continues to be appropriate for treatment of wastewater and protection of drinking water, Oxford intends to:

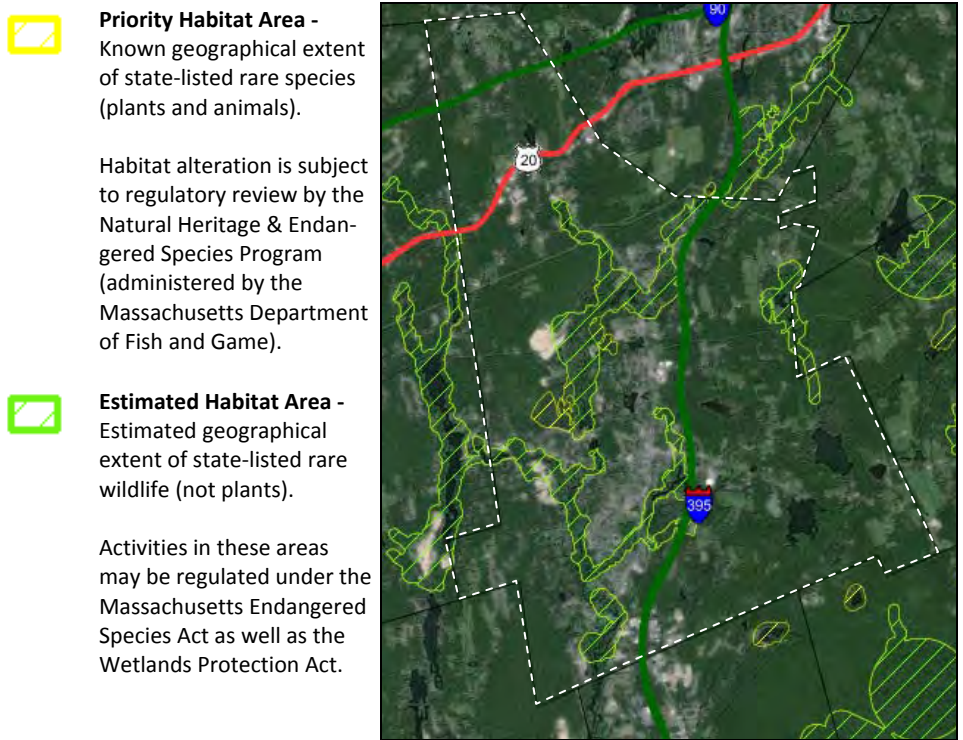- limit development in outlying areas where soil types will not support higher intensity (tan areas in the following map).
- encourage the extension of public water to areas where septic discharges may impair water quality or risk contamination of public and/or private wells.
- encourage the extension of sewers to areas where business, industrial and higher density residential development is desired.

Soil Suitability
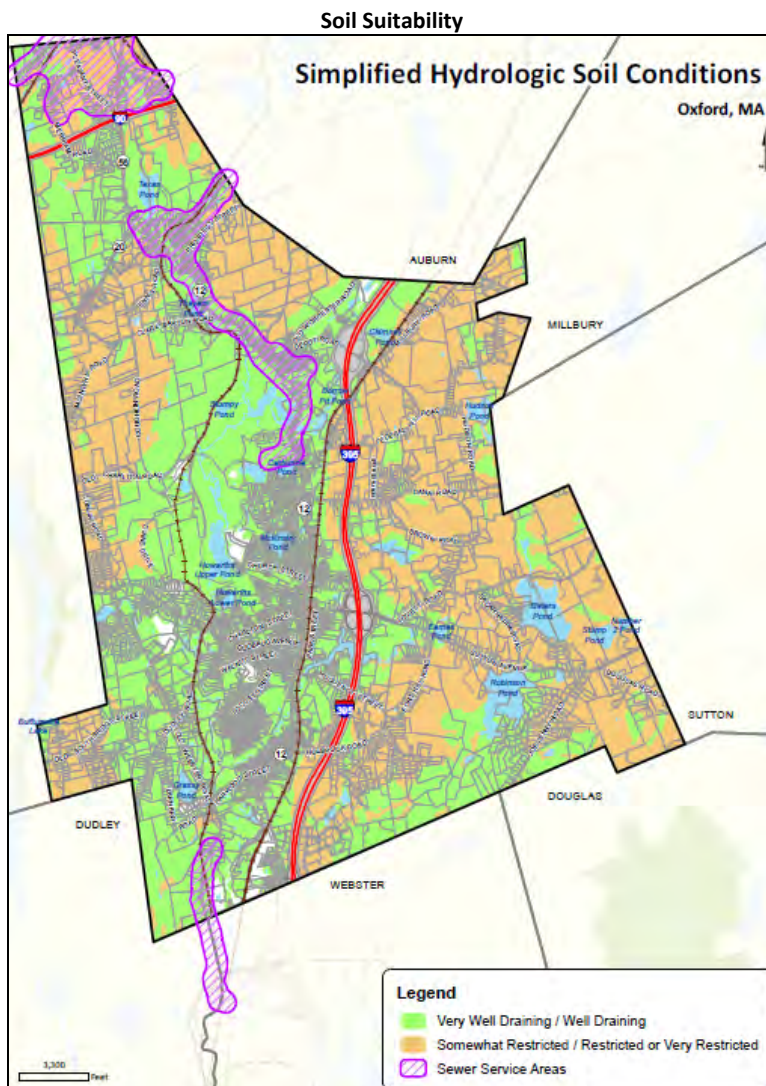
4.3   Protect Natural Ecosystems

Oxford is home to a variety of plant and animal species and the Town intends to continue protecting natural ecosystems. This includes protecting:

- habitat areas that support considered "rare and endangered" species according to the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, and
- "certified vernal pools" and "potential vernal pools" which are integral to the lifecycle of salamanders and other species.

Priority Habitat Area - Known geographical extent of state-listed rare species (plants and animals).

Habitat alteration is subject to regulatory review by the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (administered by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game).

Estimated Habitat Area - Estimated geographical extent of state-listed rare wildlife (not plants).

Activities in these areas may be regulated under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act as well as the Wetlands Protection Act.

A larger version of this map is available at Town Hall or on-line by searching for "Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program."

4.3 Protect Natural Ecosystems	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to protect natural ecosystems, sensitive habitats and other natural diversity areas.	CC	PB Town
2. Discourage the introduction of invasive species and promote the use of native species.	CC	PB Town

Natural Resources

Oxford, MA

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

WEBSTER

DUDLEY
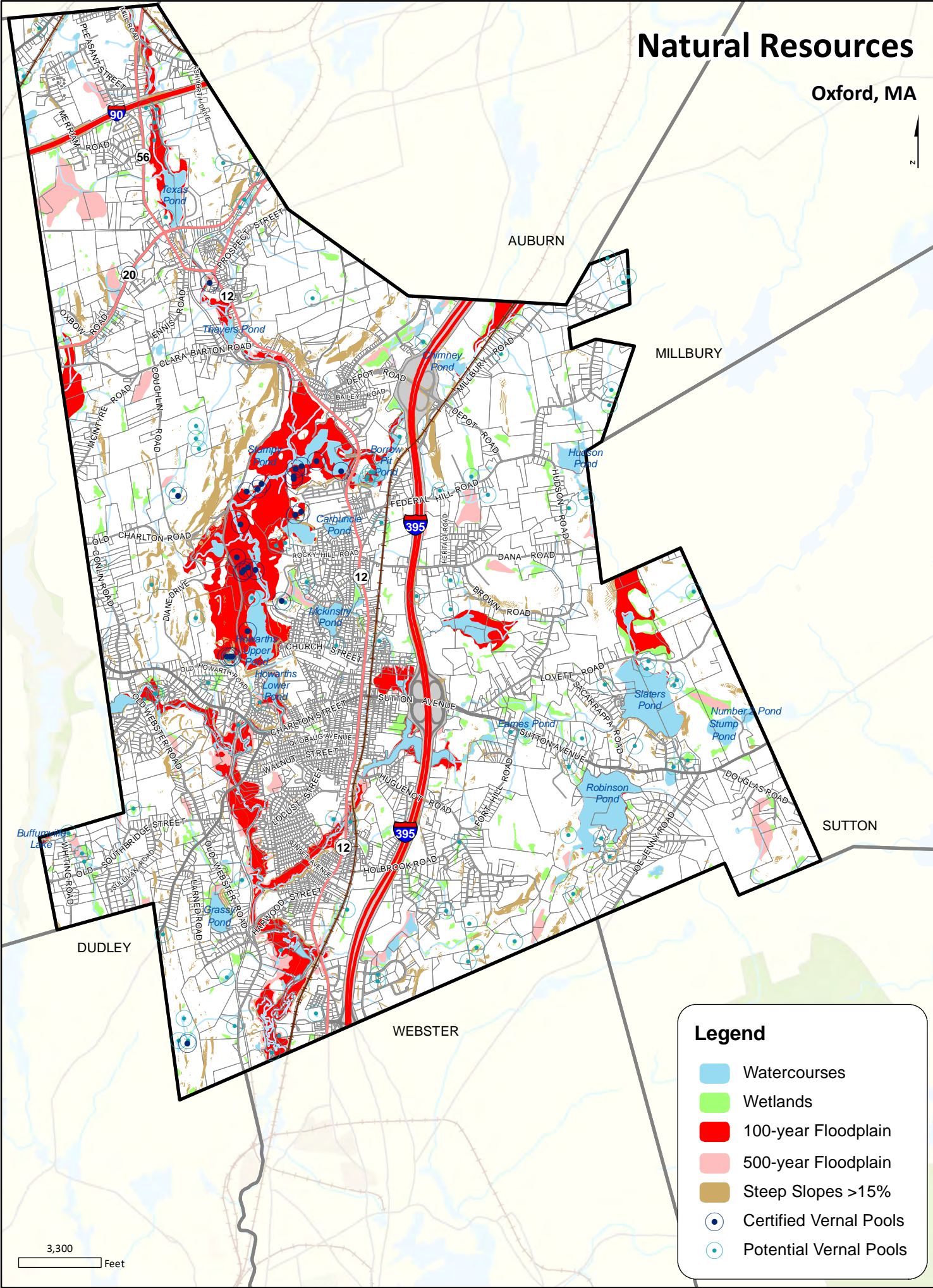
Legend

Watercourses

Wetlands

100-year Floodplain

500-year Floodplain

Steep Slopes >15%

◉ Certified Vernal Pools

◉ Potential Vernal Pools

3,300 Feet

4.4   Protect Other Natural Resources

Oxford will also strive to protect other important natural resources:
- steep slopes,
- floodplains, and
- other natural resources.

4.4 Protect Other Natural Resources	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to consider natural resource issues at the time of development.	PB	CC Town
2. Discourage development on steep slopes and other sensitive landforms.	PB	CC Town
3. Maintain participation in the National Flood Insurance Program administered by FEMA	Town	
4. Seek to coordinate resource protection activities with adjacent communities and regional organizations.	Town	CMRPC
5. Promote public education on recognizing and preserving Oxford's natural resources	CC	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. _Amend the Subdivision Bylaw_ to exclude floodplains from being calculated as part of "net developable area" in the subdivision regulations.	PB	Town
2. To relate residential development intensity to the natural capability of the parcel, _amend the Subdivision Bylaw_ to apply the concept of "net developable area" to all types of subdivisions.	PB	Town

PRESERVE OPEN SPACE 5

Overview

Open space helps protect community character, enhance the quality of life for residents, conserve important natural resources, provide wildlife habitat, provide fiscal and economic benefits, shape development patterns, and preserve lands for recreational uses.

Preservation of open space is important to Oxford residents. At a public meeting early in the planning process, participants identified open space as an important issue for the Town to address as part of the Master Plan. In a community survey which generated responses from 2,200 households, respondents indicated the following:

	Very important / Somewhat important
[Open space is] important … in contributing to a positive quality of life in the Town of Oxford for you and your household	80%
[Parks are] important … in contributing to a positive quality of life in the Town of Oxford for you and your household	75%
Oxford should strive to preserve more open space areas	68%
Oxford should strive to interconnect open spaces into continuous greenbelt areas with public trails	65%
I would be willing to pay a small amount each year on taxes which would be dedicated to purchasing open space	32%

"Unless action is taken, we will lose the treasure of … open space and environmental beauty."

**Adam Schiff,
U.S. Congress**

Oxford intends to preserve land as open space (or encourage or require the preservation of land as open space) to protect important natural resources and enhance community character.

With regard to the issue of defining open space, even the definition in the "Open Space And Recreation Planner's Workbook" issued by the Executive Office Of Energy And Environmental Affairs includes multiple elements:

- conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area *that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation*.

- undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interest [*i.e., private land*]. This includes vacant lots and brownfields that can be redeveloped into recreation areas.

- some open space can be used for passive activities such as walking, hiking, and nature study while others are used for more *active recreational uses including soccer, tennis, or baseball*.

Definition of "Open Space"

One of the challenges related to the topic of "open space" is a lack of clarity regarding definitions (see sidebar).

There is considerable agreement that land that is permanently preserved in an undeveloped state or dedicated to park use should be considered open space. However, many people think that land that is not preserved and is simply not built on is also "open space." However, this land is in private ownership and may be developed in the future.

So that Oxford will not be lulled into a false sense of security and not act to preserve "open space" until it may be too late to preserve the land it cares about, the Master Plan will use three categories to describe some of the different types of open space. The map on the facing page shows the location of these types of open space in Oxford.

Category	Description
Dedicated Open Space	Land owned by a government entity or a recognized non-profit conservation organization that is expected to remain as open space in perpetuity. *Public use of the land is generally allowed.*
Managed Open Space	Land that is used for another purpose but provides the community with some open space benefits (such as golf courses, cemeteries, fish and game clubs, recreational camps, or excess land at municipal facilities). *Public use may or may not be allowed or may be restricted to members.*
Regulated Open Space	Land with environmental constraints (such as wetlands or floodplains) which will likely not be developed in the future. *Public use generally not allowed unless on public property.*

Dedicated Open Space

Hodges Village

Managed Open Space

Golf Course

Open Space

Oxford, MA

LEICESTER

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

DUDLEY

WEBSTER

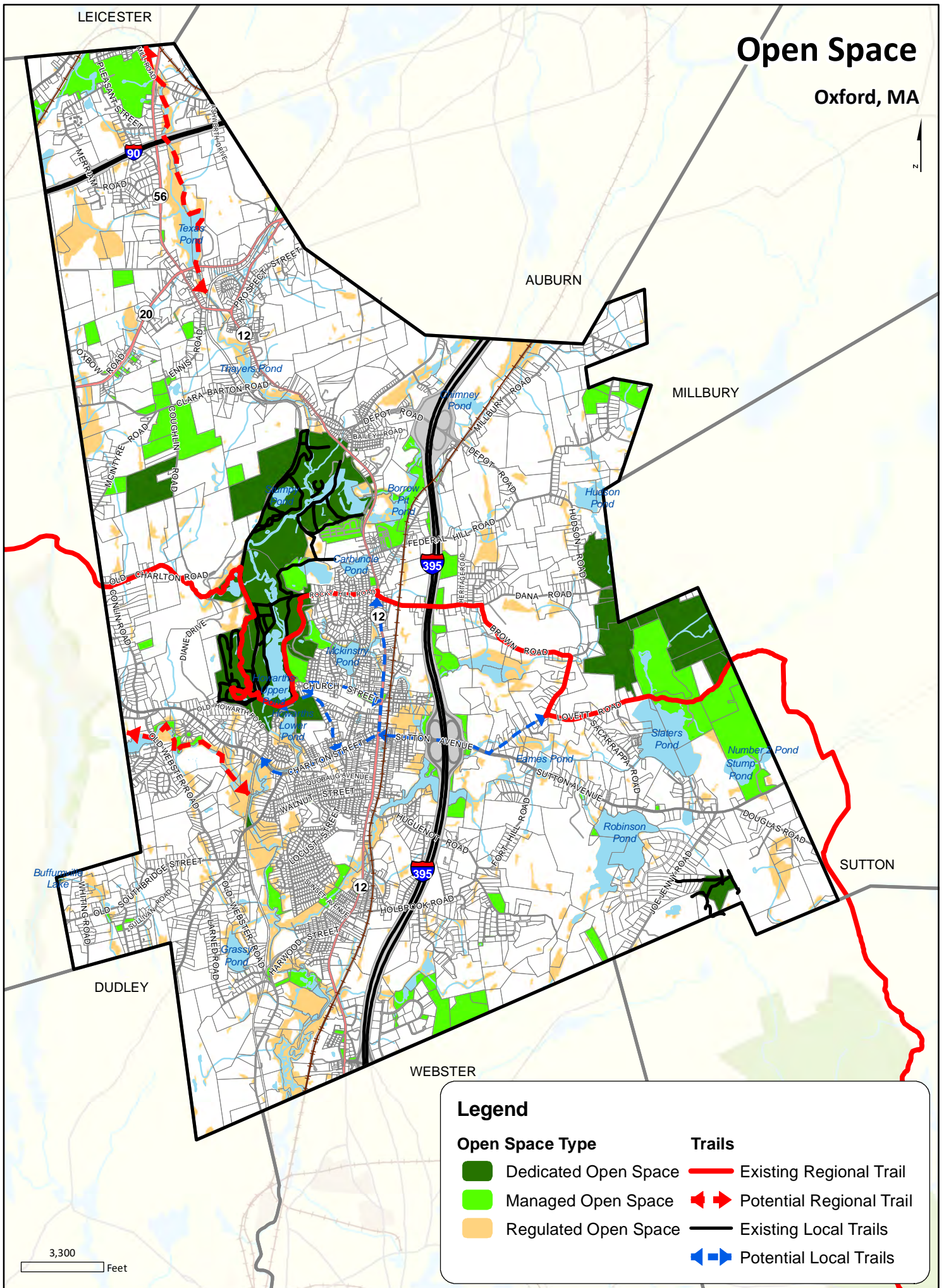3,300 Feet

Legend

Open Space Type

- ⬛ Dedicated Open Space
- 🟩 Managed Open Space
- 🟧 Regulated Open Space

Trails

- ▬▬ Existing Regional Trail
- ◀━ ▶ Potential Regional Trail
- ▬▬ Existing Local Trails
- ◀┅ ▶ Potential Local Trails

The map on the facing page depicts lands in Oxford identified as "managed open space."

The following types of land are not considered to be open space for the purposes of the Master Plan although they do contribute to overall community character:

Category	Description
Chapter 61 Lands	Land that receives a reduced assessment since the owner has enrolled it as forestry, agriculture, or open space/ recreation land. The Town has a right of first refusal to acquire the property but future development is not prohibited. *Public use generally not allowed*.
Private Undeveloped Land	Private land that is presently vacant or partially developed. While this land may appear to be "open space", nothing prevents this land from being sold or developed at some time in the future. *Public use generally not allowed by private owners.*

At some point, the Conservation Commission or the Open Space Committee should go through a comprehensive analysis of these parcels and areas (and other parcels and areas in Oxford) to ensure there is an up-to-date inventory of parcels already preserved and parcels where open space preservation efforts might be focused. In particular, there are a number of Town-owned parcels that should be evaluated for open space value and/or future disposition (keep as open space, hold for future decision, sell to abutters, convey to other organizations, etc.).

Managed Open Space

Managed Open Space

Camp Clara Barton

Huguenot Fort

Managed Open Space

Oxford, MA

N

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

WEBSTER

DUDLEY

Texas Pond

Thayers Pond

Chimney Pond

Hudson Pond

Stumpy Pond

Borrow Pit Pond

Carbuncle Pond

Mckinstry Pond

Howarths Upper Pond

Howarths Lower Pond

Slaters Pond

Number 2 Pond Stump Pond

Eames Pond

Robinson Pond

Buffumville Lake

Grassy Pond

PLEASANT STREET

MILL ROAD

MERRIAM ROAD

NORTH RILEY

PROSPECT STREET

ENNIS ROAD

OXBOW ROAD

MCINTYRE ROAD

COUGHLIN ROAD

CLARA BARTON ROAD

DEPOT ROAD

BAILEY ROAD

MILLBURY ROAD

DEPOT ROAD

HUDSON ROAD

OLD CHARLTON ROAD

OLD CONLIN ROAD

DIANE DRIVE

FEDERAL HILL ROAD

HERITAGE ROAD

ROCKY HILL ROAD

DANA ROAD

BROWN ROAD

LOVETT ROAD

SCARRAPPA ROAD

DOUGLAS ROAD

CHURCH STREET

OLD HOWARTH ROAD

OLD WEBSTER ROAD

CHARLTON STREET

QUOBAUG AVENUE

WALNUT STREET

SUTTON AVENUE

SUTTON AVENUE

HUGUENOT ROAD

FORT HILL ROAD

JOE JENNY ROAD

LOCUST STREET

MAIN STREET

OLD SOUTHBRIDGE STREET

WHITING ROAD

SULLIVAN ROAD

LARNED ROAD

OLD WEBSTER ROAD

HARWOOD STREET

HOLBROOK ROAD

90

56

20

12

12

395

12

395

12

3,300 Feet

Legend

Cemetery	
Fish and Game Club	
Golf	
Homeowners Assoc.	
Mass Highway	
Other	
Town Land	

5.1 Create An Open Space "System"

Oxford should continue efforts to preserve open space.

However, rather than acquire any land as open space, Oxford should focus its efforts on preserving parcels which can be interconnected into a cohesive over-all "system." If Oxford can do this, the value of open space to residents and the impact on the community can grow exponentially through:

- increased accessibility for all residents,
- enhanced quality of life for residents,
- improved wildlife corridors, and
- more opportunities for active or passive use.

One way to enhance the utility and the quality of an open space system is to establish a system of greenways and trails. These "systems" add to the character of the Town and provide safe and relaxing recreation. Oxford should strive to create a system of greenways and trails.

Oxford already has a basic framework in place (Mid State Trail, Hodges Village trail system) and studies have looked at expansion potential on the Webster Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad line. The Master Plan recommends that Oxford connect these trail systems to the Town Center in a meaningful way to help strengthen the downtown area. One way is to add a "shortcut" from the Mid-State Trail through the Town Center by Lovett / Sutton / Charlton / Howarth streets.

5.1 Create An Open Space System	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue efforts to preserve open space, especially dedicated open space.	CC OSC	Town
2. Strive to establish an open space system by creating a system of greenways and trails.	CC OSC	PB Town
3. As opportunities arise, strive to establish public access (including access easements) wherever possible.	CC OSC	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. Seek to establish a regional trail on the Webster Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad line.	CC OSC	Town CMRPC
2. Connect the regional trails and the trails at Hodges Village to the Town Center in a meaningful way.	CC OSC	Town
3. Create and distribute maps to identify publicly accessible open space areas and trails in Oxford.	CC OSC	Town

5.2 Maximize Open Space Tools

Tools available to preserve open space include one or more (or a combination) of the following:

Municipal Tools	1. Municipal purchase of land / development rights / easements for open space preservation with local funding. 2. Municipal action on the right of first refusal associated with "Chapter 61" designation of lands with local funding. 3. An open space set-aside in a cluster development in accordance with Chapter XIII of the Zoning Bylaw (no percentage specified). 4. An open space dedication by a developer at the time of development.
Other Tools	5. State / federal grants to fund open space acquisition. 6. State / federal purchase of land / development rights for open space. 7. Acquisition by a Land Trust or other non-profit entity for the purpose of open space preservation. 8. Donations of land by conservation minded property owners.

Despite several attempts, Oxford residents have been unwilling to authorize participation in the Massachusetts "Community Preservation Act." This Act would have allowed access to state funds for open space preservation (and other things) provided the community raised additional funds locally. Oxford should continue to seek opportunities to participate in the Community Preservation Act since state taxes paid by residents are currently going to other communities.

5.2 Maximize Open Space Tools	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Identify and implement as many tools as possible to help preserve open space.	CC OSC	Town
2. Maintain a land acquisition fund to set aside municipal funds for open space purchases.	BOS	FC CC OSC
3. Annually appropriate municipal funds to acquire open space.	BOS	FC
4. Continue to seek opportunities to participate in the Community Preservation Act.	CC OSC	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. *Amend the Subdivision Bylaw* to more strongly encourage "cluster development" and open space preservation as part of new residential subdivisions.	PB	Town

Open Space Funding

Local funding for open space acquisition can come from:

- an appropriation in the annual operating budget,

- an appropriation in the annual capital budget,

- a special appropriation from a Town Meeting or referendum,

- a special appropriation from a bond authorization at Town Meeting or referendum,

- a special appropriation from an open space fund or from municipal surplus.

OSRP Recommendation

There is a recommendation in the Community Facilities chapter that Oxford consider preparing an "open space and recreation plan" in accordance with State guidelines. Preparing such a plan will help further identify desirable open space areas in Oxford and provide access to grant funding to help preserve them.

Open Space Organizations

For many years, the Conservation Commission was the leader in terms of local efforts to preserve land as open space. Those efforts were guided by several Open Space and Recreation Plans (1988 and 2007).

In 2006, the Town established an Open Space Committee to recommend the acquisition of specific parcels for open space, conservation and/or passive recreation.

However, over time, the Open Space Committee ended up without a full complement of appointments.

5.3   Support Open Space Organizations

To guide the preservation of open space, Oxford needs an active and functioning organization to guide local efforts. As indicated in the sidebar, such an organization does not exist at the present time.

The Town should evaluate whether an Open Space Committee is the best approach to having an effective open space advocacy group in Town Hall. If it is, the Open Space Committee should have a full complement of members. If it is not, the Open Space Committee might be disbanded and the open space activities could be folded back in to the Conservation Commission (which has a dedicated staff person).

Oxford should support the establishment of a local land conservation trust (typically known as a "land trust"). Land trusts are private, non-profit organizations formed to preserve sensitive natural areas, farmland, water sources, cultural resources, open space or notable landmarks. Land trusts are able to devote more time and attention to land conservation over time than a municipality can. Having a land trust in Oxford would help to preserve land in the community and help accomplish the overall open space objectives.

Oxford should also continue to coordinate open space efforts with adjacent communities, recognized conservation organizations, and regional organizations.

5.3 Support Open Space Organizations	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to coordinate open space preservation efforts with adjacent communities, recognized conservation organizations, and regional organizations.	CC OSC	Town
2. Work with the Southern Massachusetts Community Land Trust and similar organizations to help preserve open space.	CC OSC	
3. Support establishment of an Oxford land Trust.	Residents	CC OSC
B. Action Steps		
1. Reinvigorate the Open Space Committee or fold their charge into the work of the Conservation Commission.	BOS	CC OSC

ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

6

Overview

Oxford residents consistently express the opinion that protecting community character is important to them. While the components of community character may differ from person to person, The Master Plan discusses the following elements of community character:

- historic resources.
- farms and farming.
- undeveloped land.
- scenic attributes.
- architecture of new buildings.
- maintenance of existing buildings and sites.
- other features that enhance the physical environment and/or the quality of life in the community.

Maintaining and enhancing community character is important to Oxford residents and an important element of the Plan.

How important is this resource in contributing to a positive quality of life in the Town of Oxford for you and your household	Very important / Somewhat important
Scenic roads and views	98%
Peace and quiet	90%
Small town character	87%

Oxford intends to maintain and enhance elements that contribute to the character of the community.

"Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it."

Confucius, Chinese Philosopher

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the official list of America's historic places considered worthy of preservation. Resources can include:

- National Landmarks
- NRHP Districts (including contributing and non-contributing structures)
- NRHP Places (individual sites, buildings, structures, etc.).

State Register of Historic Places

The State Register of Historic Places (SRHP) is the official list of Massachusetts' historic places considered worthy of preservation.

Properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places are automatically listed on the State Register of Historic Places.

6.1   Protect Historic Resources

Oxford contains a number of historic buildings and sites and such resources contribute to the overall character of the community. In the 2016 town-wide survey, about 61 percent of households felt that historical resources were important in contributing to a positive quality of life in the Town of Oxford.

Some of the different types of historic resources are listed in the sidebar. The National Register of Historic Places is primarily a recognition program intended to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources. Listing on the National Register may not impose significant restrictions on the property owner and may provide opportunities for tax credits or other benefits. Individual listings on the National Register of Historic Places include:

- Bartlett's Bridge, Clara Barton Rd.
- Clara Barton Homestead, Clara Barton Rd.
- Hudson House, Hudson Rd.
- Huguenot Fort, Fort Hill Rd.

As can be seen from the map on the facing page, there are a number of other resources identified on the State Register of Historic Places or identified as a contribution structure within a historic district.

Clara Barton Homestead

Model of Huguenot Fort

Historic Resources - Overall
Oxford, MA

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

DUDLEY

WEBSTER

Legend

- **National Register of Historic Places - Contributing Structure** (red dot)
- **State Register of Historic Places - Contributing Structure** (purple dot)
- **National Register of Historic Places - District Listing** (green outline)
- **State Register of Historic Places - District Listing** (purple fill)
- **Historic Resources - Town Center (See Separate Map)** (green outline)

3,300
Feet

The most effective means of protecting historic resources (listed from more effective to less effective) can include:

1. responsible ownership or sensitive stewardship (owners who care about the historic integrity of a building or structure are the most effective stewards of such property).
2. local historic districts with regulatory boards.
3. use of historic overlay zones / adaptive re-use in zoning bylaws.
4. tax incentive or tax abatement programs.
5. designation on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

| 6.1 Protecting Historic Resources	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to encourage identification and protection historical and archeological resources.	HC	
2. Promote educational programs so people are aware of the value of historic and archeological resources.	HC	
3. Continue to allow adaptive reuse of historic buildings when it will aid in the preservation of the historic structure and is appropriate given the location of the site.	PB	CC
B. Action Steps		
1. _Adopt an ordinance_ (a "demolition delay ordinance") to provide for a window of time to see if a historic structure can be saved or relocated rather than demolished.	HC	BOS
2. Establish / maintain a "plaque" program to help identify local historic buildings and places.	HC	

Historic Buildings On Main Street

Bartlett's Bridge

Historic Resources - Town Center

Oxford, MA

Mckinstry Pond
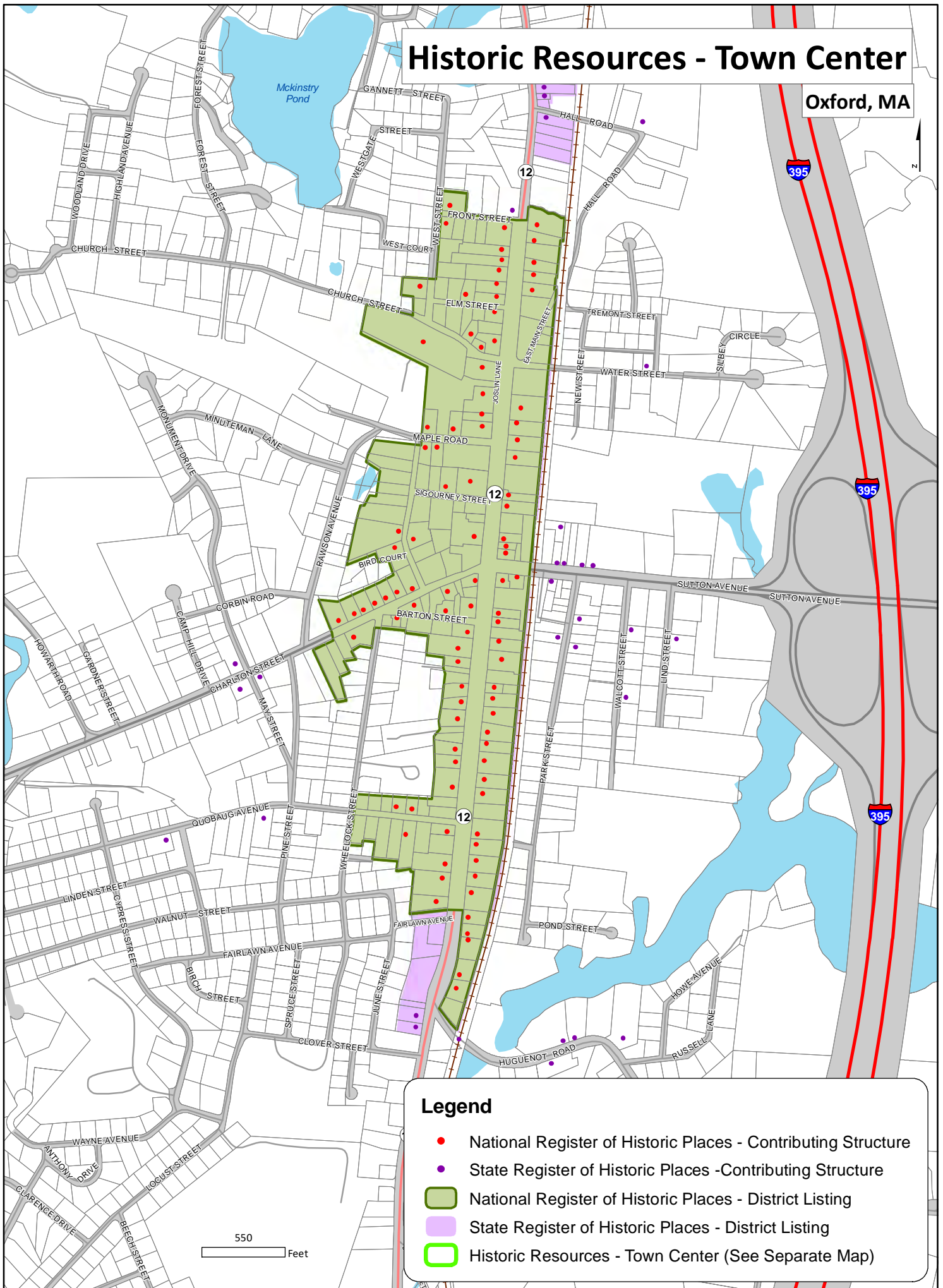
Legend

- ● National Register of Historic Places - Contributing Structure
- ● State Register of Historic Places - Contributing Structure
- ▢ National Register of Historic Places - District Listing
- ▢ State Register of Historic Places - District Listing
- ▢ Historic Resources - Town Center (See Separate Map)

550 Feet

6.2 Support Farms and Farming

- Agriculture Preservation

Farming Initiatives

In 2010, Oxford established an Agricultural Commission to advocate for farming and agriculture in Oxford and to promote and protect agricultural interests (Chapter 69 of the General By-Laws).

In 2011, Oxford adopted a "right to farm" by-law to encourage the pursuit of agriculture, promote agriculture-based economic opportunities, and protect farmlands within the Town of Oxford by allowing agricultural uses and related activities to function with minimal conflict with abutters and Town agencies when conducted in accordance with generally accepted agricultural practices (Chapter 70 of the General By-Laws).

Farms and farming are a large part of the history and character of Oxford and contribute to the overall community in many ways. Support of agricultural activities is an important aspect of encouraging a more livable community and a sustainable future. It is the hope of this Master Plan that farming will continue and be a part of Oxford's future as well.

6.2 Support Farms and Farming	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to support farms and farming.	AC	CC
2. Seek to preserve existing agricultural lands and farmland soils that have potential for agricultural use.	AC	CC Town

Farms And Agricultural Lands In Oxford
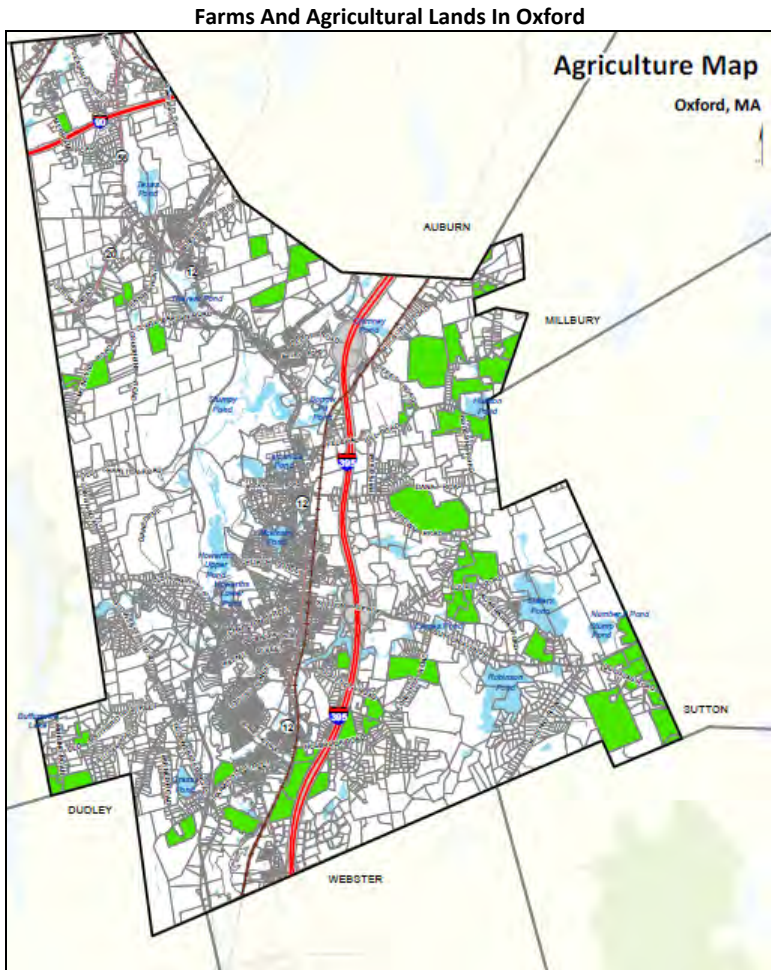
6.3   Preserve Other Undeveloped Land

Community character often comes down to the perception of the amount of undeveloped land in a community. Oxford wants to promote policies that help retain undeveloped land as long as possible.

Chapter 61 of the Massachusetts General Laws allows a community to assess land by its use value (forestry, agriculture, or open space/ recreation land) rather than its market value. The use assessment reduces the tax burden on the properties and reduces the possibility that land will be put into development if people cannot afford the taxes. The program enhances the perception of open space in Oxford since it helps land remain undeveloped longer and it reduces the pace of growth. It also gives the municipality the opportunity to purchase land enrolled in the program if it is to be sold.

There are different types of signals to the community that land in the Chapter 61 program may be in the process of being contemplated for development:

- **Sale** – the Town receives notice that a bona fide offer to purchase the property is pending and the Town has 120 days to match the sale price
- **Conversion** – the Town receives notice that the owner intends to "convert" the property to development and the Town has 30 days to prepare an appraisal (with the possibility of additional appraisals) and then 120 days to act
- **Passive** – the Chapter 61 designation is not renewed (one year grace period where the right-of-first refusal is still operative and 5-year period to capture foregone taxes)

Given the relatively short time frame for the municipality to respond, Oxford hopes to have a "quick response" approach (including possible priorities) to react to Chapter 61 opportunities that may arise.

6.3 Preserve Undeveloped Land	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Encourage the retention of undeveloped residentially-zoned land.	CC	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. Review and refine procedures (and priorities) for how to respond should Chapter 61 land become available.	BOS	FC Town
2. Strive to set aside funds for possible Chapter 61 land acquisition.	FC	BOS Town

Trees

Mature trees and the overall tree canopy (especially along streets) contribute significantly to the overall character of the community.

People tend to take trees for granted when, in reality, trees may be at risk if they are not well-maintained.

While Oxford has a Tree Warden that oversees trees on public property, it makes sense to be proactive in terms of managing (including maintaining and replacing) trees in key locations. Oxford will continue efforts to manage trees in the community.

Since trees are also a cause of electrical outages from storms and severe weather, Oxford will continue to balance tree preservation and the planting of new trees with the desire for a reliable and resilient electrical system.

6.4   Preserve Scenic Attributes

Scenic Resources – Scenic resources contribute to community character. It is wise to identify important scenic resources up front if Oxford is to be effective at protecting them. Due to its topography, Oxford has a number of scenic views (such as those from Fort Hill). Scenic views should be protected to the extent feasible. Oxford has designated a number of roads as scenic roads and this means that there shall be no cutting of trees or removal of stone walls without a public hearing and permission from the Town. Oxford should continue to protect the scenic character of local roads.

Town Center – Oxford has a wonderful town center area with a number of historic buildings and one of the widest main streets in new England, Oxford should strive to preserve, maintain, and enhance the scenic attributes of the Town Center area.

Enhance Gateways – Gateways are entry points to a community and provide an opportunity to define to residents and visitors that they have entered a special place. Oxford should seek ways to identify and improve gateways. This may or may not include signage.

6.4 Preserve Scenic Attributes	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue efforts to preserve scenic resources in Oxford such as scenic views, ridgelines, etc.	CC	PB Town
2. Continue to identify and protect scenic roads.	CC	BOS
3. Promote the establishment of community gateway features (signage, landscaping, lighting, etc.) and other elements that contribute to community character.	CC	BOS Town
4. Continue to retain, replace, and establish street trees along existing streets and in new developments.	PW PB	
B. Action Steps		
1. Investigate ways to bury overhead wires and utility cables when opportunities arise.	Town	
2. Establish a street tree maintenance program.	PW	
3. Establish a street tree planting program (new and replacement).	PW	
4. Develop a list of appropriate street trees.	CC	

Other Character Features

Oxford, MA

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

WEBSTER

DUDLEY
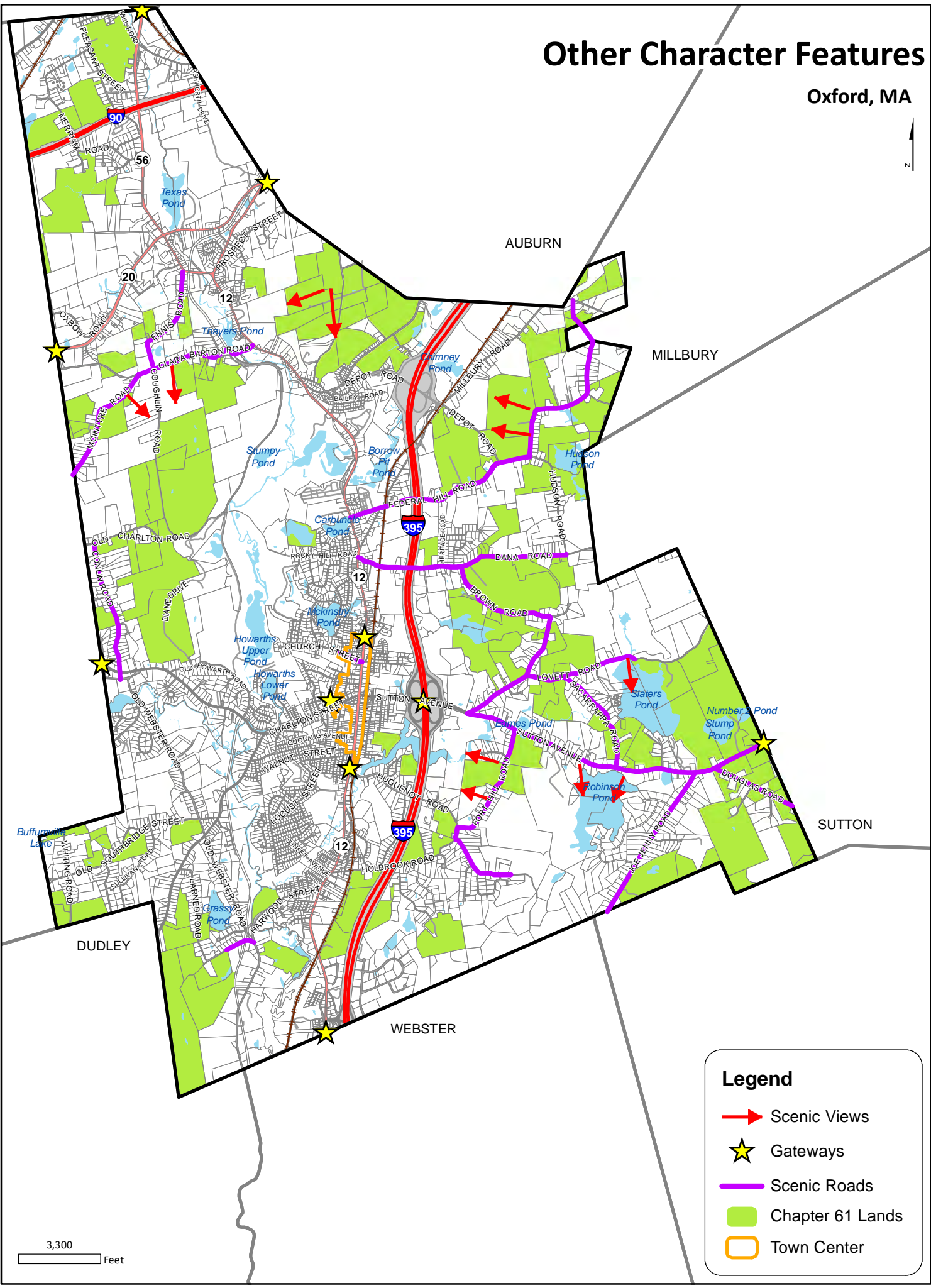
Legend

→ Scenic Views

★ Gateways

— Scenic Roads

▮ Chapter 61 Lands

▯ Town Center

3,300 Feet

6.5   Promote Architectural Character

Architectural design contributes to community character. Buildings that complement Oxford's identity as a New England town contribute to community character. Buildings that are fundamentally out of character or scale will negatively affect community character.

In the community survey, Oxford residents indicated that community design and architectural character were important, especially in the Town Center:

	Very important / Somewhat important
Improvements to buildings in the Town center should strive to maintain the historical character of the area.	81%
The design of business buildings is an important consideration in any new development in Oxford.	70%

Oxford will seek ways to encourage and promote architectural character as part of new development and redevelopment in the community.

6.5 Promote Architectural Character	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Promote appropriate building and site design.	*ARB*	PB Town
2. Encourage developments that contribute to, and enhance, a "sense of place" in Oxford.	*ARB*	PB Town
B. Action Steps		
1. *Amend the Zoning Bylaw* to add language to the Special Permit section incorporating a finding of compatibility of building and site design to the decision-making process.	PB	TM
2. Establish design guidelines for commercial uses and for special permit uses in residential zones.	*ARB*	PB
3. Establish an award program for excellence in building and/or site design.	*ARB*	PB

Sample Design Guidelines From Other Communities

Interconnecting Sites
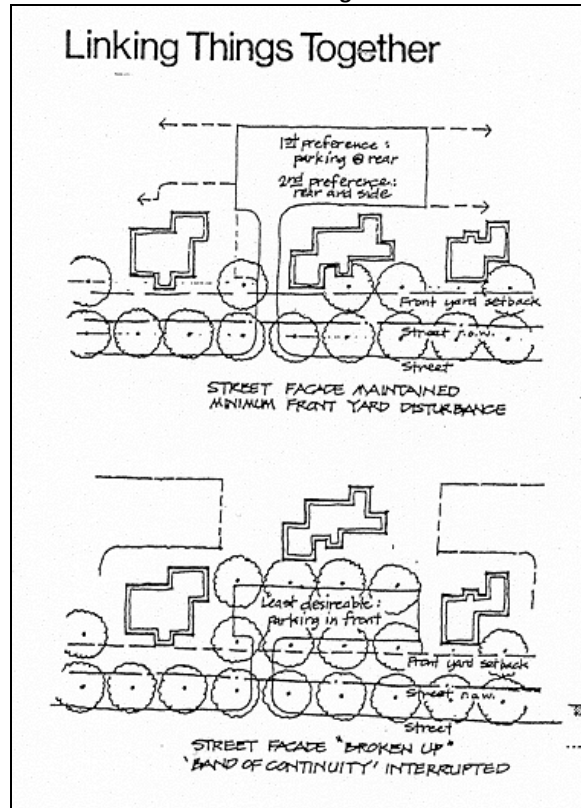
Landscaping Recommendations
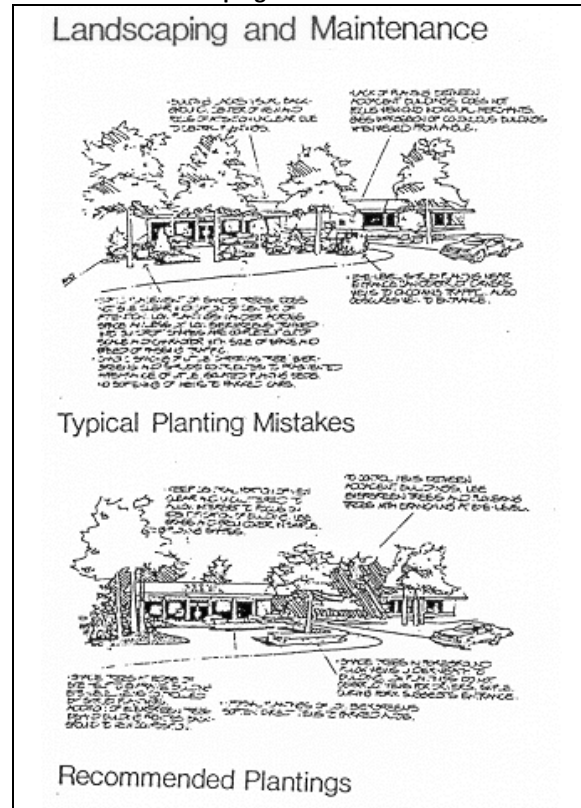
Use of Building Modifiers

Use of Building Modifiers

6.6   Address Property Maintenance

One of the things that can negatively affect the character of a community and detract from the overall quality of life is proper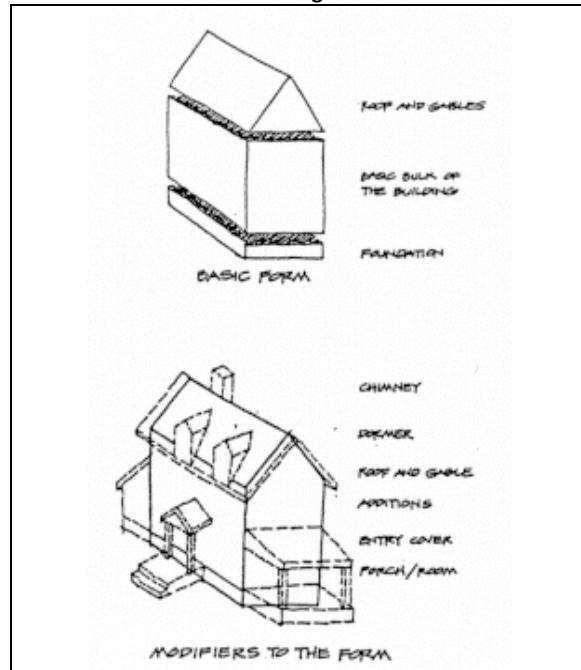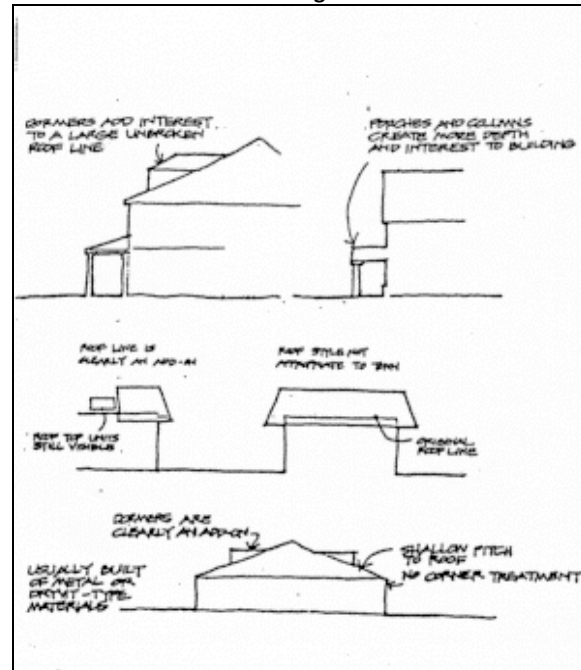ties that are not maintained or become dilapidated. These situations, if they occur, can have a significant impact on the properties around them.

The Town maintains an inventory of potentially distressed properties. Historically, the Town has intervened only when there is a public health or safety issue. This has reflected a desire to respect private property and not place undue burdens on property owners. However, the prevention of blight and the remediation of a blighted property (especially in the Town Center area) is important to the general well-being of the community and additional tools should be put in place in case they are needed.

Oxford will investigate enacting a "blight ordinance" that will enable the Town to address the issue of blight or lack of maintenance directly.

6.6 Address Property Maintenance	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to encourage property maintenance.	Town	BOH
2. Continue to promote housing rehabilitation, especially when it enhances public health and safety and reduces negative impacts on adjacent properties.	Town	BOH
3. Continue efforts to address "blight" or property maintenance where it has a negative effect on surrounding properties or the community.	Town	BOH
B. Action Steps		
1. Enact an ordinance that will enable the Town to address the issue of blight / property maintenance directly.	BOS	TM

6.7   Promote Community Spirit

Community spirit is an important concept that contributes to the overall charac-ter of Oxford. Spirit is the feeling residents have about their community and how it projects to the outside world. The following table identifies some of the resources that have been identified as contributing to community spirit:

Resource	Description
Community Pride	Oxford should help build "team spirit" and help residents (and others) see the positives about the community.
"Branding"	Create a lasting, positive impression about what makes Oxford special.
Unique Events	Unique events (parades, fairs, and concerts) where resi-dents join in a common activity add to community spirit.
Volunteers	Volunteers and organizations help make Oxford a special place and help build community spirit.
Communication	Keeping people involved in community issues and priorities helps maintain community spirit.

Spirit Resources

- Founders Day
- Community concerts
- Community parades
- Community pride
- Local sports leagues / events

Community Projects

Canoe Launch

Community Recognition

Community Improvements

Playground Improvement

Community Contributions

Little League Donation

Communication

During the planning process, residents suggested that it would be helpful if the Town were to explore and implement ways to enhance communication with residents.

Some people thought it would be wonderful to see Oxford hold regular community workshops to inform and empower citizens.

Some people thought that information needs to be sent to people and that this could be accomplished through social media accounts (or an e-mail news registry) with bi-weekly updates on activities going on in the community.

Residents thought this would help people better understand and appreciate what goes on at Town Hall and help create interest in serving on a Town board or commission.

In the community survey, almost two-thirds of residents felt that Oxford should have more community events and activities to involve residents.

6.7 Promote Community Spirit	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue efforts to build community pride and spirit.	Town	BOS
2. Continue efforts to establish a positive "brand" for Oxford.	Town	BOS
3. Continue to encourage programs that contribute to community pride and spirit (such as concerts on the Town Green).	CUL RC BC	Town
4. Continue to encourage local organizations and volunteer contributions.	Town	BOS
5. Improve community communications.	Town	BOS
B. Action Steps		
1. Seek to re-establish "Founders Day."	Town	BOS CUL RC BC
2. Establish a program of recognizing municipal volunteers through events such as an annual picnic.	Town	BOS
3. Hold regular community workshops to inform and empower citizens.	Town	BOS

ENHANCE OXFORD CENTER

7

Overview

The downtown area in Oxford is a major community focal point and an important element of the Master Plan. Oxford residents want to strengthen and improve the Town Center.

In years gone by, downtown Oxford was an integral part of the daily lives of Oxford residents since people lived and worked in and near the downtown and this was where the business, civic, social, and cultural activities took place.

However, following World War II, the transition to an automobile-based culture and shopping preferences diverted the attention of shoppers to retail shopping centers and away from downtown areas. As people moved to locations in Oxford where they needed to drive to everything, the locational advantages once enjoyed by downtown were eroded.

Now, however, changing demographics, changing lifestyles, and consumer spending patterns are contributing to greater interest in downtown areas.

It is a long term goal of the town to attract and retain development that serves the needs of Oxford residents and visitors.

"At the center of your being you have the answer; you know who you are and you know what you want."

Lao Tzu
Chinese Philosopher

Oxford intends to promote development of downtown in ways that will help create and maintain a "sense of place."

7.1 Strengthen And Enhance Downtown

Over the years, Oxford residents have clearly stated that it is their desire to preserve the village scale and historical character of the downtown. However, this desire has not always translated into actions and regulations (see sidebar).

Oxford intends to implement programs and regulations to help preserve and protect the character of downtown Oxford. In addition, it is a long term goal to promote development and redevelopment that serves the needs of Oxford residents and visitors.

Oxford intends to seek ways to reinvigorate the downtown area and create a vibrant town center with a strong "sense of place." Changing demographics, changing lifestyles, and consumer spending patterns are contributing to greater interest in downtown areas and so, the next ten years could prove to be pivotal in the long term efforts to strengthen downtown.

7.1 Strengthen And Enhance Downtown	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Reinvigorate the downtown area in Oxford and create a vibrant downtown.	Town	
2. Attract and retain development in the downtown area that serves the needs of Oxford residents and visitors.	Town	
3. Preserve and protect the character of downtown Oxford	*ARB*	PB
B. Action Steps		
1. *Amend the Zoning Bylaw* to require that new development and redevelopment protect the character of downtown (see the 2007 Downtown Preservation Study).	PB	TM

Historic Character   **Current Character**

7.2   Enhance "Pedestrian-Friendliness"

Maintaining and enhancing the pedestrian-friendliness of downtown should be a key recommendation of the Master Plan. Pedestrian-friendliness contributes to the overall experience and ambience in the downtown area and the overall "sense of place."

As one example, whenever a driveway crosses a sidewalk, the sidewalk grade and surface should be maintained to the extent feasible to clearly indicate that this a pedestrian area (rather than a vehicular area).

7.2 Enhance "Pedestrian-Friendliness"	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Focus on the quality of the streetscape (the "public realm") in downtown, not just development on private lands in order to enhance the pedestrian experience: • appropriate sidewalk widths • buildings brought close to or at the street with as continuous a street façade wall as possible • active first floor uses / outdoor dining, etc. • crosswalks with signage, signals and call buttons • pedestrian amenities (trees, benches, lighting, flowers, hanging baskets, fountains, etc.) • mid-block / off-street pedestrian connections • connections to outlying areas / neighborhoods	PB	*ARB*
2. Discourage driveways that interrupt the sidewalk and/or continue sidewalks over driveways to make it clear that pedestrians have priority.	PB	*ARB*
B. Action Steps		
3. Adopt a "Model Block" specification for private improvements / extensions to existing sidewalks.	PB	*ARB*

Pedestrian Friendly

Pedestrian Crosswalk

7.3   Address Downtown Traffic Issues

Traffic issues are a common complaint in downtown. North-south traffic has always been present as people traveled back and forth between Webster and Auburn and Worcester. However, within the past several decades, with the construction of Interstate 395 and the development of the Home Depot / Market Basket complex, traffic from Oxford, Charlton, Dudley, and other communities are adding east-west traffic flows to the key intersection in the downtown.

Traffic backups are common on all approaches in peak hours. Turning movements (left-turns) can be particularly problematic given signal timing. There is limited space to add additional lanes and this concept would have significant negative impacts on the character of downtown.

A traffic overview conducted in 2007 offered the following comments and insight:
- it is likely that congestion will continue to build.
- increasing congestion will likely have a negative impact on a number of uses in the downtown area.
- installing a median or traffic signals (at combined driveways) on Sutton Avenue might eventually be warranted depending on traffic movements entering the roadway.

Southbound Congestion on Route 12

Westbound Congestion on Sutton Avenue

The most immediate strategy is to retime / replace the traffic signal. Ensuring the traffic signals operate at peak efficiency can help address congestion in this location. The Town is also looking at having a "smart signal" installed to detect the traffic demand in real time on each of the approaches and adjust the signal timing to address actual traffic volumes. This approach will help to maximize the capacity of the current intersection configuration.

Longer term, another solution may be needed. Other options which have been discussed but *are not endorsed at this time* include:
- a "roundabout," and
- converting Charlton Street to one-way westbound with Barton Street converted to one-way eastbound.

The recent addition of a two-way left-turn lane had alleviated some of the problems on Sutton Avenue (caused by a multitude of commercial driveways and street intersections) but traffic trying to **_enter_** the roadway can still cause issues. This situation should continue to be monitored.

7.3 Address Downtown Traffic Issues	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Address and resolve traffic issues in downtown Oxford.	PW	CMRPC MDOT PD
B. Action Steps		
1. In the short term, revise the operation of the traffic signal at the intersection of Main Street and Charlton Street / Sutton Avenue to maximize the capacity of the current intersection.	PW	CMRPC MDOT PD
2. Continue to evaluate traffic operations on Sutton Avenue to manage the vehicular conflicts in this section.	PW	CMRPC MDOT PD

7.4   Improve Parking In Downtown

The availability of adequate parking is a key consideration for a downtown area for the following reasons:
- there must be enough to support activity levels in the downtown on most occasions.
- there cannot be so much parking that it dominates the overall appearance of the downtown and prevents it from having a "sense of place."
- the distribution (or location) of parking is important.
- parking has to be visible and safe.

Overall, it seems that Oxford has enough parking for the level of activity in downtown today. However, there are some areas where it feels (and appears) there is a shortage of parking. The goal is to increase the level of activity in downtown and provide for parking where people will want it.

On-street parking can be of significant benefit to a downtown area (visible, convenient, pedestrian-friendly, etc.) and should be retained and encouraged whenever opportunities arise.

7.4 Improve Parking In Downtown	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Improve parking in downtown Oxford.	PB	PW
2. Promote a parking philosophy where people park once downtown and visit many destinations as a pedestrian.	PB	
3. Maintain and promote on-street parking wherever possible in the downtown.	PW	CMRPC MDOT
B. Action Steps		
1. Consider allowing / requiring the provision of additional on-street parking.	PB	PW
2. *Amend the Zoning Bylaw* to reduce parking requirements for downtown since mixed use areas do not require the number of parking spaces required by the current Zoning Bylaw.	PB	TM
3. *Amend the Zoning Bylaw* to require the interconnection of parking areas and the sharing for driveways so that buildings can be built along the street with ample convenient parking to the rear.	PB	TM
4. Investigate the establishment of public parking areas.	Town	BOS
5. Improve signage / wayfinding to parking areas.	Town	PW

Unshared Parking And Driveways

Three driveways on Main Street with individual parking areas

Shared Parking And Driveways

Two driveways on Main Street with a shared parking area creating the potential for:
- Building additions
- More landscaping
- Better traffic flow

7.5 Modify Downtown Zoning Districts

To promote appropriate development in the downtown area, the zoning districts should be revised.

First, some of the zoning districts in the core downtown area should be replaced by a new "Village Business" zone. This will create opportunities for development and redevelopment in places where that development will strengthen and enhance the downtown area. It should allow mixed use buildings provided the first floor uses along the street are devoted to business uses and residential uses are located on the upper floors. Residential back streets currently in a business zone should return to a residential zoning designation.

Second, some of the boundaries of the new "Village Business" zone should be different than the existing boundaries:
- on the west side of Route 12, the boundary of the new "Village Business" zone should be confined to properties fronting on Main Street and not extend further west into residential areas.
- the new "Village Business" zone should probably be extended down Charlton Street (perhaps as far as the current public works garage). Businesses and mixed use buildings in this area will help strengthen and extend the walkable, pedestrian-friendly nature of the downtown area.
- the new "Village Business" zone could be extended easterly along Sutton Avenue as well. While traffic volumes may make it challenging to create a pedestrian-friendly environment, this area is an integral part of the downtown core and should help enhance the village core.
- a "Housing Opportunity Overlay Zone" should be established to allow for higher density residential development in and near the downtown (especially if sewers can be made available to this area).

- Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)
- Smart Growth Zoning District

7.5 Modify Downtown Zoning Districts	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Revisit the zoning districts and boundaries in the downtown area.	PB	TM
B. Action Steps		
1. Revise the Zoning Bylaw and the Zoning Map to establish a "Village Business" zone.	PB	TM
2. Revise the Zoning Bylaw and the Zoning Map to establish a "Housing Opportunity Overlay" zone.	PB	TM
3. Revise the Zoning Map to locate zone boundaries to logical places.	PB	TM

Downtown Area Map

Oxford, MA

R2

GB

R3

R3

GB

HI

VB

R3

R2

GB

12

12

395

395
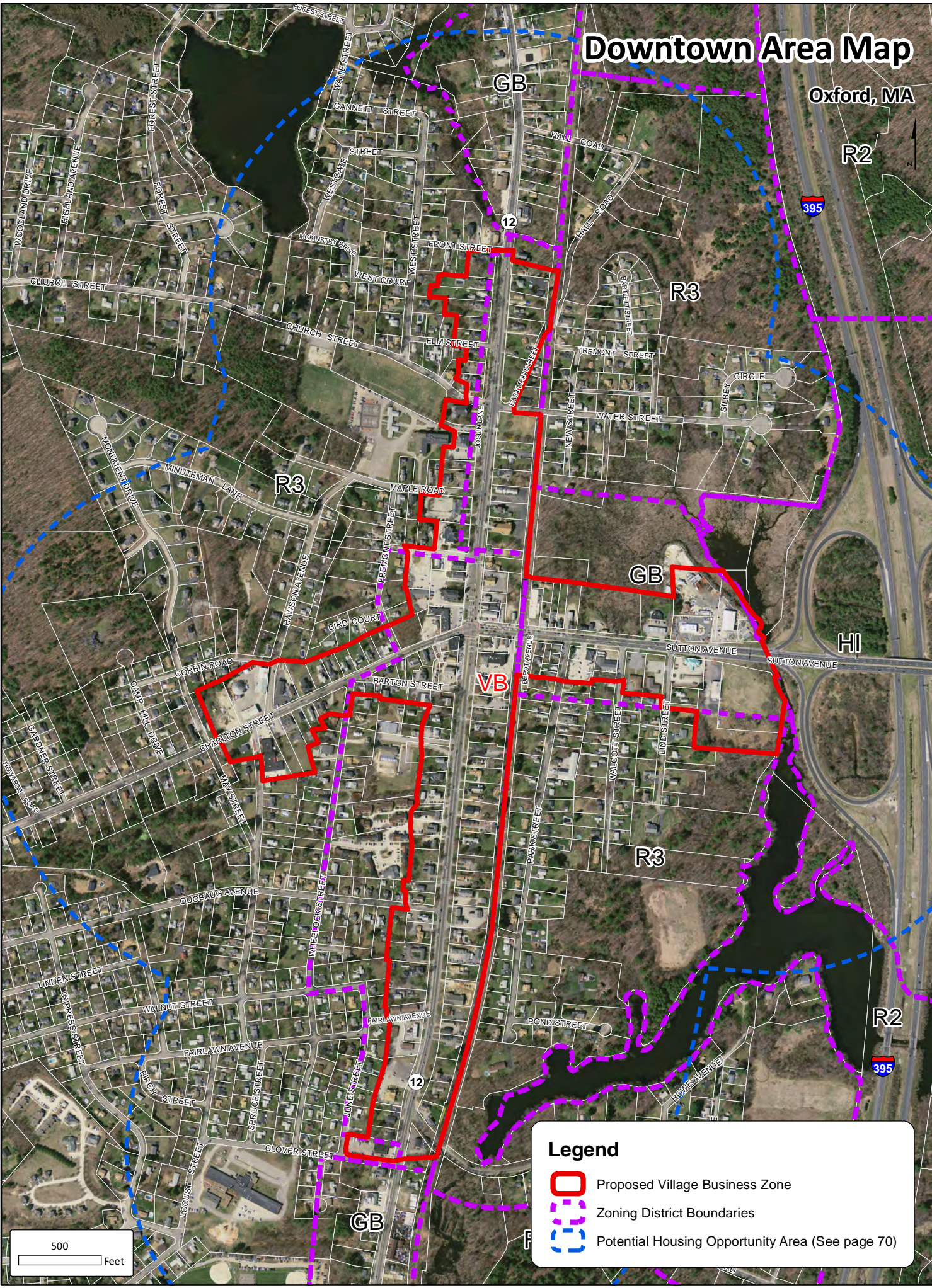
Legend

▭ Proposed Village Business Zone

▭ Zoning District Boundaries

▭ Potential Housing Opportunity Area (See page 70)

500 Feet

SMART GROWTH

- Business Improvement District
- District Improvement Financing
- Tax Increment Financing

food for thought

At some time in the future, it may be desirable to consider some other ways to improve and enhance downtown:

- establishment of a "business improvement district" to provide common services for properties in the area
- utilization of "district improvement financing" or "tax increment financing" to fund improvements in the area

7.6   Enhance Downtown In Other Ways

Oxford should also seek other opportunities to enhance and promote the downtown area.

7.6 Enhance Downtown In Other Ways	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Consider other ways to enhance the downtown area: • installing "gateway features" at key entry points • placing wired utilities underground • encouraging trail connections to Hodges Village, the Mid-State Trail, and other open space areas in Oxford • planting trees • adding benches and other pedestrian amenities • adding bike racks and other cycling amenities • expanding water and sewer services	Town	
2. Consider other ways to promote the downtown area: • scheduling special events downtown (such as Founders Day, art shows, musical events, etc.).	Town	PR CUL

Gateway Feature
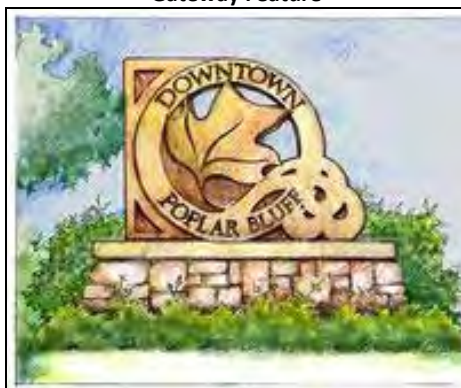
Downtown Event

ENCOURAGE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

8

Overview

Economic development in Oxford provides three key benefits to the community:
- jobs for residents of the community and the region,
- goods and services for residents of the community and the region,
- net tax revenue which helps support community services.

Encouraging economic development is important to Oxford residents and an important element of the Plan.

Oxford intends to encourage and promote economic growth that benefits the community.

"Economic growth and environmental protection can and should go hand in hand."

**Christopher Dodd
Former US Senator**

IPG Photonics

Wilson Language Training

8.1   Encourage Economic Development

Oxford has an excellent regional location, a number of areas zoned for business/industrial development, and benefits from having three I-395 interchanges within the town and an active freight rail line.

Oxford seeks to maintain and enhance business and economic development within the community. Over the years, these efforts have been supported by the Oxford Business Association, the Industrial Development Commission, and other entities.

In addition to business/industrial development, Oxford considers other uses which provide more in tax revenue that they require in municipal expenditures to be a form of economic development. This can include:
- some residential developments ("empty nester" housing, assisted living facilities, congregate housing, some multi-family developments), and
- major infrastructure projects (such as solar farms).

Oxford will also strive to convert "brownfield sites" (properties which may be challenged by historic contamination) to productive use.

8.1 Encourage Economic Development	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to encourage economic development to provide jobs, provide goods and services, and provide net tax revenue.	Town	BOS PB
2. Seek to be known as a "business-friendly" community.	Town	BOS PB
3. Continue to work with the Oxford Business Association, Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to promote economic growth of Oxford.	Town	BOS PB
4. Strive to convert "brownfield sites" (properties which may be challenged by historic contamination) to productive use.	Town	
B. Action Steps		
1. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ to simplify the approval process for as many uses as possible.	PB	TM
2. Investigate the desirability of offering tax incentives to attract additional business development.	BOS	FC

8.2   Guide Business Development

As shown on the Business Development map, Oxford has a number of business locations. Some issues related to business development in Oxford include:
- evident "strip development" patterns in some areas
- the need for architectural design guidance
- extremely detailed use tables in the Zoning Bylaw
- growing competition from on-line retail outlets

The survey indicated business development is important to Oxford residents:

	Very important / Somewhat important
Oxford should look at ways to get more business development in areas other than Route 12 & 20.	71%
The design of business buildings is an important consideration in any new development in Oxford.	70%
Oxford should look at ways to encourage more business development along Route 20	69%
Oxford should look at ways to encourage more business development along Route 12	65%
Oxford should offer property tax incentives for companies creating jobs and high value properties	65%

During the planning period, the main goals for business areas are to:
- encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings and sites,
- enhance the design of buildings and sites through a design review process or other means, and

8.2 Guide Business Development	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Discourage the further linear extension of business development along major roadways (i.e. – zone changes that would extend strip development patterns along main roads).	PB	
2. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings and sites.	PB	
B. Action Steps		
1. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ to delete the Office and Professional District since no such zones exist.	PB	TM
2. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ to simplify the use tables.	PB	TM
3. Rezone land along Route 56 (north of Route 20) to General Business to take advantage of this strategic location.	PB	TM

Strip-Type Development

Strip-type development typically refers to non-residential development that occurs along major roads in a linear fashion and may have:
- buildings that orient towards parking areas between the building(s) and the street,
- having one-story buildings with very simple architectural features,
- multiple curb cuts,
- limited pedestrian interconnections between sites, and
- uncoordinated signage.

Access Management

Access management refers to strategies to maintain roadway capacity (and reduce congestion) by controlling and sharing driveway. This is particularly relevant on major roadways and in commercial areas where turning movements are greatest.

The current standards in Chapter XI, Section 1.0 do not really limit access in a meaningful way and should be revisited. Much progress has been made in access management in the past several decades (since many of these provisions were enacted) and it would make sense to revisit these provisions:
- Inadequate driveway separation
- Special permit for combined driveways

8.3 Guide Industrial Development

As shown on the map on the facing page, Oxford has a number of industrial locations. Industrial areas in Oxford benefit from:
- access to a qualified workforce
- excellent access to the interstate highway system in some areas
- access to freight rail service in some areas

On the other hand, some areas may have issues such as:
- lack of utility service (public water, public sewer, natural gas) to some areas, especially areas with highly permeable soils
- challenging topography and/or soils in some areas
- non-optimal road access to some industrially-zoned areas and some in-dustrial zoned parcels due to lack of road frontage

8.3 Guide Industrial Development	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Seek to make the best and most efficient use of the areas presently zoned for industrial development.	PB	
2. Seek to improve the availability of water and sewer utilities to industrially-zoned areas.	PW	BOS PW
B. Action Steps		
1. Review the Zoning Bylaw to ensure the uses permitted are appropriate in the designated locations.	PB	Town
2. Review the zone boundaries of industrial districts since many districts do not follow property lines and this may cause issues over time.	PB	Town
3. Investigate the potential for industrial (or light industrial zoning) in strategic areas where such development might be appropriate: • near Texas Pond, • near Millbury Road and Dana Road, and/or • In the southwest corner of Oxford along Old Webster Road.	PB	Town

Business Development

Oxford, MA

MILLBURY

AUBURN

DUDLEY

WEBSTER

SUTTON

Texas Pond
Thayers Pond
Stumpy Pond
Borrow Pit Pond
Carbuncle Pond
Chimney Pond
Hudson Pond
McKinstry Pond
Howarths Upper Pond
Howarths Tower Pond
Eames Pond
Slaters Pond
Number 2 Pond
Stump Pond
Robinson Pond
Buffumville Lake
Grassy Pond

3,300 Feet
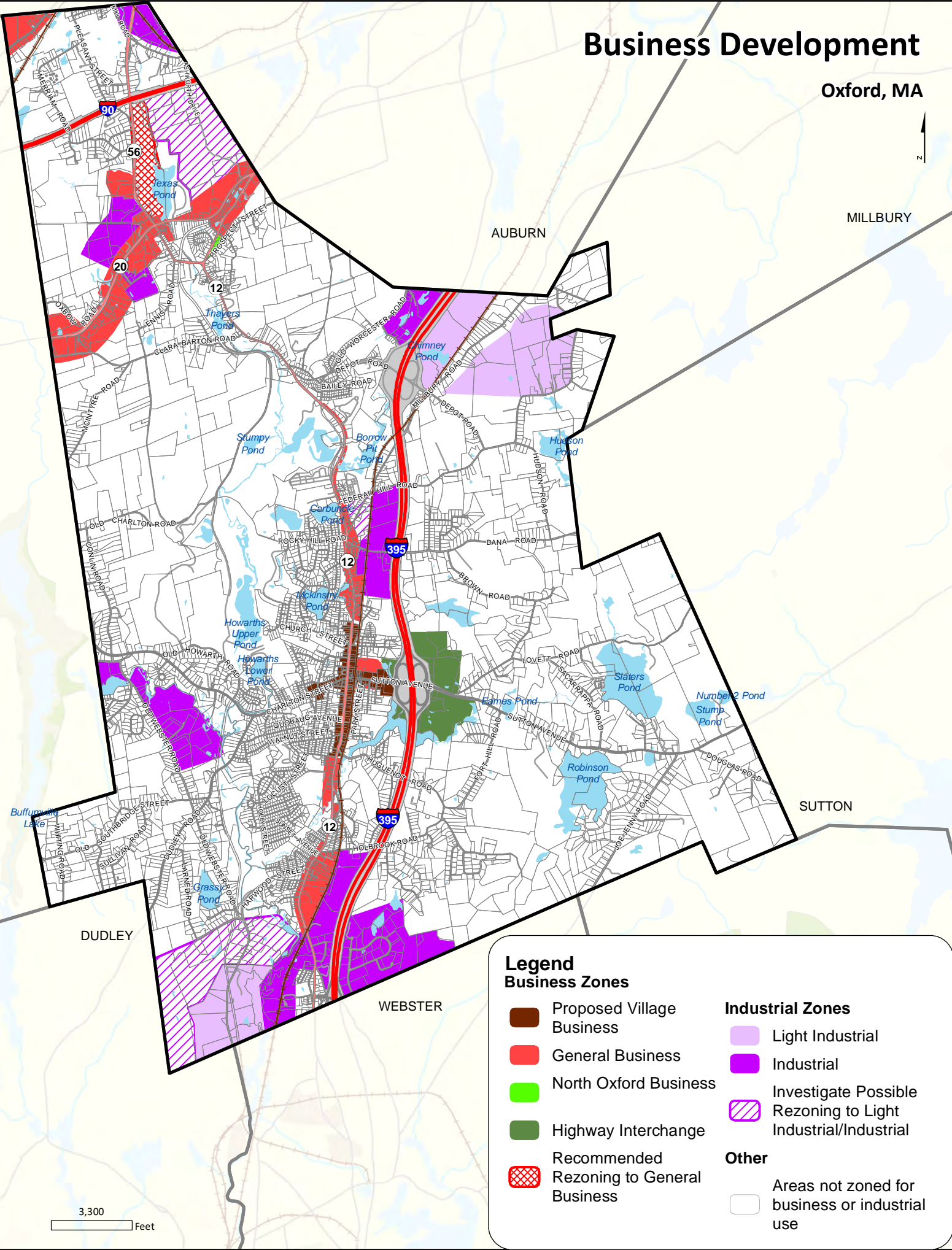
Legend
Business Zones

- Proposed Village Business
- General Business
- North Oxford Business
- Highway Interchange
- Recommended Rezoning to General Business

Industrial Zones

- Light Industrial
- Industrial
- Investigate Possible Rezoning to Light Industrial/Industrial

Other

- Areas not zoned for business or industrial use

8.4 Review Business Development Regulations

Oxford should also seek other opportunities to review and improve the regulations guiding business and industrial development.

- **Parking** – Review the parking regulations to ensure the parking ratios are relevant to actual parking need.

- **Parking** –Change the parking stall size to 9' x 18' to reduce impervious coverage and/or allow more development.

- **Landscaping** – Add landscape requirements to the Zoning Bylaw since the only requirements are limited to the parking section (Chapter XI, Section 6.0).

- **Home Occupations** – Consider allowing certain types of home occupations (such as office-type uses with no employees and other similar occupations) as accessory to a residence in all districts (Chapter III, Section 2.0) since such uses are currently not permitted in some districts.

- **Earth Removal** – Consider adding provisions to the earth removal regulations (Chapter XVIII) to provide that major earth removal operations prepare a closure plan (or a reuse plan) for their properties.

8.4 Review Business Development Regulations	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Maintain development regulations that are relevant to current community needs and development practices.	PB	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. Review development regulations on a regular basis, including, but not limited to: • Parking. • Signage. • Landscaping. • home occupations. • earth removal.	PB	Town TM

GUIDE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

<div style="text-align: right">

9

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Overview

Most of the land area of Oxford is zoned and used for residential purposes. Residential growth can be expected to continue due to Oxford's convenient location, range of housing choices, affordable prices, and quality of life.

"Home is the nicest word there is."

Laura Ingalls Wilder
American Writer

> **Oxford intends to guide housing development to meet community needs and enhance community character.**

Single Family Home

Single Family Home

Two-Family Building

Multi-Family Building

9.1   Guide Residential Development

Guiding residential development and maintaining the integrity of residential neighborhoods is an important recommendation of the Master Plan. Since most areas of Oxford rely on wells and septic systems, it is important to consider soil types, terrain, and infrastructure availability (and capacity) on development density.

In addition to considering soil characteristics, Oxford wants to limit _new build-ings_ with two or more families to locations in and near the downtown area and reserve outlying areas (where soil types are less favorable) to lower density single-family uses. Areas in and near Downtown (shown on the map as "Potential Housing Opportunity Area") are opportunities for allowing higher density development to help meet housing needs (seniors and affordable housing).

The following chart indicates how the residential zoning districts should be configured for different use categories:

Recommended Residential Use By Residential Zone

District	Single Family Dwelling	Two-Family Dwelling	Three Family Dwelling	Multi-Family
Rural R-1 (60,000 SF)	Permitted			
Suburban R-2 (40,000 SF)	Permitted	Could allow by Special Permit on larger lot		
Village R-3 (20,000 SF)	Permitted	Special Permit on larger lot	Special Permit on larger lot	Special Permit if in Housing Opportunity Overlay Zone
Multi-Family R-4	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Special Permit

9.1 Guide Residential Development		Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies		**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Protect residential areas from incompatible uses.		PB	Town
2. Maintain a residential zoning pattern that considers soil types, terrain, and infrastructure availability.		PB	Town
B. Action Steps			
1. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ to limit _new_ 2+ family dwellings to certain areas.		PB	TM
2. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ and _the Zoning Map_ to allow multi-family development by Special Permit in the Housing Opportunity Overlay Zone.			

Residential Densities

Oxford, MA

N

MILLBURY

AUBURN

SUTTON

DUDLEY

WEBSTER

Pleasant Street · Mill Road · Ashworth Drive · Merriam Road · Oxbow Road · McIntyre Road · Coughlin Road · Ennis Road · Prospect Street · Clara Barton Road · Thayers Pond · Depot Road · Bailey Road · Chimney Pond · Millbury Road · Depot Road · Hudson Road · Hudson Pond · Stumpy Pond · Borrow Pit Pond · Federal Hill Road · Old Charlton Road · Old Conlin Road · Diane Drive · Carbuncle Pond · Rocky Hill Road · Dana Road · Brown Road · McKinstry Pond · Howarths Upper Pond · Church Street · Howarths Lower Pond · Old Howarth Road · Old Webster Road · Charlton Street · Sutton Avenue · Lovett Road · Sacarrappa Road · Slaters Pond · Number 1 Pond · Stump Pond · Quaboag Avenue · Eames Pond · Sutton Avenue · Walnut Street · Locust Street · Buffumville Lake · Whiting Road · Old Southbridge Street · Sullivan Road · Sunset Avenue · Larned Road · Grassy Pond · Harwood Street · Huguenot Road · Holbrook Road · Fort Hill Road · Joe Jenny Road · Robinson Pond · Douglas Road

3,300 Feet

Legend

Residential Zoning Districts

- Lowest Density (Robinson Pond)
- Lower Density (R-1)
- Moderate Density
- Higher Density (R-3)
- Highest Density (R-4)

Residential Uses

- Two Family / Three Family Uses
- Multi-Family Developments
- Areas Not Zoned Residential
- Areas For Possible Rezoning to Business / Industrial
- Potential Housing Opportunity Area

9.2 Encourage Open Space Development Patterns

SMART GROWTH

- Natural Resource Protection Zoning (NRPZ)

- Open Space Design (OSD)

In order to protect important natural resources and preserve as much open space as possible while accommodating future residential growth, Oxford intends to encourage "open space development" (called "cluster development" in Section XIII in the Zoning Bylaw).

The Master Plan recommends the following regulatory changes to the Oxford Zoning Bylaw:

- apply the same "mathematical approach" for determining the number of lots to a conventional subdivision and a cluster development - otherwise there may be a disincentive to the very approach Oxford wants to promote

	Conventional Subdivision	Cluster Subdivision
Subtracts ANR lots	Yes	Yes
Subtracts steep slopes	**No**	Yes
Uses efficiency factor of 70%	**No**	Yes
Subtracts wetlands / watercourses	**No**	Yes
Subtracts floodplains	**No**	**No**

- change the "mathematical approach" so that floodplain is included in either approach
- maintain the same yard setbacks as the underlying district around the perimeter of the development.
- allow smaller yard setbacks _within_ the cluster development (since the lots are smaller).
- require "cluster development" in the most rural areas.

9.2 Encourage Open Space Development	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Encourage the use of open space development patterns.	PB	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ to: • establish a "lot yield" calculation that applies to all types of residential subdivisions (except an "approval not required" (ANR) application) • subtract floodplain land from the calculation of development yield • modify the setbacks for lots within a cluster development • require open space development in the R-1 zone and the Robinson Pond district	PB	TM

CASE STUDY – Open Space Development

Open space development is an approach that allows development to occur while preserving open space and a site's important features.

The graphics on these pages illustrate how "open space design" subdivisions can relate better to the natural attributes of the land and characteristics of the community than "conventional design" development patterns:

Parcel Prior To Development

Graphics by Randall Arendt

Conventional Subdivision Development
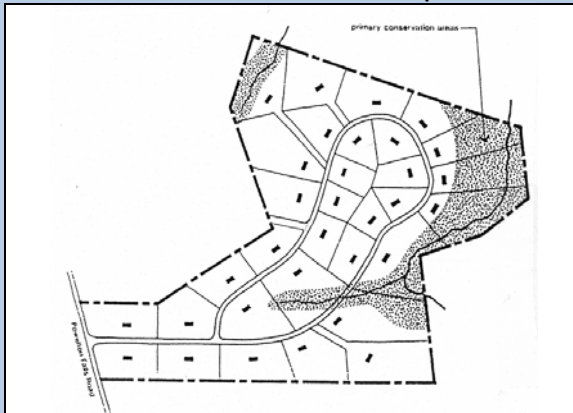
- 32 lots on 82 acre parcel
- Average lot size = 2.5 acres
- No open space preserved
- Scenic features converted into lots

Open Space Subdivision Development
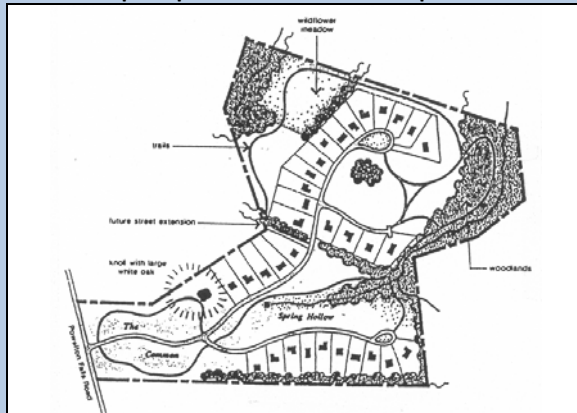
- 32 lots on 82 acre parcel
- 32 acres in lot areas / average lot size = 1.0 acre
- 50 acres preserved as open space (60% of parcel)
- 50 acres of publicly accessible open space
- Scenic features preserved

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Locational Considerations

1. Multi-family develop-ments should:
   a. be located in or near "nodes"
   b. be served by public water and public sewer
   c. be served by local transit facilities (if available)
   d. be located to provide a gradual transition in density or use to ad-joining areas
   e. be designed to be compatible with the area proposed
   f. use appropriate topo-graphic, vegetative, or other transitions to provide a buffer to adjacent uses and streets

2. Roadways serving the site should be capable of safe-ly and conveniently han-dling traffic generated by the development as well as provide easy and direct access to major thorough-fares serving Oxford.

3. The site should be of adequate size and suitable terrain to establish an attractive and functional layout of buildings and site improvements.

9.3   Guide Multi-Family Development

In terms of promoting community structure and enhancing "sense of place," sites in and near the downtown are the best sites for multi-family development. Location of multi-family uses in these areas will also help to promote develop-ment of an active and vibrant village with a variety of land uses.

This area is also very desirable for multi-family residential development. As the population ages, locations within walking distances of downtown areas are proving very attractive for rental apartments and condominiums for "empty nesters" and retired persons. These same units are also attractive to young professionals who may work in the area.

Multi-family (and/or higher density) developments should be discouraged in other areas unless there is some significant community benefit that will result.

This is a change of policy from the 1984 Master Plan which recommended that multi-family housing be permitted in most residential zoning districts and con-solidated in the R-4 district in North Oxford.

Overall, it might be in Oxford's best interests to strongly guide multi-family developments to appropriate sites where they can serve as a transition between business and industrial uses (or major travel routes) and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

9.3 Guide Multi-Family Development	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Guide multi-family development to locations which will help promote development of active and vibrant nodes with a va-riety of land uses.	PB	Town
2. Encourage higher density housing development in and near downtown (see the "Potential Housing Opportunity Area" on the Residential Densities map) in mixed use buildings and stand-alone developments where appropriate in order to help meet housing needs and strengthen the downtown.	PB	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ to require consideration of the recommended locational criteria (see sidebar) whenever a new multi-family development is being considered.	PB	TM
2. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ to discourage multi-family devel-opments that are not moderate density developments in smaller scale projects.	PB	TM

9.4 Encourage Housing For An Aging Population

Population projections indicate that Oxford, like many other communities, will experience a marked rise in the number of older residents in the future. Since housing needs can change as people get older for health, economic, or lifestyle reasons, having a range of housing options can help ensure that residents will always be able to live in Oxford if they so choose.

- Chapter 40R

- Accessory Dwelling Units

9.4 Housing For An Aging Population	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Seek ways to address the housing needs of an aging population.	Town	PB
2. Encourage housing for older residents to be located near the downtown area where services and facilities are more readily available.	Town	PB
3. Enhance local programs and services for seniors to help them remain in their homes longer.	COA	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. *Amend the Zoning Bylaw* to allow the Zoning Official to make "reasonable accommodations" (such as lesser setbacks to allow a handicapped ramp) to help enable an older resident to stay in their home longer.	PB	TM
2. *Amend the Zoning Bylaw* to simplify the process for establishing an accessory apartment provided there is an operable door on a common wall allowing the accessory unit to be recombined with the principal unit at a later date.	PB	TM
3. *Amend the Zoning Bylaw* to allow developments (such as age-restricted developments, assisted living, congregate care, etc.) in a number of zoning districts to help meet the housing needs of an aging population.	PB	TM
4. Support expansion of the supply of subsidized elderly housing (there are over 100 people on the waiting list for senior housing and the waiting period is many years).	HA	

9.5 Encourage Housing That Is Affordable

A recent housing needs assessment performed for Oxford (coordinated by the CMRPC using a model created by the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission) found that 38 percent of all households in Oxford qualified for state and/or federal housing programs based on income:

- 15% of households were extremely low income (earning less than 30% of the area median income (AMI))
- 10% were very low income (earning less than 50% AMI)
- 13% were low income (earning less than 80% AMI)

Subsidized Housing

Webster	8.6%
Oxford	**7.3%**
Douglas	4.4%
Millbury	4.0%
Leicester	3.9%
Auburn	3.6%
Dudley	2.4%
Charlton	1.7%
Sutton	1.3%

Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Oxford has a diverse range of housing at the present time and this diversity helps address the housing needs of current and future residents. The community survey found that many current residents were attracted to Oxford because of the availability of affordable housing and/or the perceived housing value.

Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) - Oxford is recognized as a community with affordable housing. A recent study compared housing costs to median income and found Oxford to be the second most affordable housing market in all of Massachusetts.

Subsidized Housing - Even though there is housing in Oxford that is naturally affordable, there are still people that may have difficulty affording market rate housing. This is not an insignificant issue. According to the State database, Oxford currently has about 400 subsidized housing units in the community. This represents about 7.3 percent of all housing units in the community.

	Colonial Valley (Liberty Lane)	Huguenot Arms (Wheelock Street)	Orchard Hill Estates (Sutton Avenue)
	Oxford Housing Authority	Oxford Housing Authority	Private - Occupancy limited to 60% of AMI
	67 units total	118 units total	215 units total
Family Units	7 @ 2BR 7 @ 3BR		84 @ 1BR 77 @ 2BR
Elderly Units	53 @ 1BR	118 1BR units	47 @ 3BR 7 @ 4BR
	Waiting list of over 200 people plus share of elderly	Waiting list of over 100 elderly people	Waiting list of over 400 people

To allow for the development of affordable housing, Oxford has already incorporated the following provisions in the Zoning Bylaw:

- allowing more units in a cluster development provided at least 10 percent of the units are set aside in perpetuity as affordable housing (Chapter XIII, Section 4.2).
- allowing more units in a multi-family development provided at least 10 percent of the units are set aside in perpetuity as affordable housing (Chapter X, Section 5.2).

However, neither of these provisions have been utilized.

CASE STUDY

Housing Production Plan

A Housing Production Plan is a proactive strategy for planning and developing affordable housing. In addition to helping communities plan for and provide a diverse housing supply, a Housing Production Plan prepared in accordance with State guidelines gives Oxford more local control over private development projects containing affordable housing (Chapter 40B projects).

The elements of a Housing Production Plan include the following:

- **Housing Needs Assessment**
    - an identification of current and future housing needs
    - an identification of current and future housing programs
    - identification of development constraints and limitations affecting the ability to provide for current and future housing needs

- **Affordable Housing Goals**
    - a numerical goal for housing production that will increase the number of units eligible for the "Subsidized Housing Inventory" maintained by the State

- **Strategic Action Plan**
    - a range of housing actions, consistent with local and regional needs feasible within the housing market in which they will be situated, including rental and ownership/other housing arrangements for:
        - Individuals,
        - Family,
        - Persons with special needs,
        - Elderly
    - strategies to mitigate the identified development constraints.
    - zoning districts or geographic areas in which the municipality proposes to modify current regulations for the purposes of meeting its housing production goal.
    - specific sites for which the municipality will encourage the development of affordable housing.
    - municipally-owned or Housing Authority-owned parcels for which the municipality or Housing Authority commits to issue requests for proposals (RFP) to develop subsidized housing.

(For more information, see 760 CMR 56.03(4))

Chapter 40B

Chapter 40B is a state law enacted in 1969 which establishes a consolidated local review and approval process (known as a "comprehensive permit") for certain projects involving the construction of low- or moderate-income housing.

Chapter 40B empowers the zoning board of appeals (ZBA) to hold hearings and make binding decisions that encompass all local ordinances or bylaws and regulations.

Comprehensive permit applications are subject to unique rules and are typically far more complex than any other matters that come before a ZBA.

Should such an application be proposed in Oxford, a 2017 handbook prepared by the Massachusetts Housing Partnership will be a valuable resource for people who want to understand the comprehensive permit process.

Chapter 40B Handbook for Zoning Boards of Appeal
March 2017
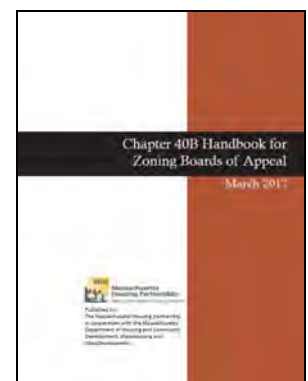
Oxford will continue to seek opportunities to address the need for housing that is more affordable and that fits into the overall land use framework of the community. This might include re-purposing some municipal buildings for housing through public or private development programs:

- former Woodward School in North Oxford
- Public Works site on Charlton Street
- former Police Station at Dana Road
- Community Center building on Main Street
- Facilities Maintenance Building on Barton Street
- miscellaneous lands acquired by the Town over the years

The Master Plan also recommends that Oxford investigate the preparation of a "housing production plan." As described in the "case study" on the preceding page, preparing a Housing Production Plan will help Oxford:

- plan for and provide a diverse housing supply, and
- give Oxford more local control over private development projects containing affordable housing (Chapter 40B projects) for a time period.

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission can help Oxford with the preparation of this Housing Production Plan, if desired. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development has guidelines that are available online to assist towns in the development of a Housing Production Plan.

State Guidelines
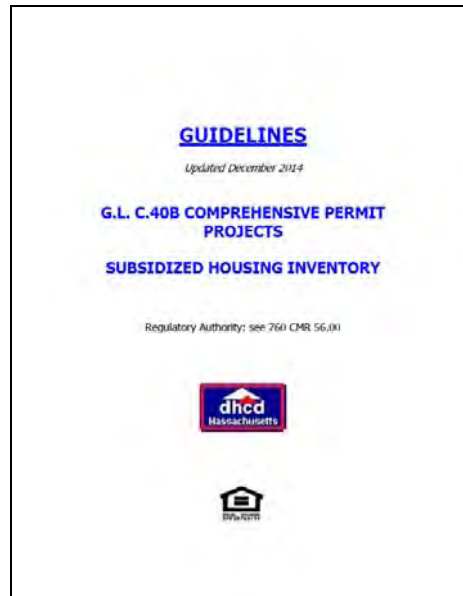
Example Of A Plan
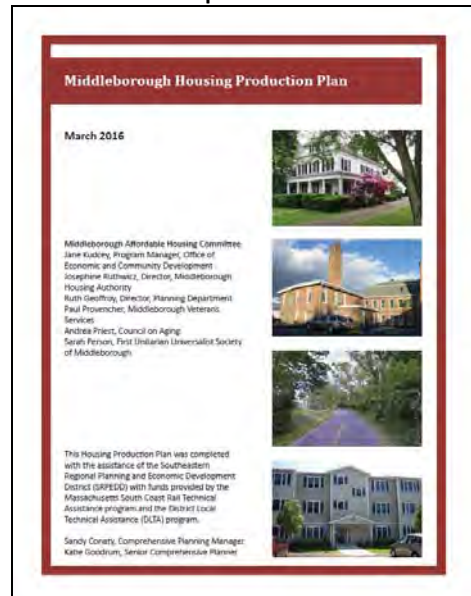
9.5 Housing That Is Affordable	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Seek to maintain a diverse housing stock.	Town	
2. Consider ways to provide housing opportunities consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity.	Town	
3. Consider allowing / encouraging development of municipal buildings and/or sites into housing, including senior housing, to meet community needs.	Town	
B. Action Steps		
1. Investigate the benefits of preparing of a Housing Production Plan in accordance with State guidelines.	Town	
2. If desired, seek assistance the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission for the preparation of a Housing Production Plan.	Town	CMRPC

**Colonial Valley
(Liberty Lane)**
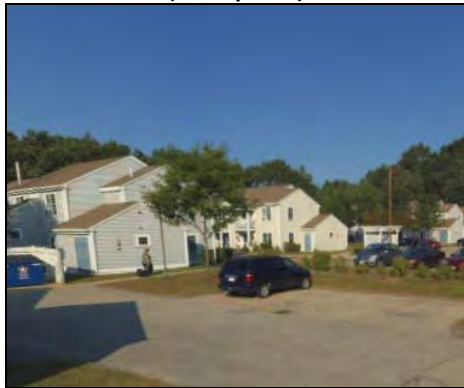
**Huguenot Arms
(Wheelock Street)**

If some lands currently zoned Multi-Family (R-4) are rezoned for business and/or industrial development, this will affect the amount of land available to meet some housing needs.

While some of this may be offset by the proposed Housing Opportunity Overlay Zone in the center of Oxford, the overall impact of this change should be a consideration.

9.6   Encourage Maintenance Of The Housing Stock

Like a number of communities, Oxford experienced a post-WWII housing boom and so about half of all houses in Oxford are more than 50 years old.

While the design trends of the 1950s and 1960s may seem somewhat dated today, these housing units can provide for the housing needs of today and the future if they are maintained and adapted to societal needs. The setback and lot coverage provisions in the Zoning Bylaw allow for additions to these older units to incorporate some recent home trends (more bathrooms, larger kitchens, larger closets, first floor master bedrooms, etc.).

Building, health, electrical, fire, and other codes may make updating older housing units a more involved proposition. This can be even more challenging for lower income households.

To facilitate home improvements, especially for lower income occupants, Oxford will seek grants to fund efforts by local residents to rehabilitate and improve their housing.

9.6 Encourage Maintenance Of The Housing Stock	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to encourage the improvement and maintenance of the housing stock in Oxford.	Town	BOH
B. Action Steps		
1. Investigate obtaining grants to fund the efforts of local residents to rehabilitate and improve their housing.	Town	BOH

PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

10

Overview

For the purposes of this Plan, "sustainability" refers to the philosophy of encouraging activities that allow present generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The term "resiliency" refers to the community's ability to adapt to new circumstances and/or recover from sudden changes or adversity.

"A sustainable world means working together to create prosperity for all."

**Jacqueline Novogratz
American Entrepreneur**

Oxford intends to guide growth and change in ways that will help make it a more sustainable community and a more resilient community.

Sustainability

Resiliency

Solar and Wind

Oxford's Zoning Bylaw allows for the following "sustainable" approaches within every zone in the community:
- Wind energy allowed (Section 3.6)
- Solar energy allowed (Section 3.7)

10.1 Promote Sustainability And Resiliency

On behalf of the community, the Town of Oxford will strive to be more sustainable and more resilient and encourage its residents and businesses to do the same.

10.1 Promote Sustainability And Resiliency	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Promote energy conservation / sustainability.	Town	
2. Promote water conservation.	CC	BOH Town
3. Promote waste reduction / recycling.	CC	
4. Educate residents about sustainability concepts.	CC	
5. Maintain preparedness to respond to emergency situations.	Town	PD FD
6. Continue to identify and mitigate hazards from recurring events, such as flooding.	Town	PW
7. Be prepared to adapt to long term economic and other challenges (climate, physical, social, etc.).	Town	

Sustainability

Resiliency

ADDRESS
COMMUNITY FACILITIES

11

Overview

Community facilities support functions such as education, public works, public safety, and recreation, all of which are important to supporting local land uses as well as maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in Oxford.

Maintaining and enhancing community facilities is important to residents.

How important are the following to a positive quality of life in the Town of Oxford for you and your household?	Very important / Somewhat important
Police, Fire & Emergency Services	94%
Town Services	91%
Taxes	87%
School system	81%
Oxford Community Center	68%

Please indicate your opinion on the following town services …	Somewhat Agree / Strongly Agree
Oxford Fire/EMS services are adequate	87%
Oxford Police services are adequate	86%
Oxford Library services are adequate	80%
Oxford Department Of Public Works services are adequate	79%
Oxford Town Hall services are adequate	78%
The Town provides a good range of services needed in Oxford	68%
Oxford Senior Center & Community Center services are adequate	62%
There is adequate space in Town buildings for public meetings …	62%
Property taxes are fair for the services provided by the Town	51%

"The more we share, the more we have."

**Leonard Nimoy
American Actor**

Oxford intends to provide community services and facilities that meet community needs and enhance the overall quality of life.

Additional Information

During the planning process, research booklets were prepared to inform partici-pants about different issues and facilitate discussion.

The booklet on "Infrastruc-ture Strategies" (available from the Building/Zoning Office) contains additional data and a more detailed discussion of community facility needs.

The Master Plan does not get involved in the day-to-day operations of individual departments. Rather, the Plan seeks to identify potential community facility needs (buildings and sites) so that they can be anticipated and planned for.

11.1 Address Community Facility Needs

As part of the overall planning process, community facilities in Oxford were evaluated in terms of their current condition and their ability to meet communi-ty needs for the foreseeable future. The analyses are summarized below:

Facilities Not Expected To Be Adequate For Community Needs

Community Center

- *Serious maintenance / condition issues*
- *Needs an overall decision of whether to renovate or relocate*
- *Property may revert to heirs if not used for purposes designated in deed*

Building Mainte-nance Facility

- *Serious building issues*
- *Consider relocating with public works*
- *Consider how to repurpose the site*

Facilities Where Attention Is Needed To Meet Community Needs

Public Works Garage

- *Expand public works garage*
- *Alternatively, consider whether to relocate this facility elsewhere and re-purpose the site*

Town Hall

- *Investigate renovation / expansion options*

Fire Department (includes emergency medical and medical transport)

- *Maintaining / replacing equipment*
- *Maintaining adequate staffing*
- *Stable financial platform*

Facilities That Appear To Have Some Issues To Consider

Schools
- *Adequate capacity but students and overall community would benefit from better school performance*

Recreation Facilities
- *Improve grounds maintenance*
- *Expand facilities / programs*

Oxford Library
- *Should plan and prepare now for possible future growth*
- *Acquire adjacent property when it becomes available*

DPW Headquarters
- *May become surplus if other facilities improved (DPW garage or Town Hall)*
- *Plan for possible sale*

Solid Waste / Recycling
- *Service currently provided by multiple private haulers*
- *Revisit possible cost savings to residents and businesses from consolidated collection and disposal*

Woodward School
- *Consider how to repurpose the site*

Building / Grounds Maintenance
- *Services are satisfactory*
- *Current approach is costly and inefficient (duplication)*
- *Town / School should seek better maintenance and/or less cost*
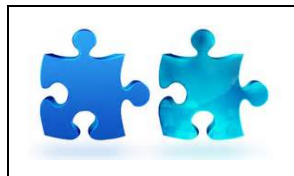
Disconnected Town-Owned Parcels
- *Evaluate properties and consider selling parcels to abutters*

Expected To Be Adequate

The following facilities are expected to be adequate to meet community needs through the planning period:
- Senior Center
- Police Department
- Animal Control
- Cemeteries

Oxford Community Facilities

GENERAL GOVERNMENT	SAFETY / EMERGENCY SERVICES

1. Town Hall

2. DPW Headquarters
   (Public Works / Conservation)

EDUCATION FACILITIES

3. Oxford High School

4. Oxford Middle School

5. Clara Barton Elementary School

6. Alfred Chaffee Elementary School

RECREATION FACILITIES

INDOOR

7. Community Center

8. Senior Center

OUTDOOR

9. North Oxford Recreation Area (Stanley Johnson Little League Fields, basketball court)

10. Greenbriar Recreation Area (on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property)

11. Carbuncle Pond

12. Treasure Island (playscape)

13. Community Center Recreation Area (soccer field, basketball court, skate park)

14. Town Common (Joslin Park)

15. Ruel Field

SAFETY / EMERGENCY SERVICES

16. Fire Headquarters

17. North Oxford Fire Station

18. Police Station

19. Animal Shelter

PUBLIC WORKS

20. Public Works Garage

21. Building Maintenance

22. Transfer Station

HOUSING AUTHORITY

23. Colonial Valley (67 units)

24. Huguenot Arms (118 units)

OTHER FACILITIES

25. Oxford Library

26. Woodward School

27. North Cemetery

28. Gore Cemetery

29. South Cemetery

Community Facilities

Oxford, MA

LEICESTER

AUBURN

MILLBURY

CHARLTON

Texas Pond

Stumpy Pond

Borrow Pit Pond

Hudson Pond

Thayers Pond

Carbuncle Pond

Makinstry Pond

Howarths Upper Pond

Howarths Lower Pond

Chimney Pond

Slaters Pond

Number 2 Pond Stump Pond

Eames Pond

Robinson Pond

Buffumville Lake

Grassy Pond

SUTTON

DUDLEY

DOUGLAS

WEBSTER

3,300 Feet

Legend

Community Facilities

- 🔵 General Government
- 🔵 Education
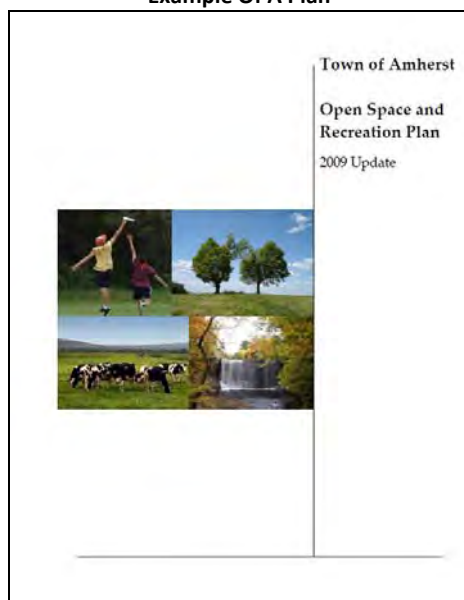- 🟢 Recreation
- 🔴 Public Safety
- ⚫ Public Works
- 🟠 Housing
- 🟡 Other

The Master Plan also recommends that Oxford investigate preparing an "open space and recreation plan" in accordance with State guidelines. As described in the "case study" on the facing page, preparing an Open Space and Recreation Plan will help Oxford:

- strengthen its knowledge of natural resources,
- strengthen its awareness of the different types of open space in the community (dedicated, managed, regulated, private, etc.),
- create a comprehensive inventory of recreation interests and the adequacy of the various facilities in Oxford to meet those interests and desires,
- give Oxford a strategic framework for specific actions related to preserving land and providing recreational l facilities, and
- be eligible for State grants for open space and recreation purposes.

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission can help Oxford with the preparation of an Open Space and Recreation Plan, if desired. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation has guidelines that are available online to assist towns in the development of an Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Example Of A Plan   **Example Of A Plan**

CASE STUDY

Open Space and Recreation Plan

In order to be eligible for some State grants related to preserving open space and providing recreational facilities, Oxford may wish to prepare an Open Space and Recreation Plan in accordance with State guidelines.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation requires that an Open Space and Recreation Plan include the following:

- Section 1 – Plan Summary
- Section 2 – Introduction (Statement of Purpose / Summary of Process)
- Section 3 – Community Setting (Region, History, Population, etc.)
- Section 4 – Environmental Inventory and Analysis
- Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation / Recreation Interest
- Section 6 – Community Vision / Goals
- Section 7 – Analysis of Needs (Resource Protection, Community Needs)
- Section 8 – Goals and Objectives
- Section 9 – Five-Year Action Plan
- Section 10 – Public Comments
- Section 11 – References

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLANNER'S WORKBOOK

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEVAL PATRICK, GOVERNOR
TIMOTHY MURRAY, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
IAN BOWLES, SECRETARY

DIVISION OF CONSERVATION SERVICES
BOB O'CONNOR, DIRECTOR
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, SUITE 900
BOSTON, MA 02114
www.state.ma.us/envir

Funding Challenges

Having adequate funding to meet anticipated community facility needs is expected to be a challenge. Strategies to overcome this might include:

- being as strategic as possible in order to devote funds to the highest priorities,
- being as cost-efficient as possible in order to stretch limited funds as far as possible, and/or
- regionalizing some services if it will help meet local needs affordably.

11.1 Address Community Facility Needs	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Maintain existing community facilities.	PW	BOS SC
2. Address identified community facility issues.	PW	BOS SC
3. Encourage continued improvements in school performance.	SC	SD
4. Encourage expanded recreation programs.	RC	Staff
5. Seek to provide top-notch recreation facilities.	RC	Staff
6. When land becomes available adjacent to the Library and other existing facilities, evaluate the purchase of that property as quickly as possible in order to be able to provide for future expansion of existing facilities, if or when needed.	Town	BOS FC
B. Action Steps		
1. Evaluate ways to consolidate facilities maintenance (building and grounds) for the greatest efficiency and economy while meeting community expectations and priorities.	PW	BOS SC
2. Decide what to do about the community center.	RC	BOS
3. As funds permit, investigate the renovation / expansion options for Town Hall to consolidate municipal departments and provide meeting and storage space.	Town	BOS
4. Investigate expansion or relocation of the Public Works Garage (incorporating the building maintenance function at the same site).	PW	BOS
5. If the Public Works Garage on Charlton Street is to be relocated, sell the existing property for a use that will help strengthen the Downtown area.	PW	BOS
6. Sell the Building Maintenance Facility on Barton Street for a use that will help strengthen the Downtown area.	PW	BOS
7. Sell the Woodward School building in North Oxford for an appropriate use.	PW	BOS SC
8. Investigate preparing an "open space and recreation plan" in accordance with State guidelines.	Town	RC CC
9. If desired, seek assistance the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission for the preparation of an "open space and recreation plan."	Town	CMRPC

IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

12

Overview

The transportation systems in Oxford are functionally important to the day-to-day life of residents, visitors, and businesses as well as being an important component of its character and self-image. This section of the Master Plan looks at the overall configuration of the vehicular transportation network and other transportation modes (pedestrian, bicycle, bus, etc.).

"Transportation is the … glue of our daily lives. When it goes well, we don't even see it."

Robin Chase
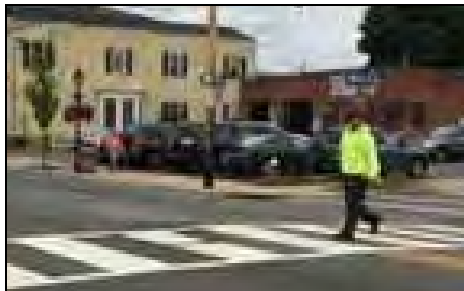**Transportation Entrepre-**
neur

Roadways

Roadways

Pedestrians

Bicycle

Oxford intends to provide for safe and efficient transportation systems that meet community needs and enhance the overall quality of life.

91

Town Responsibility

Many roads serving regional and state-wide roles are not State-operated.

Route 12 is a State roadway (north of Front Street Road and south of Fairlawn Avenue) but roads are Town-owned and/or Town main-tained in the downtown area.

# 12.1 Address Overall Roadway Circulation

For the most part, Oxford has a fair system of major roadways providing access within the community. While natural resource and topographic constraints result in some situations where these roadways are not optimally configured, the basic circulation needs of the community are met.

Regional Circulation

One of the overall transportation challenges in Oxford is that the regional road network essentially requires people to come through Oxford and Oxford Center (Main Street, Charlton Street and Sutton Avenue) to get to Interstate 395 and other destinations in Oxford and Auburn. In other words, the Interstate 395 exits are the closest and most convenient for people who want to travel to Worcester or other places accessed by the Interstate highway system. The resulting traffic volumes cause significant congestion at peak travel times, especially in the downtown area.

Oxford should request that MassDOT and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) work with Oxford to help alleviate the regional transportation burden placed on the community.

Interchange Locations and Proximity
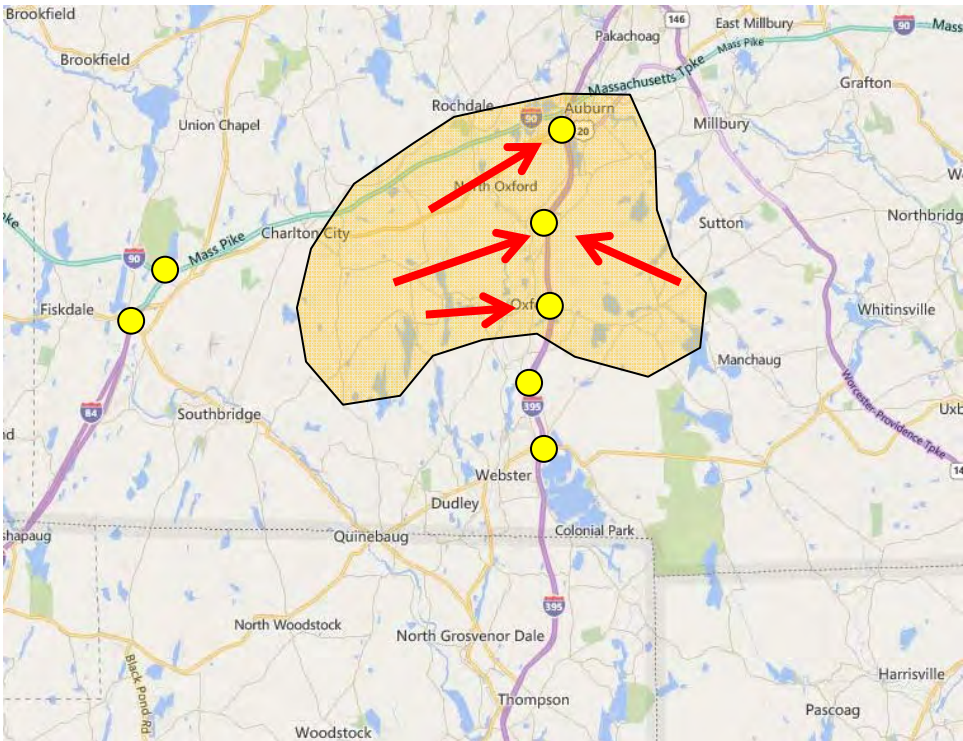
Few Alternate Routes

Another challenge affecting traffic circulation in Oxford is that all roads lead to the center. The lack of alternative routes in all quadrants of the community (except the southeast) forces onto the arterial roads (Main Street, Charlton Street, Sutton Avenue) and these roads funnel all traffic into the main intersection in the center of Oxford. Again, the resulting traffic volumes cause significant congestion in the downtown area at peak travel times.

Over the long term, Oxford should seek ways to encourage / require the establishment of alternative routes to alleviate traffic flows:

Quadrant	Possible Options
Northwest	Seek to connect from Charlton Street (or Old Charlton Road) to Main Street (Route 12) in one of three locations: NW1. Rocky Hill Road (involving Army Corps of Engineers property (Hodges Village) and bridging the French River) NW2. Old Worcester Road (involving ACE property and bridging the French River) NW3. Coughlin Road allowing for a connection to Clara Barton Road (leading to Main Street although improvements may be needed at the intersection of Clara Barton Road and Main Street) and to Ennis Road (leading to Leicester Street)
Southwest	Seek to connect from Charlton Street to Main Street (Route 12) by bridging the French River and connecting Old Webster Road: SW1. to Harwood Street around Lambert Circle, or SW2. to Main Street just north of the railroad overpass, or SW3. to Cudworth Road (Exit 3 on Interstate 395) (also involves crossing the railroad tracks) SW4. to Cudworth Road by a straight connection
Northeast	Seek to interconnect the following streets into a more direct alternate route to help distribute traffic: • Depot Road • Federal Hill Road • Hudson Road • Dana Road • Brown Road • Lovett Road • Sacarappa Road

These road connections could be required to be built as part of any future subdivision of land or other land development within these corridors. In this way, the road could be built with the minimum amount of funding needed from the Town. However, funding from the Town (and/or the State) might be necessary for any major bridges (such as those over the French River).

The "Vehicular Circulation" map shows possible location of some alternate routes.

Road Classification

Expressways
- Interstate 90 (not directly accessible from within Oxford)
- Interstate 395 (with 3 interchanges within Oxford)

Arterial Routes - State
- Main Street (Route 12) part
- Southbridge Road (Route 20)

Arterial Routes - Town
- Main Street (Route 12) part
- Leicester Street (Route 56)
- Charlton Street
- Sutton Avenue
- Cudworth Road

Collector Routes
- Stafford Street
- Pleasant Street
- Ennis Road / Clara Barton Road / McIntyre Road (parts)
- Depot Road (part)
- Millbury Road
- Old Webster Road
- Dudley Road
- Harwood Street

Local Roads and Streets
- All other roads and streets In Oxford

Road Classifications

The Road Classifications map categorizes roads in Oxford by the traffic circulation function they serve (see sidebar).

## Problem Roads / Intersections

The Regional Transportation Plan prepared by CMRPC ("Mobility 2040") identified the Main / Charlton / Sutton intersection as the 171st worst intersection in the State of Massachusetts for accidents. This intersection is a regular bottleneck for traffic and should be addressed.

The Town should continue to work with MassDOT and CMRPC to identify and address problem roads and intersections and maintain a safe and efficient roadway network. There have been some severe accidents on Route 20 and MassDOT is undertaking a significant improvement project in the next 10 years or so.

12.1 Address Overall Circulation	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Request that MassDOT and the CMRPC work with Oxford to help alleviate the regional transportation burden placed on the community.	PW	BOS CMRPC MDOT
2. Work with MassDOT and CMRPC to improve the Main / Charlton / Sutton intersection.	PW	BOS CMRPC MDOT
3. In the northwest quadrant, require any future subdivision to participate in the establishment of one or more roads to connect Charlton Street to Main Street in North Oxford.	PB	Staff
4. In the northeast quadrant, require any future subdivision to participate in the establishment of a more direct connection from Main Street to Sutton Avenue.	PB	Staff
5. In the southwest quadrant, seek to establish one or more roads to connect Old Webster Road across the French River to Main Street (near the overpass or at Cudworth Road).	PB	BOS CMRPC
6. Support MassDOT improvements to Route 20.	Town	MDOT
7. Since the character of Main Street in the downtown area is important, continue to maintain this portion of Route 12.	Town	MDOT
8. Resist MassDOT efforts for the Town to assume maintenance responsibility of arterial roads.	Town	MDOT
9. Continue to coordinate with CMRPC on overall transportation issues.	Town	CMRPC MDOT

Vehicular Circulation

Oxford, MA

N

AUBURN

MILLBURY

NW3

NW2

NW1

NE

SW1

SW2

SW3

SW4

DUDLEY

WEBSTER

SUTTON
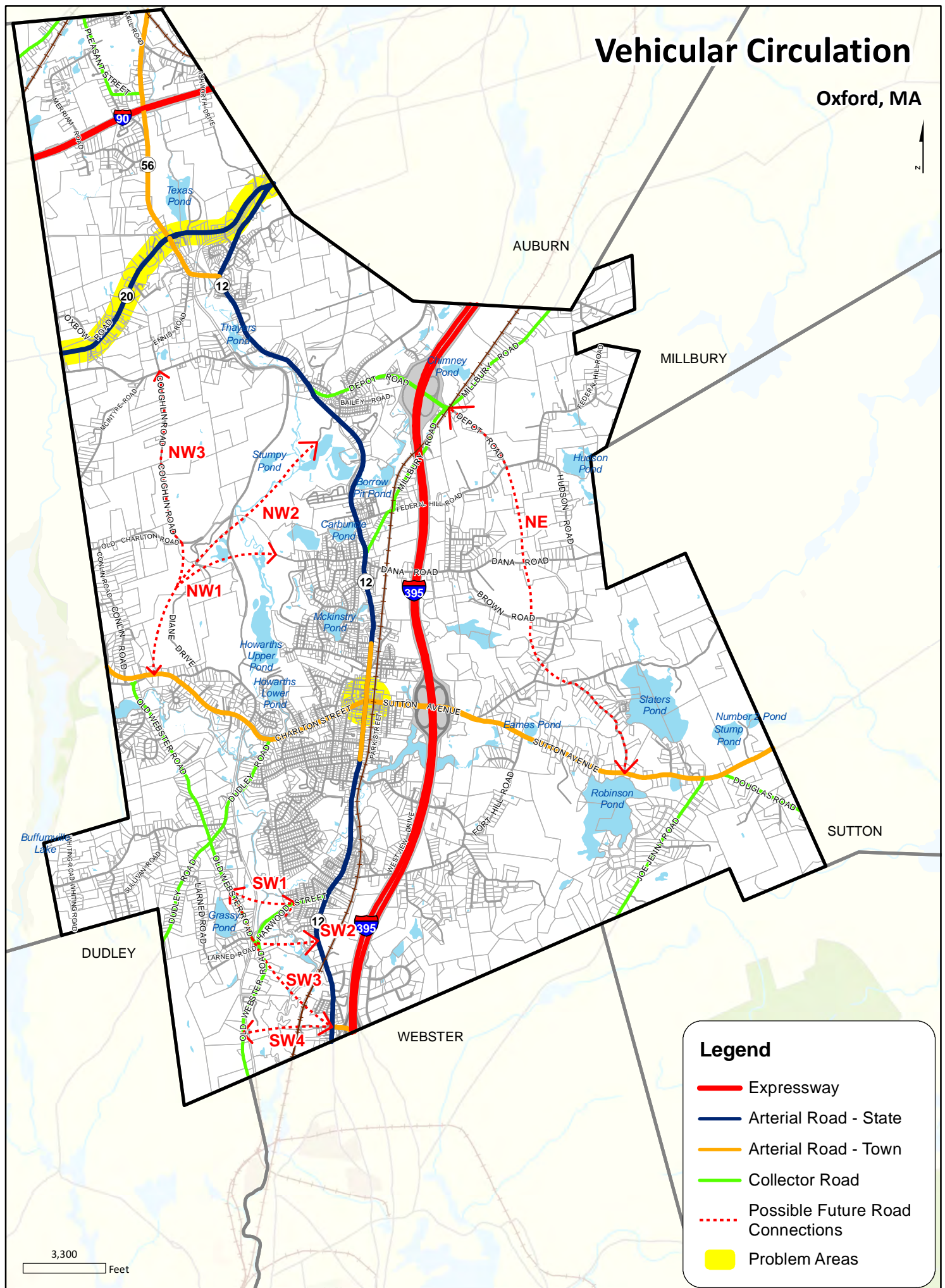
Legend

━━━ Expressway

━━━ Arterial Road - State

━━━ Arterial Road - Town

━━━ Collector Road

‑‑‑‑ Possible Future Road Connections

▨ Problem Areas

3,300 Feet

Pavement Management

Pavement management is an approach to maintaining a roadway system (pavement quality) as efficiently and economically as possible.

A comprehensive pavement evaluation is undertaken and then the overall quality of the roadway system can be monitored over time. Since the life cycle of pavement has been studied extensively, the most cost-effective strategies to maintain the roadway can be determined. Maintenance and repair can be scheduled at the most appropriate times to reduce the life-cycle cost of maintaining the roadway system.

12.2 Address Other Roadway / Parking Issues

Pavement Quality / Pavement Management - Oxford uses a "pavement management" system to monitor the condition of the overall roadway system. However, pavement maintenance has not been funded at a level that would maintain or improve pavement quality and so the overall system has shown declining quality scores over time.

The challenge is that roadways can deteriorate to the point that a full reconstruction or renovation is needed and this is the most expensive situation in the long term.

Preventative maintenance along the way can double or triple the pavement lifespan and save significant amounts of money. The Town will strive to implement a long-term pavement management program.

Pavement Condition Map
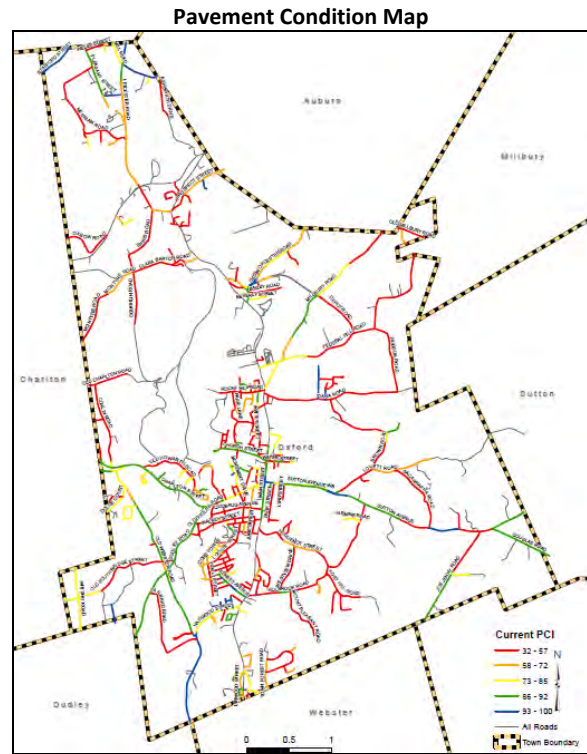
VHB Consulting

"Complete Streets" - For many years, roadways had been treated as the exclusive area for vehicles. This singular approach is now changing and communities around the country are seeking to establish "complete streets" which provide for a wider range of transportation modes including walking, cycling, transit, and other modes. As stated by the National Complete Streets Coalition, "complete streets" are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

The Town has adopted a "Complete Streets" policy and is in the process of expanding the Complete Streets approach in order to be eligible for Tier 2 funding for specific projects from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

Roadway Safety / Roadway Improvements - Other major vehicular transportation issues in the future are likely to include:

- addressing locations where unsafe or hazardous conditions may arise.
- reducing speeding, to the extent possible.
- balancing traffic capacity with maintaining community character as roadway improvements are proposed.
- utilizing "access management" strategies on Route 12 and Route 20 to minimize curb cuts and maximize interconnections between properties, especially in business areas (current Zoning Bylaw Chapter XI. Sections 1.4 and 1.5 currently **_discourage_** the sharing of driveways).

There are a number of bridges in Oxford being monitored by the State in terms of whether they are "structurally deficient" or "functionally obsolete."

Traffic Calming –Traffic speed and cut-through traffic can be an issue on some streets in Oxford. To address these type of issues, some communities have implemented "traffic calming" strategies to slow traffic or divert it back to streets better configured to accommodate it. Traffic calming uses physical design and other measures to improve safety for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists. It aims to encourage safer, more responsible driving and potentially reduce traffic flow. Some traffic calming techniques are listed in the sidebar on this page.

Roadway Funding - Roadway maintenance is funded in two key ways:

- "Chapter 90" funding from the State of Massachusetts for highway construction, preservation and improvement projects that create or extend the life of public roads, bridges, road building equipment and related engineering services and expenses, and
- Town-appropriated funds.

Chapter 90 funding is not sufficient to fund all road improvements in Oxford so local funding is needed to address local needs. This can be a challenge depending on other local needs.

As a result, it is important to ensure that the Town is getting all the funding it is entitled to under the State formula (based on miles of public ways, population, and employment). A 2006 review by CMRPC found that the State database of road miles was lower than what the Town annual report had indicated. Oxford should review the State road list to be sure it includes all "accepted public ways'" so that Oxford gets all the monies it is eligible for.

Traffic Calming Techniques

Engineering measures:

- Narrowing / reducing / deflecting / reconfiguring traffic lanes
- Speed bumps / speed humps
- Changing surface material or texture

Enforcement and education measures:

- Reducing speed limits
- Enforcing speed limits
- Vehicle activated speed signs
- Speed-activated camera enforcement

- Parking Dimension

Parking Dimensions / Standards - At the present time, Oxford has a parking stall requirement of 9 feet wide by 20 feet long with a 24-foot wide aisle. This is larger than is typical for a parking space. Most communities have adopted a parking stall requirement of 9 feet wide by 18 feet long with a 24-foot wide aisle. When Oxford residents visit other communities, they likely park in 9' x 18' spaces.

While the 2' difference (18 square feet) may not sound like much, it adds up considerably in a parking lot or a parking structure. Oxford should modify the Zoning Bylaw to allow for 9' by 18' spaces.

In addition, Oxford should review the parking requirements for land uses to ensure that the number of parking spaces being required is appropriate. A number of studies from around the country have found that zoning regulations often require more parking spaces than are needed and this reduces economic development and land values, increases impervious coverage and runoff, and detracts from community character.

Oxford should review parking requirements in the Zoning Bylaw.

Roadway Discontinuance / Abandonment / Private Ways - Overall, Oxford should be careful about assuming responsibility for maintaining or improving roads that do not serve an overall circulation need (either present or future) or represent a long-term liability for the Town. For example, listing a road as a "public way" to obtain Chapter 90 funding may make sense on a revenue basis except when the road will require such expensive improvements (today or in the future) that the cost will outweigh the benefits.

While "discontinuance" of a road requires a majority vote of Planning Board and Town Meeting (MGL c. 41 Section 81-I and c. 82, Section 21), discontinuance of maintenance is done by the Board of Selectmen. The effect of discontinuance of maintenance is that the Town is not obligated to maintain the way but the public retains right of travel.

Another issue for Oxford to consider is the maintenance of private ways. The Town has a by-law that establishes the Town's role in maintaining private ways (including plowing them). However, private ways may not be in good shape and property owners often request that the Department of Public Works provide maintenance beyond what the by-law stipulates. In addition, the definition of a "private way" has been stretched over the years to include some (but not neces-sarily all) "common driveways."

12.2 Address Other Roadway / Parking Issues	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Seek to maintain / improve Town roads in terms of pavement quality (pavement management).	PW	
2. Continue efforts to move traffic as efficiently as possible while balancing traffic capacity with maintaining community character.	PW	
3. Continue to work with MassDOT and CMRPC to address locations on State highways where unsafe or hazardous conditions exist.	PW	CMRPC MDOT
4. Continue to address locations on local roads where unsafe or hazardous conditions may arise (including sight lines).	PW	
5. Utilize "access management" strategies to minimize curb cuts and maximize interconnections between properties, especially in business areas.	PB	
6. Seek to consolidate or eliminate curb cuts in close proximity to intersections or where they create a public safety issue.	PB	PW
7. Seek to reduce speeding and consider "traffic calming", where appropriate.	PD	PW
B. Action Steps		
1. Continue to make improvements at the Main / Charlton / Sutton intersection in order to address congestion (a "smart signal", installation of a roundabout, and/or installation of a median on Sutton Avenue.).	PW	CMRPC MDOT
2. Investigate the use of traffic calming measures along Sutton Avenue at the gateway to the Downtown area.	PW	CMRPC MDOT
3. Review the Chapter 90 road list and seek to ensure that all "accepted public ways" are on the list maintained by MassDOT.	PW	
4. Adopt and implement a "complete street" approach to street construction, especially in the downtown area.	PW	BOS
5. Revisit the parking space dimensions and the parking requirements in the Zoning Bylaw.	PB	TM
6. Review unused and similar roads in Oxford to determine whether some roads should be abandoned or discontinued.	PW	BOS
7. Review the policies related to maintenance of private ways.	PW	BOS

12.3 Improve Pedestrian Options

There is growing interest in walking for transportation, health, exercise, and other reasons and this interest has accelerated in recent years.

Sidewalks - Oxford should continue to promote pedestrian activity in and near Downtown. This will help strengthen the Downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods and be a significant amenity to residents and businesses. Over time, the Town should seek to maintain/enhance the condition of the sidewalk system, address "gaps", and extend sidewalks to outlying areas.

At the present time, the Zoning Bylaw does not appear to require the construction of sidewalks as part of new development. The Planning Board should consider adding such language.

Oxford currently clears snow from the sidewalk system and takes care of repairs (if needed). While some communities have adopted ordinances that require abutters to clear snow and repair sidewalks in front of their properties, the current system has been in place for a number of years.

Trails – Oxford is fortunate to have a number of trails in the community. For example, the Mid-State Trail (a 92-mile hiking trail that extends through Worcester County from New Hampshire to Rhode Island) travels through Oxford. In addition, there is an extensive network of trails (both non-motorized and motorized) at the Hodges Village land controlled by the Corps of Engineers..

In the past, there has been evaluation of establishing a "greenway"/ "rail trail" along the French River from Webster to Auburn using the Webster Branch of the former Boston & Albany Railroad (abandoned in the early 1970s). Efforts should continue to extend and improve the overall trail system in Oxford and connect these trails to the Downtown area.

12.3 Improve Pedestrian Options	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to encourage and support provisions for walking.	Town	
2. Seek to maintain, repair, and extend the sidewalk system in and near the Downtown area.	PW	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. Consider developing and implementing a sidewalk plan.	PW	Town
2. _Amend the Zoning Bylaw_ to require sidewalks as part of new developments in certain areas.	PB	TM

Sidewalks and Trails

Oxford, MA

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

DUDLEY

WEBSTER

Pedstrian and Bicycle

First Priority Sidewalk Area

Second Priority Sidewalk Area

Midstate Trail

Potential Local Trails

Other Trails
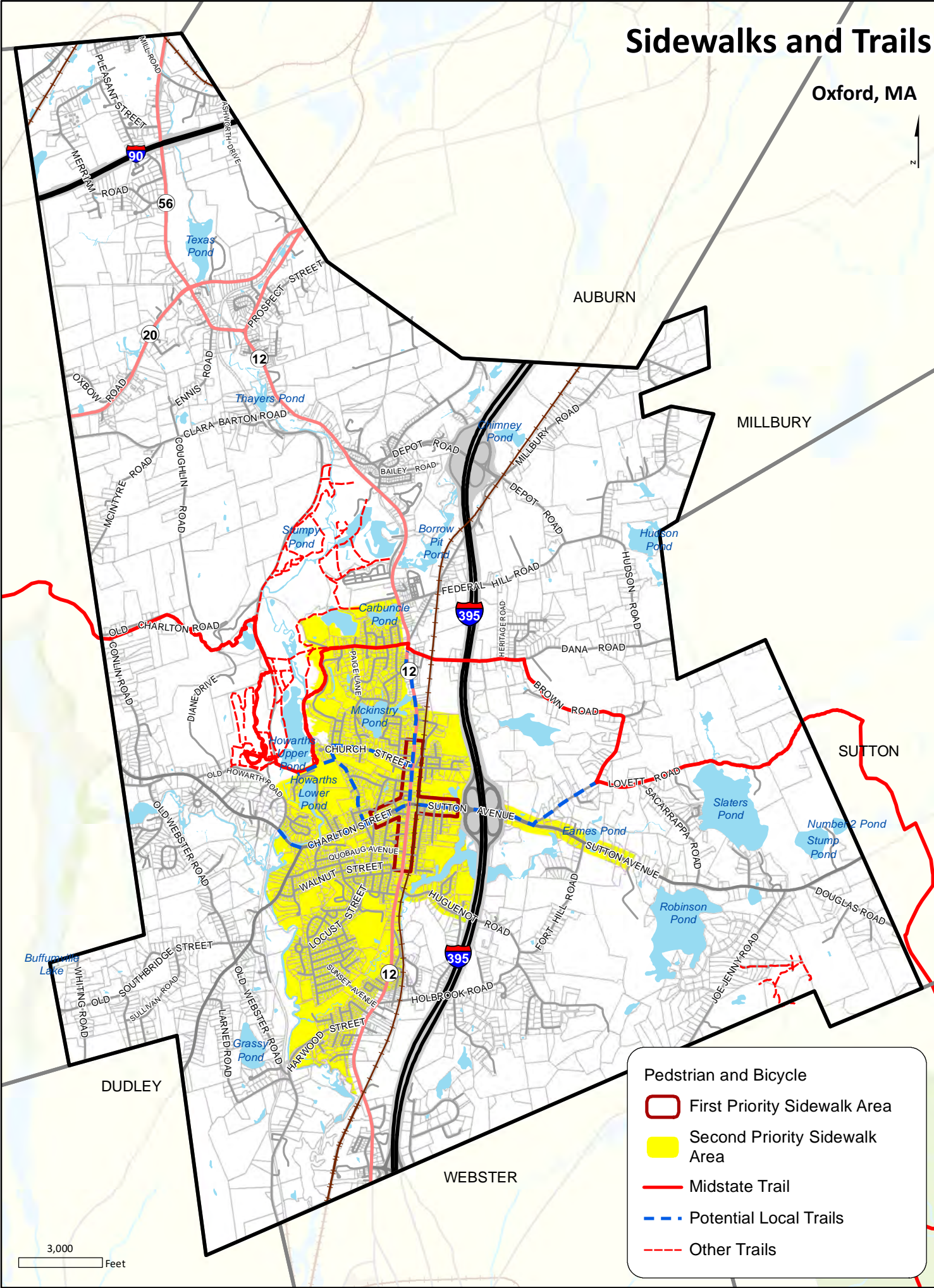
3,000 Feet

Bicycle Route Sign

12.4 Improve Bicycling Options

The Master Plan supports making more provisions for bicycles. Encouraging more bicycle use (and creating an overall system of bicycle routes on State and local roads, as appropriate) is strongly encouraged. Oxford should undertake a process to:

- identify streets with the most potential for bicycle use,
- provide bicycle amenities as appropriate (lane striping, signage, bike racks, etc.), and
- educate motorists and cyclists about sharing the roadway.

Oxford has a good foundation to build on in terms of bicycle routes. The Mid-State Trail is an asset that encourages bicycle use in Oxford. In addition, the trails throughout the Hodges Village area (maintained by the Corps of Engineers) provides for additional biking opportunities. With the support of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (see the Regional Transportation Plan), Oxford has an opportunity to be recognized as a leader in terms of bicycle circulation.

12.4 Improve Bicycling Options	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Encourage and support provisions for bicycling.	Town	
2. Seek to establish a system of safe bicycle routes throughout the community.	PW	Town RC
3. Evaluate bicycle potential as part of any roadway improvement or pavement striping project in Oxford.	PW	Town
B. Action Steps		
1. Categorize streets in Oxford in terms of "bicycle-friendliness" in order to develop a system of bicycle routes where appropriate in the community.	PW	RC

12.5 Enhance Other Transit Services

Fixed Route Bus Service

Route 42 of the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) travels the length of Main Street (Route 12) through Oxford fifteen times each day (seven times southbound or outbound to Webster, and eight times northbound or inbound to Worcester) with a peak period frequency of two hours.

While ridership from within Oxford has historically been modest, this bus route provides a valuable service to those who want or need it. Oxford should continue to support retaining / expanding this service to the extent feasible.
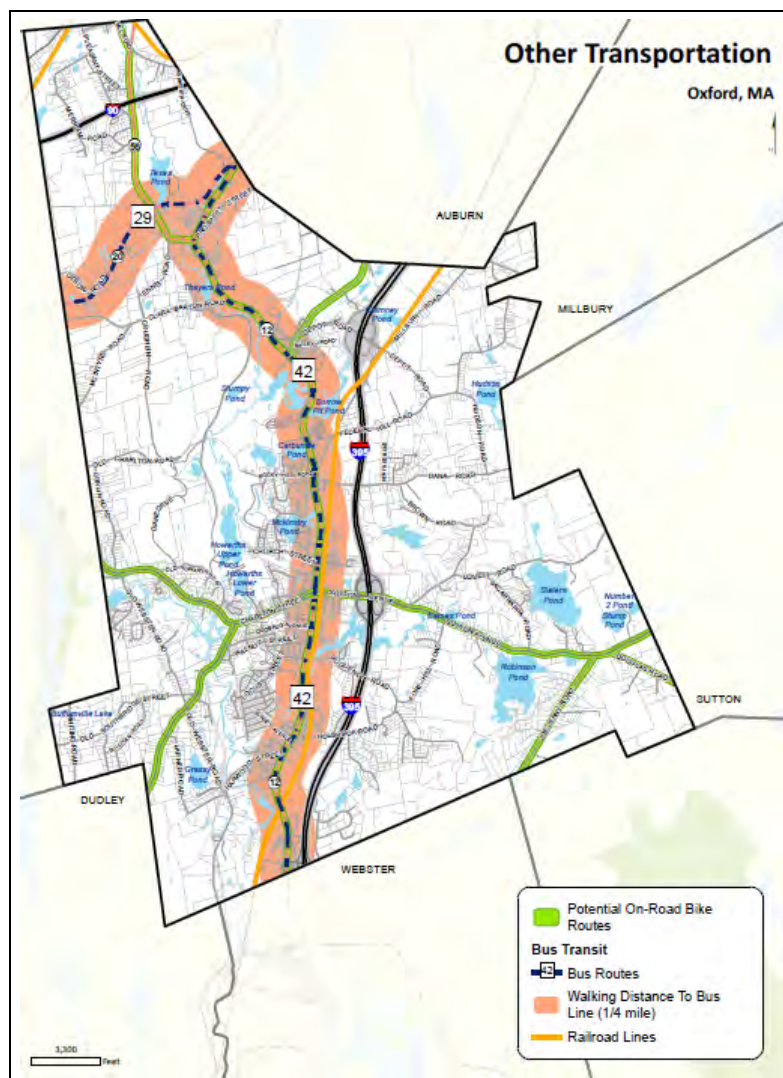
Paratransit

Paratransit transportation service (also called "dial-a-ride") helps elders and people with disabilities by providing basic transportation services for medical appointments, grocery shopping, and trips to the Senior Center. The Town operates a basic in-town paratransit service which helps many seniors.

The Town of Oxford is under contract with the WRTA to provide transit services for people with disabilities and out-of-town transportation services.

Rail Service

The Providence and Worcester Railroad owns and operates a north-south rail line through Oxford (running from Norwich to Worcester). The line is dedicated to freight at this time but it still a significant asset to support local businesses and industries. The Oxford-Auburn Freight Rail Study conducted by CMRPC evaluated the issues and opportunities affecting this rail line. The Town will support possible future passenger service.

12.5 Enhance Other Transit Services	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Seek to maintain and enhance bus transit services to and within Oxford.	WRTA	Town
2. Provide bus shelters and other amenities (such as posted schedules and route maps) to support transit users.	WRTA	Town
3. Support the dial-a-ride service.	Town	COA WRTA
B. Action Steps		
1. Implement other programs to enhance transit services in Oxford.	Town	CMRPC WRTA

IMPROVE UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

13

Overview

The availability of utility infrastructure – water, sewer, electricity, and communications, for example – has a significant influence on overall public health, safety, welfare, and quality of life.

The Master Plan looks at the availability of these utilities (both capacity and location) to ensure they are adequate for community needs.

"Strategic investment in infrastructure produces a foundation for long-term growth."

Roger McNamee
American Businessman

Water Service

Sewage Service

Storm Drainage

Wired Utilities

Oxford intends to encourage the provision of adequate utility infrastructure to meet community needs.

Water Company Purchase

In 2009, the Town Meeting voted to acquire the water system from Aquarion. However, the decision was appealed and the settlement cost turned out to be higher than residents had authorized. The acquisition went back to Town meeting but residents, for a variety of reasons, declined to authorize the additional spending.

Under the original acts of the community and the Massachusetts legislature, the Town still has the ability to acquire the system in the future should the need arise.

13.1 Maintain and Enhance Piped Utilities

Maintain and Enhance Water Service

Water service in most areas of Oxford is provided by the Aquarion Company. The system, which serves over 2,600 service connections, is supplied by wells and supported by storage tanks. Aquarion reports they have adequate capacity to address community needs for the foreseeable future.

In recent years, Aquarion has been making improvements to the water system for reliability and service improvement. Interest has been expressed by the Town and some businesses in extending public water to the industrial park in south Oxford to better serve the businesses and sites located there. Some businesses have said they may have to relocate if public water is not available for sprinkler systems and/or process needs. Aquarion has stated that there are construction challenges (getting under Interstate 395) and cost challenges (payback for construction costs).

The Town intends to work with Aquarion to address and resolve these issues as well as any other issues that prevent expansion of the water system and water supply to meet community needs. Without a comprehensive water system, Oxford is at a competitive disadvantage with other communities and this may affect the overall development (and economic development) of the community.

Water quality protection is an issue because off the transmissivity of the soil types around Aquarion's wells in Oxford. Oxford will work with Aquarion to adopt and enforce a wellhead protection program.

The Cherry Valley and Rochdale Water District provides water service for areas north of the Massachusetts Turnpike. No issues have been reported with regard to the ability to address needs within their service area.

Water Service Area

Oxford, MA

LEICESTER

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

CHARLTON

DUDLEY

WEBSTER

Texas Pond

Thayers Pond

Stumpy Pond

Borrow Pit Pond

Chimney Pond

Hudson Pond

Carbuncle Pond

Mckinstry Pond

Howarths Upper Pond

Howarths Lower Pond

Eames Pond

Slaters Pond

Number 2 Pond
Stump Pond

Robinson Pond

Buffumville Lake

Grassy Pond

Legend

■ Existing Aquarion Service Area

■ Existing Cherry Valley / Rochdale Water District Service Area

■ Planned Water Extension

■ Desirable Future Water Service Areas

3,000 Feet

Expand Sewer Service

Historically, most development in Oxford has been served by septic systems. This has generally been adequate since the most intensive development tended to be in the areas where soil types were well draining. Nevertheless, sewers have been installed in three (3) areas of the community:

- in the Oxford-Rochdale Sewer District (north of the Massachusetts Turnpike) with effluent discharged to the French River off Comins Road in Oxford.
- along Route 20 and Route 12 from Auburn southerly to the High School with effluent treated in Millbury at the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District facility.
- Old Webster Road from the IPG facility southerly to Webster with effluent treated in Webster.

Oxford is anticipating the extension of sewers westerly along Route 20 (between Route 56 and Oxbow Road) prior to the reconstruction of this roadway.

However, ***the lack of sewers*** has inhibited growth and development in certain areas:

- the two industrial parks in south Oxford
- the industrial zoned areas in northeast Oxford
- the Downtown area (especially the R-3 residential district with homes on 20,000 SF lots)
- the residential neighborhoods around downtown

Simply stated, the lack of a sewer system puts Oxford at a competitive disadvantage with other communities and this may affect the overall development (and economic development) of the community.

While the overall transmissivity of the soil types in the downtown area means that residential septic systems may continue to function, there are issues with nitrogen loading due to the concentration of septic systems. This can immediately affect the specific property if it contains a well and septic system and, over time, can create nitrogen loading issues throughout the entire downtown area. Due to the transmissivity of the soil types in downtown, this may also be a long-term threat to the water supply.

Sewer Service Area

Oxford, MA

LEICESTER

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

CHARLTON

DOUGLAS

DUDLEY

Texas Pond

Thayers Pond

Stumpy Pond

Borrow Pit Pond

Carbuncle Pond

Chimney Pond

Hudson Pond

Mckinstry Pond

Howarths Upper Pond

Howarths Lower Pond

Eames Pond

Slaters Pond

Number 2 Pond Stump Pond

Robinson Pond

Buffumville Lake

Grassy Pond

OXBOW ROAD

MCINTYRE ROAD

COUGHLIN ROAD

ENNIS ROAD

BAILEY ROAD

OLD CHARLTON ROAD

CONLIN ROAD

DIANE DRIVE

CHARLTON STREET

DUDLEY ROAD

PARK STREET

CHARLTON STREET

SULLIVAN ROAD

OLD WEBSTER ROAD

WHITING ROAD

LARNED ROAD

OLD WEBSTER ROAD

WESTVIEW DRIVE

HUGUENOT ROAD

MOUNT PLEASANT ROAD

FORT HILL ROAD

LOVETT ROAD

SUTTON AVENUE

BROWN ROAD

DANA ROAD

DANA ROAD

FEDERAL HILL ROAD

FEDERAL HILL ROAD

MILLBURY ROAD

MILLBURY ROAD

DEPOT ROAD

HUDSON ROAD

JOE JENNY ROAD

JOE JENNY ROAD

STAFFORD STREET

MILL ROAD

MERRIAM ROAD
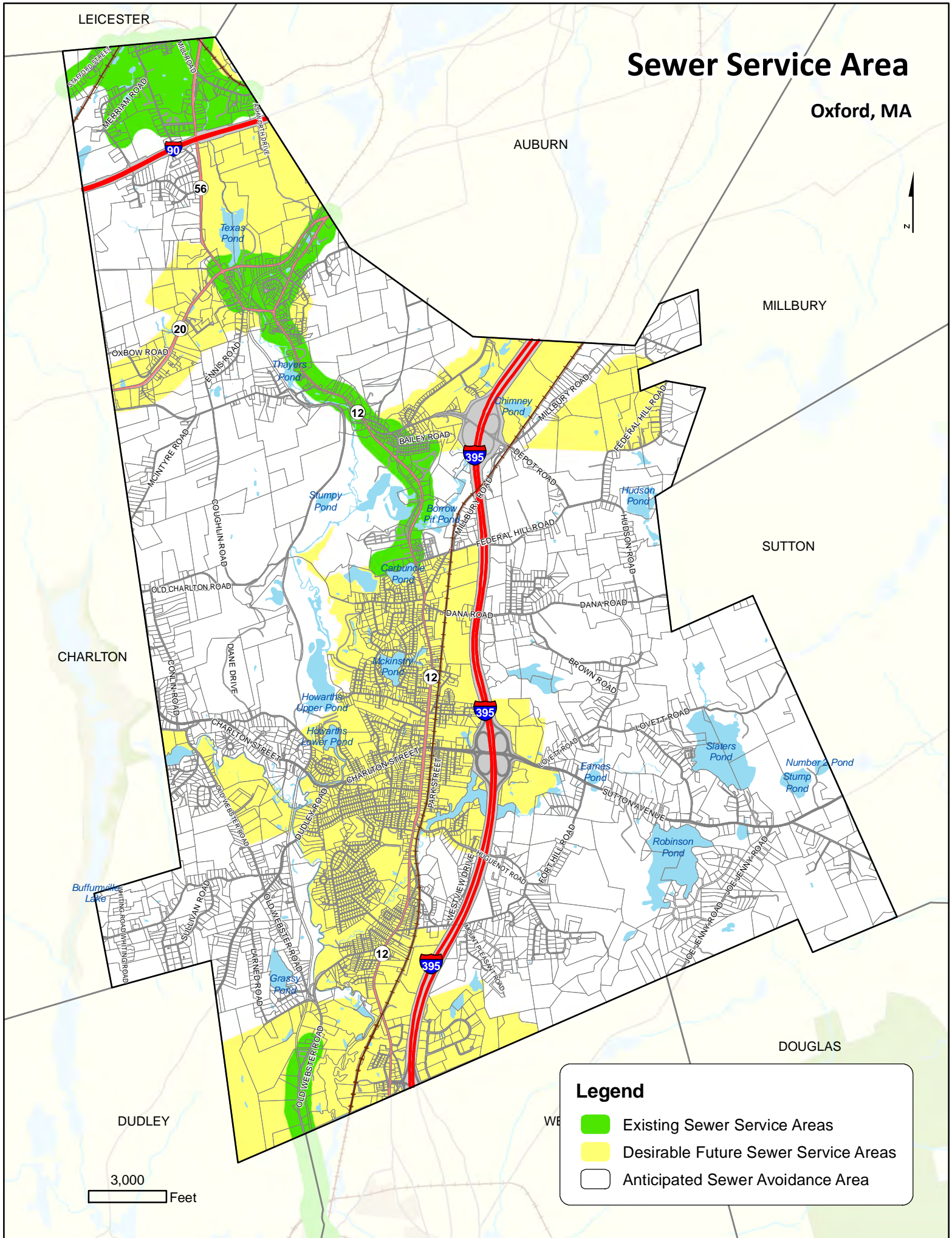
ASHWORTH DRIVE

90

56

20

12

395

12

395

12

395

Legend

- Existing Sewer Service Areas
- Desirable Future Sewer Service Areas
- Anticipated Sewer Avoidance Area

3,000 Feet

In addition, the improvement and enhancement of the downtown area and the addition of new uses to enhance the community (housing and new businesses) may not be possible. It is also not ideal to have multiple septic systems in such close proximity to water supply wells in such well-drained soils.

Oxford has reached the stage where a decision should be made about sewers. If Oxford is serious about economic growth and enhancing the downtown areas, sewers provide a way to do this without worrying about possible threats to public health resulting from discharges from individual septic systems or area-wide cumulative discharges that may affect public health.

Webster may be seeking additional sewage flows and this may be an opportune time to explore options. This is probably more feasible than trying to build a facility in Oxford (due, in part, to limited flow in the French River at certain times of the year.

An alternative approach might be to share the package treatment plant in the Market Basket / Home Depot area. If feasible, this approach would likely be less expensive than connecting to the Webster system although it would have less capacity than a connection to the Webster treatment plant.

Once an overall approach is determined, sewer lines can be extended over time through development agreements and/or betterment assessments.

Address Storm Drainage Issues

Storm drainage is an important consideration that many people take for granted. Drainage and flooding issues can occur in areas where drainage facilities did not anticipate the level of development prevalent today. The Town continues to address drainage situations as solutions become apparent.

In the future, it is anticipated that Oxford will do more to implement "low impact development" strategies where attention is paid to treating runoff to remove pollutants and infiltrating it into the ground as soon as possible.

13.1 Maintain And Enhance Piped Utilities	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Maintain and enhance water service.	AWC	
2. Maintain and enhance sewer service.	PW	BOS Town
3. Continue to investigate and address drainage issues.	PW	Town
4. Implement "low impact development" strategies where attention is paid to treating runoff to remove pollutants and infiltrating it into the ground as soon as possible.	PB	PW
B. Action Steps		
1. Implement programs to maintain and enhance piped utilities.	Town	PW

Natural Gas

Natural gas service is not widely available in Oxford at the present time.

The introduction and expansion of natural gas service is encouraged since it can provide an alternative source of fuel to local residents and businesses.

SMART GROWTH

- Low Impact Development Approaches

Rain Garden

Pervious Pavement

Streetlights

Some communities are purchasing and then managing and maintaining local streetlights.

Oxford should consider this approach in order to maintain the street-lighting system as cost-effectively as possible.

This could also include a conversion of streetlights to LED technology.

SMART GROWTH

- LED Street Lights

13.2 Maintain and Enhance Other Utilities

Wired Utilities

Electrical service, wired telephones, and cable television / internet are the main wired utilities. The reliability of these systems is an important consideration since they can be vulnerable to service interruptions from storm events and other disruptions since the wires are exposed.

As opportunities arise, it would be desirable to place wired utilities underground. In addition, the Town should seek an appropriate balance between electrical reliability and the impacts on community character / environmental health from trimming of tree branches.

Expanding internet capacity is also a recommendation of the Plan.

Wireless Utilities

People are increasingly relying on wireless services for voice and data. Wireless services can also enhance public safety since people can call for assistance from anywhere service is available. People are often concerned about wireless services because of the perceived visual impact of new towers.

Oxford should seek to balance the demand for wireless services and the public safety benefits with the visual and other impacts of new tower installations.

13.2 Maintain and Enhance Other Utilities	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to seek an appropriate balance between reliability of wired utilities and community character / environmental health.	Town	
2. Work with property owners and utility companies to bury utility wires as opportunities arise, especially in Downtown.	Town	
3. Consider converting street lights to LED bulbs to increase energy efficiency.	PW	
4. Seek to expand internet capacity and wireless coverage while maintaining community character.	Town	

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

<div style="text-align:right">**14**</div>

Overview

The recommendations of the preceding chapters can be combined to present an overall Future Land Use Plan for Oxford. The Future Land Use Plan is a reflection of the stated goals, policies, and recommendations of the Master Plan as well as an integration of the preceding elements of the Master Plan. In essence, the Future Land Use Plan is a statement of what the Oxford of tomorrow should look like.

Residential

Business

Community Uses

Character

Future Land Use Plan

The following table describes the major categories reflected on the Future Land Use Plan map on the facing page:

Conservation Areas	Description
Natural Resources	Areas with significant environmental constraints (wetlands, watercourses, steep slopes, flood-plains, etc.)
Open Space	Properties considered open space today and intended to remain as "dedicated open space" or "managed open space"

Residential Areas	
Low Density Residential	Areas where existing development patterns, soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity are generally suitable for residential development at densities of 1.0 units per acre or less.
Higher Density Residential	Areas where existing development patterns, soil types, and infrastructure capacity are generally suitable for residential development at densities greater than 1.0 unit per acre.
Multi-Family Residential	Areas with existing multi-family development or areas zoned for such.
Potential Housing Opportunity Area	An area where higher density housing is desired to help address housing needs and help strengthen the village center area.

Business Areas	
Proposed Village Business Zone	The main community focal point intended for continued development as a pedestrian-oriented, mixed use, village-type area with a strong sense of place.
Business	Other areas in Oxford zoned for business uses
Industrial	Other areas in Oxford zoned for industrial uses

Policy Area Summary

The map on the subsequent page summarizes some of the major policy initiatives recommended in this Master Plan.

Future Land Use Plan

Oxford, MA

MILLBURY

AUBURN

SUTTON

WEBSTER

DUDLEY

3,300
Feet

Legend

- Natural Resources
- Dedicated Open Space
- Managed Open Space
- Agricultural
- Lower Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Potential Housing Opportunity Area
- Town / Institutional Facility
- Proposed Village Business Zone
- Business
- Recommended Rezoning to General Business
- Industrial
- Investigate Possible Rezoning to Light Industrial / Industrial

Policy Area Summary Map

Oxford, MA

N

AUBURN

MILLBURY

SUTTON

DOUGLAS

WEBSTER

DUDLEY

PLEASANT STREET
MILLER ROAD
MERRIAM ROAD
I-90
56
20
OXBOW ROAD
PROSPECT STREET
ASHWORTH ROAD
Texas Pond
ENNIS ROAD
12
CLARA BARTON ROAD
Thayers Pond
MCINTYRE ROAD
COUGHLIN ROAD
OLD CHARLTON ROAD
DIANE DRIVE
Stumpy Pond
DEPOT ROAD
BAILEY ROAD
Lamney Pond
MILLBURY ROAD
DEPOT ROAD
Hudson Pond
HUDSON ROAD
Borrow Pit Pond
FEDERAL HILL ROAD
HERITAGE ROAD
395
12
Catbunco Pond
DANA ROAD
BROWN ROAD
LOVETT ROAD
SACARRAPPA ROAD
Slaters Pond
Number 2 Pond Stump Pond
Miskinsky Pond
PAIGE LANE
CHURCH STREET
Howarths Upper Pond
OLD HOWARTH ROAD
Howarths Lower Pond
OLD WEBSTER ROAD
CHARLTON STREET
QUOBAUG AVENUE
WALNUT STREET
LOCUST STREET
SUTTON AVENUE
Eames Pond
SUTTON AVENUE
HUGUENOT ROAD
FORT HILL ROAD
Robinson Pond
DOUGLAS ROAD
JOE JENNY ROAD
12
HOLBROOK ROAD
395
SUNSET AVENUE
SULLIVAN ROAD
OLD SOUTHBRIDGE STREET
WHITING ROAD
Buffumville Lake
LARNED ROAD
HARWOOD STREET
Grassy Pond

3,100 Feet

Legend

- - - Desirable Road Connections

▨ Desirable Future Sewer Service Area

- - - Potential Housing Opportunity Area

■ New Village Business Zone

▨ Areas to Investigate Industrial / Light Industrial

▨ Areas to be rezoned to General Business

▨ Promote Open Space Development Patterns

IMPLEMENTATION

15

Overview

Implementation of recommendations is a key part of the planning process. In fact, it may be the most important part of the planning process. If strategies, policies, and action steps to make Oxford a better place are identified but not implemented, the planning process will not have produced the changes desired by the community or realized the full potential of what Oxford could and should be.

The whole purpose of the planning process is not to produce a plan but to identify positive changes that should be undertaken in Oxford in order to:

- meet community needs,
- preserve community character, and
- enhance the overall quality of life.

"Successful people … imagine what their future could be and then work every day toward that goal."

**Brian Tracy
Motivational Author**

Implementation Committee

Groundbreaking

Ribbon Cutting

Implementation Challenges

The inability to fund all the recommendations in the Master Plan is a significant impediment to implementation of recommendations

As a result, it is anticipated the Master Plan will help serve as a road map to things the community wishes to accomplish but the availability of funding will determine the speed that Oxford will be able to get there.

There is no doubt that implementation is a priority. It is just that the timeframe to accomplish community goals may be longer than anyone wants.

Since Proposition 2.5 became effective in 1982, overall inflation of costs (as reflected in the Consumer Price Index) has outpaced the municipal revenue increases allowed by the law.

If Oxford cannot raise sufficient revenue to address its needs, services and facilities could decrease in both quality and quantity.

Implementation Concepts

It should be understood that implementation of the Master Plan will be a gradual and continual process. Many of the policy recommendations in the Master Plan will be implemented by the Planning Board through zoning amendments, application reviews, and other means. Some policy recommendations will require the cooperation of other local boards and commissions such as the Board of Selectmen. A number of the Master Plan recommendations will require approval by the Town Meeting. However, if the Master Plan is to be successfully realized, the recommendations must serve as a guide to all residents, applicants, agencies, and individuals interested in the future of Oxford.

Many sections of the Master Plan also identify specific action steps which can be itemized, scheduled, managed and completed. Action steps lend themselves to monitoring implementation and measuring progress. It is hoped that, over time, Oxford will continue to identify and undertake new action steps to help implement the Plan.

This type of process (reviewing the Master Plan and adding new policies and action steps) will help the Master Plan (and plan strategies) be relevant over a long timeframe.

Plan Priorities

There are a number of recommendations in the Master Plan and it is understood that it will likely be impossible to implement them all. However, all the recommendations are important and can make Oxford a better place.

In order to provide some guidance, the members of the Master Plan Update Committee decided to individually and anonymously prioritize the recommendations in the Master Plan. Members of the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen were also asked to participate. Each person (18 total) identified and ranked their top ten priorities. These responses were then collated and the rankings were given point values (#1 = 10 points to #10 = 1 point) and then tabulated.

The complete scoring of each "strategy" in the Master Plan is presented on page 119. Based on the results of this exercise, the Master Plan Update Committee felt that the Master Plan would be a success if it could accomplish as many of the "top ten" items as possible.

Strategy	Section	Page	Score
1. Encourage Economic Development	8.1	64	81
2. Maintain and Enhance Piped Utilities	13.1	106	69
3. Address Community Facility Needs	11.1	84	68
4. Implement The Plan	15.1	120	62
5. Guide Business Development	8.2	65	60
6. Strengthen And Enhance Downtown	7.1	54	54
7. Protect Water Quality / Water Resources	4.1	24	52
8. Guide Industrial Development	8.3	66	46
9. Address Overall Roadway Circulation	12.1	92	43
10. Address Downtown Traffic Issues	7.3	56	42
11. Protect Other Natural Resources	4.4	28	33
12. Maintain and Enhance Other Utilities	13.2	112	30
13. Enhance "Pedestrian-Friendliness"	7.2	55	29
14. Protect Historic Resources	6.1	40	29
15. Create An Open Space "System"	5.1	36	28
16. Address Housing Needs	9.4 / 9.5	75+	27
17. Encourage Open Space Development Patterns	9.2	72	24
18. Promote Architectural Character	6.5	48	24
19. Improve Pedestrian Options	12.3	100	22
20. Protect Natural Ecosystems	4.3	26	20
21. Guide Residential Development	9.1	70	20
22. Promote Sustainability And Resiliency	10.1	82	18
23. Support Farms and Farming	6.2	44	15
24. Guide Multi-Family Development	9.3	74	14
25. Maximize Open Space Tools	5.2	37	13
26. Support Open Space Organizations	5.3	38	9
27. Address Property Maintenance	6.6	50	9
28. Improve Parking In Downtown	7.4	58	8
29. Modify Downtown Zoning Districts	7.5	60	8
30. Preserve Scenic Attributes	6.4	46	7
31. Respect Soil Capabilities	4.2	25	7
32. Promote Community Spirit	6.7	51	7
33. Preserve Other Undeveloped Land	6.3	45	5
34. Address Other Roadway / Parking Issues	12.2	96	4
35. Improve Bicycling Options	12.3	102	2
36. Enhance Downtown In Other Ways	7.6	62	1
37. Review Business Development Regulations	8.4	68	0
38. Encourage Maintenance Of The Housing Stock	9.6	80	0
39. Enhance Other Transit Services	12.5	103	0

Key Definitions

Capital Asset - Land, land improvements, infrastructure, equipment, or other assets that have a long-term lifespan.

Capital Project - A project which results in the acquisition or increased value or lengthened lifespan of a capital asset.

Capital Budget - The amount of money to be spent in the current fiscal year for capital projects.

Capital Improvements Plan - A multi-year financial plan that:
- Lists and describes capital projects a local government plans to undertake,
- Indicates how projects will be funded, and
- Projects the effects of the plan on key financial variables, such as the real property tax rate.

Capital Improvement Programming

Spending on capital projects is an important part of Oxford's approach to the future and deserves additional discussion. When Oxford invests in projects and programs which are closely aligned with the policies and action steps identified in the Master Plan, the community moves closer to achieving its overall goals and objectives. This includes maintaining the facilities Oxford already has.

Capital projects can be of three general types:
- spending to maintain a capital asset and maintain or extend its useful life or level of service.
- spending to physically expand an existing capital asset (such as a school building).
- spending to provide a new facility to meet present or future community needs.

Creating a multi-year financial plan with estimations of capital funding needs and how to pay for them (based on assumptions about operating expenditures, revenues, assessed value, reserves, and known debt service commitments) is an important way for Oxford to efficiently and cost-effectively address the maintenance of its capital assets and address the needs and desires of residents.
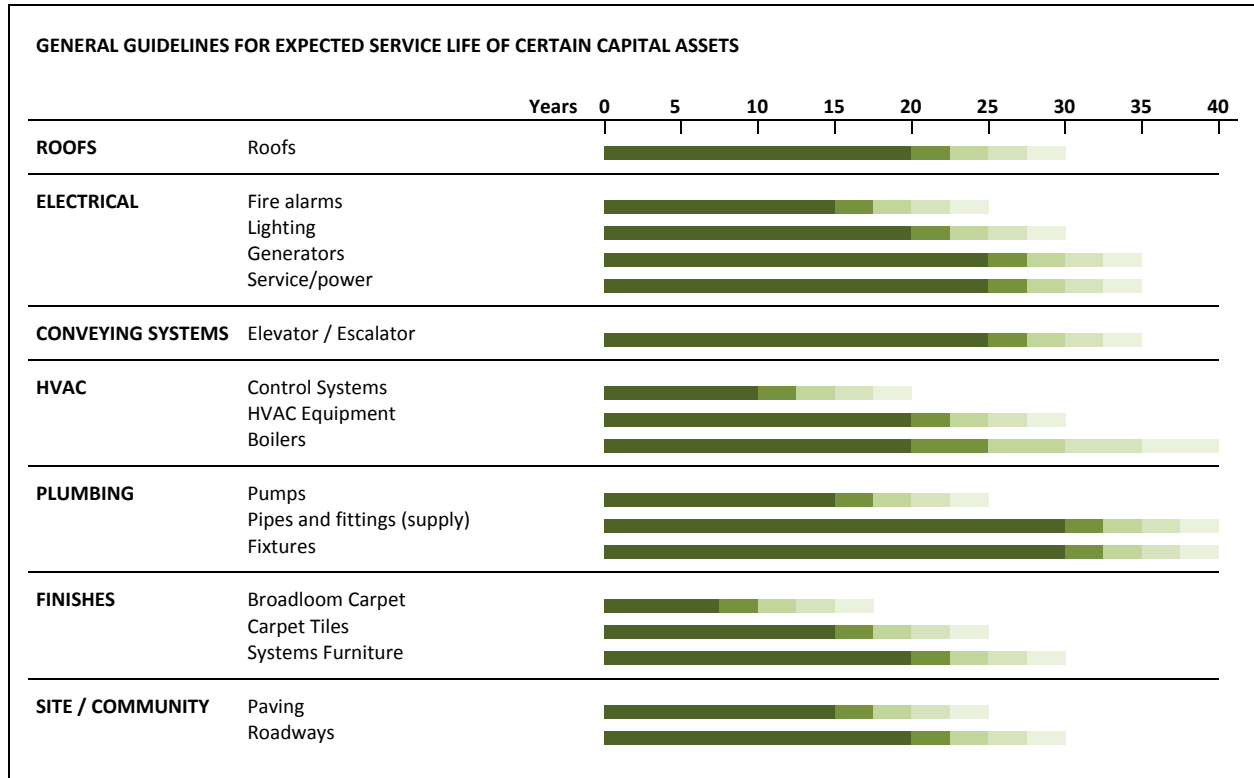
In fact, if Oxford did not invest towards meeting its capital needs:
- infrastructure (such as roads or utility systems) may deteriorate or fail affecting the basic health and safety of residents.
- building systems (such as roofs or mechanical systems) may deteriorate affecting the usability of the facility.
- operating costs and/or future replacement costs may be higher and reduce funds available to provide other services.
- Oxford may spend more time and money responding to failures than if it had anticipated and planned for capital needs in a cost-effective way.
- Oxford may not be in a position to maximize its economic potential.
- the visual attractiveness of Oxford may suffer.
- the Town may not be able to take advantage of state or federal grants to offset the cost to local property owners.
- the quality of life may be reduced.

Developing and funding a multi-year financial and capital plan has clear benefits to Oxford:
- allowing for better project ranking and affordability measures,
- clearing up uncertainty about current levels of investment,
- resolving the problem of dealing with the same issues repeatedly, and
- improving the annual budget and budget process since the amount of funding required for debt service and capital spending can be balanced in current and future years.

Just as car owners change their oil on a regular basis and replace their vehicle when needed, Oxford must do the same thing.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR EXPECTED SERVICE LIFE OF CERTAIN CAPITAL ASSETS

	Years	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40

ROOFS — Roofs

ELECTRICAL — Fire alarms, Lighting, Generators, Service/power

CONVEYING SYSTEMS — Elevator / Escalator

HVAC — Control Systems, HVAC Equipment, Boilers

PLUMBING — Pumps, Pipes and fittings (supply), Fixtures

FINISHES — Broadloom Carpet, Carpet Tiles, Systems Furniture

SITE / COMMUNITY — Paving, Roadways

Adapted From "Facility Management and Capital Renewal", Fairfax County, Virginia

A multi-year financial and capital plan is also a useful budgeting and managing tool since it allows the Town to:

- balance needed or desired capital investments with available financing, thereby receiving the optimum benefits for the available public revenue.
- align the capital improvement program with its planning activity, programs, and operating resources and facilitate coordination between Town departments.
- take advantage of government, foundation, and other grant programs and leverage project-specific funding resources.
- undertake a logical process of assigning priorities to projects based on their overall importance to the Town.
- coordinate activities with federal, state and regional organizations, utility companies, and the private sector to anticipate when the Town will undertake public improvements, and make decisions and plan investments accordingly.

Capital spending to maintain or achieve a certain level of service is an important consideration. A regular planning process (such as preparing the capital improvement plan) should:

- inventory and assess particular types of physical infrastructure,
- identify deficiencies,
- establish a desired "level of service" or other metric for facilities, and
- prioritize needed investments.

This analysis should also include consideration of the desired level of service. How to measure level of service for each of the various types of capital assets maintained by the Town will be an on-going endeavor ((public water, public sewer, roadway pavement, sidewalks, trails, recreation facilities, fire / police / emergency medical, open space, public works, education, etc.).

If the demands placed on a capital asset exceed its capacity, the level of service might be expected to decline. Thus, it will be important for Oxford to monitor the qualitative aspects of the community's capital assets level of service in order to:

- assure that development occurs in concert with the capacity of local facilities,
- enable adequate public facilities to be provided in a timely manner
- help achieve the growth objectives of the Master Plan, and
- correct deficiencies in providing adequate levels of service as opportunities arise.

Sealing Roadway Cracks

Roof Replacement
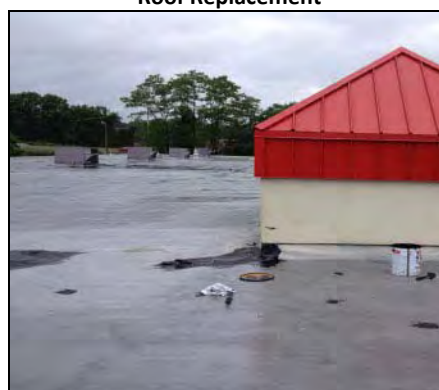
In some communities, capital projects are scored as to their overall priority based on such considerations as:

Criteria	Description	Weight
1. **Health, Safety & Welfare**	An assessment of the degree to which the project improves health and safety factors associated with the infrastructure asset. For example, projects that result in the reduction of accidents, improved structural integrity, and mitigation of health hazards would score higher	25%
2. **Regulatory or legal mandates**	An assessment of the degree to which the project is under a regulatory order or other legal mandate, or meets a federal, State or local safety requirement. For example, projects that are required by consent decrees, court orders, and other legal mandates would score higher.	25%
3. **Operational Necessity**	An assessment of the degree to which the project sustains (5 points max.) or improves (10 points max.) operational efficiency and effective delivery of services.	10%
4. **Implication of Deferring the Project (opportunity costs)**	An assessment of costs associated with deferring the project, such as inflationary construction costs or additional annual operating / maintenance costs for each year the project is not funded. For example, projects that would have significantly higher future costs, negative community aspects, or negative public perception, should they be deferred, would score higher.	10%
5. **Budget Impact**	An assessment of the project's budget impact, i.e. the degree to which it affects operations and maintenance costs positively or negatively. For example, a roof replacement project that reduces both maintenance requirements and energy consumption or a storm drain that reduces the need for periodic cleaning would score higher. On the other hand, a new facility that increases maintenance, energy and staffing costs would score lower.	5%
6. **Strategic Goals**	An assessment of the degree to which the project furthers the strategic goals as adopted in the Master Plan.	6%
7. **Grant Funding Opportunity**	An assessment of the amount of funding in the project compared to the amount of funding provided by grant funds from outside agencies. This should include an assessment of the amount of funding needed to complete the current project phase and the entire project. For example, a project that would bring grant funds from an outside agency into the Town would score higher, while a project that relies only on Town funds would score lower.	7%
8. **Community Demand**	An assessment of the degree to which the project meets a community need or responds to community demand. How need/demand was assessed, measured, or recorded will be noted.	7%
9. **Implementation readiness**	An assessment of the time required for a project to begin. This should include an assessment of: project complexity; internal decisions/commitments that are required; review requirements by boards/commissions; agreements or approvals required by non-Town entities; timing considerations with other capital projects (if applicable); the degree to which the project is in compliance with the Master Plan or other Town-adopted plans; and level of public support. Whether a public information strategy is recommended will be noted.	5%

Adapted from City of Annapolis, Maryland

123

Implementation Committee

Some communities have found that a Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) can be effective at coordinating implementation of the Plan.

The PIC includes representatives of various Town boards and commissions. The PIC meets *__quarterly__* to discuss ways to facilitate or accelerate Master Plan implementation, assess the status of specific recommendations, evaluate the priorities, and even suggest new implementation techniques.

Oxford may wish to consider establishing a Plan Implementation Committee to coordinate implementation of the Plan.

The membership of the Master Plan Update Committee could be reconstituted as the Plan Implementation Committee.

The goal will be to have the PIC in place when the Master Plan is adopted.

15.1 Implement The Master Plan

It is intended that the Master Plan be a working document used to implement policies and complete action steps.

15.1 Implement The Master Plan	Legend for Leaders / Partners located on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Implement the Master Plan.	*PIC*	Town
2. Regularly review Master Plan strategies, policies and action steps to ensure they are relevant to community needs.	*PIC*	PB
3. Coordinate implementation efforts with adjacent municipalities and regional planning agencies.	*PIC*	Town CMRPC
4. Use the Master Plan to guide: • granting of special permits, • zoning map or text changes, and • referrals from the Board of Selectmen regarding municipal improvements or other matters.	PB	BOS
5. Encourage the Board of Selectmen and other Town agencies to use the Master Plan to: • guide decisions on the Operating Budget, • guide decisions on the Capital Budget, and • guide preparation of a long-term Capital Improvements Program.	*PIC*	BOS FC
B. Action Steps		
1. Establish a Plan Implementation Committee made up of representatives of various boards to prioritize, coordinate, and refine implementation of the Plan.	Town	PB
2. Update the Zoning Bylaw to implement strategies, policies, and action steps in the Master Plan.	PB	
3. Update the Subdivision Bylaw to implement strategies, policies, and action steps in the Master Plan.	PB	
4. Seek to hire a Town Planner to help manage land use activities in Oxford and help implement the Master Plan.	BOS FC	Town
5. Seek to hire a grant writer to help obtain grants for Oxford and help implement the Master Plan.	BOS FC	Town

CONCLUSION 16

Overview

The Master Plan has been prepared to meet the challenges that will confront the Town of Oxford in the future. The Master Plan is intended to serve as a guide to be followed in order to enhance the Town's quality of life, the overall economy, and community character.

The Master Plan is also intended to be flexible enough to allow adjustments that achieve specific goals and objectives while maintaining the integrity of the long-term goals of the community. Still, the most important step of the planning process is implementation of the Plan's strategies, policies, and action steps.

During the next few years, some of the goals will be achieved, some circumstances will undoubtedly change, and some conditions may arise that will suggest that it is time to reconsider some of the Master Plan strategies, policies, and action steps. Such situations are to be expected. Programs that help achieve community consensus, establish community goals, and promote community welfare will all turn out to be positive steps in the history of Oxford.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Designations For Leaders And Partners In The Policies / Action Steps Tables

AC	Agricultural Commission	MDOT	Mass. Dept. of Transportation
ARB	Architectural Review Board *(NEW)*		
AWC	Aquarion Water Company	OSC	Open Space Committee
BC	Bandstand Committee	PB	Planning Board
BOH	Board of Health	PD	Police Department
BOS	Board of Selectmen	*PIC*	*Plan Implementation Comm. (NEW)*
B/Z	Building / Zoning Department	PW	Public Works
CC	Conservation Commission	RC	Recreation Commission
CMRPC	Cent. MA Regional Planning Comm.		
COA	Council On Aging	SC	School Committee
CUL	Cultural Council	SD	School Department
		Staff	Town of Oxford Staff
FC	Finance Committee		
FD	Fire Departments	TM	Town Meeting
		Town	Town agencies and departments
HA	Housing Authority		
HC	Historical Commission	WRTA	Worcester Regional Transit Auth.
HD	Health Department		
		ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals
LIB	Oxford Library		

In the above table, entities which do not yet exist are highlighted in italic text.