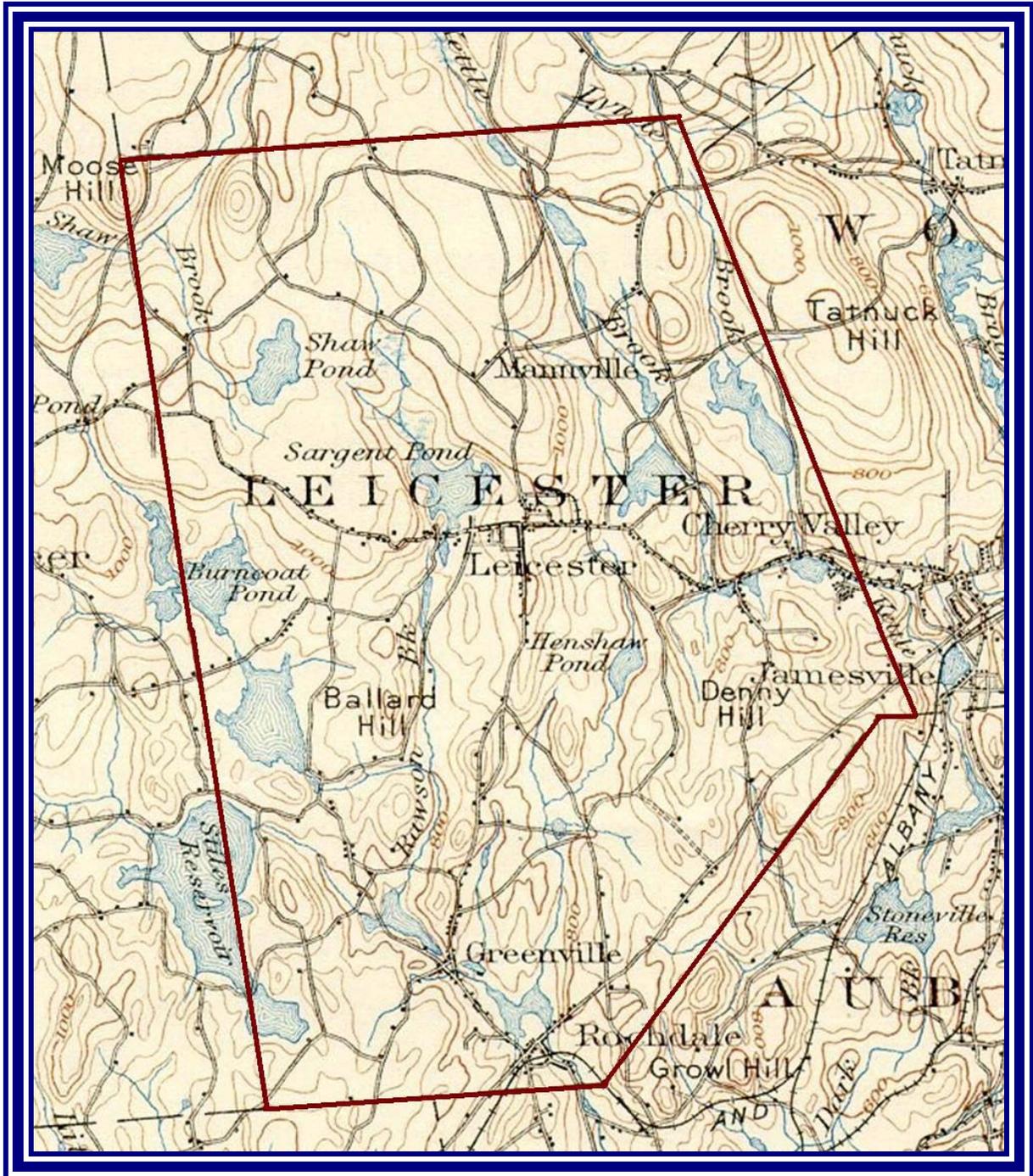


Leicester Master Plan



2009

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The members of the Leicester Planning Board would like to extend their gratitude to the many people who contributed their knowledge, time, and energy to the completion of this project.

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Cover: Portion of Historic USGS Map, Quinsigamond, MA-CT-RI Quadrangle USGS 30 Minute Series (northwest corner), 1908, Reprinted 1930 (surveyed 1885 & 1886), from UNH DIMOND LIBRARY, Documents Department & Data Center.

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- A. Summary of Survey Results
- B. Open Space Plan Five-Year Action Program (Chapter 9)
- C. Capital Improvement Plan
- D. Public Forums & Comments
- E. Status of 2000 Master Plan Action Items
- F. Resources

INTRODUCTION

The 2009 Master Plan is an update the Town's 2000 Master Plan. The Town's first Master Plan was prepared in 1971. Master Plans are described in Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 41, Section 81D) as the "basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality." Master Plans must address the following elements: goals, land use, housing, economic development, natural resources (natural, cultural, and historic resources), open space and recreation, services, transportation, and implementation. These required elements have been reorganized in this plan to reflect planning efforts already completed by the Town of Leicester. For example, the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan will serve as the Open Space and Recreation Element and much of the Natural Resources element.

For each required element, or chapter, this plan provides data and background information, identifies issues and opportunities, and provides specific recommendations. The final chapter, Implementation, provides a comprehensive list of all recommendations, and identifies the responsible entity and priorities. Implementation of the plan is the collective responsibility of the Town and those representing the Town.

This Master Plan is intended to set forth Leicester's goals and provide strategies to guide local decision makers when making decisions about Leicester's future. It is important for readers to remember a Master Plan is, by definition, general in nature. The Plan sets forth background information and directional guidance for the future and should stimulate thought and action. One measure of Master Plan success is how many times over the coming year's residents, Town officials, volunteers, formal and informal committees and Town staff open the Plan for ideas.

THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS IN LEICESTER

The Leicester Master Plan was prepared almost entirely in-house by the Leicester Master Plan Committee and the Leicester Town Planner. Through a technical assistance grant, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) assisted with the Economic Development Chapter of the plan. CMRPC also assisted with transportation information and prepared a base map that was used in development of some of the Master Plan maps.

The Master Plan Committee met monthly and all meetings were open to the public. To increase public involvement in the Master Plan and to help the Committee form goals and objectives, the Committee prepared a Master Plan Survey. This survey was distributed as an insert to the *Spencer New Leader*, which is delivered free to all Leicester households. Surveys were also available at online, several local businesses, the library, Senior Center and Town Hall. Surveys were distributed in mid-February 2008, and were collected through mid-March 2008. (Results of the survey are contained in the Appendix.)

The Master Plan Committee also held three public forums. The first, held in November 2007, was designed to assist with goals, objectives and recommendations related to the Economic Development chapter. The second, held in April 2008, was to present the results of the survey, provide an update on Master Plan progress, and to solicit public input on Leicester's future

development. The complete draft of the plan was made available in mid-March 2009 for public review and comment. A third public forum, a Master Plan “Open House” was held on April 4, 2009 to provide another opportunity for public comment and input. (See Appendix for detailed Public Forum information.) The Master Plan Committee finalized the plan in May 2009. The Planning Board adopted the Master Plan on July 7, 2009.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES OF THE MASTER PLAN

The Leicester Master Plan Update Committee used several approaches to establish community goals for the Master Plan. The results of the surveys and public forums described earlier were one source of preparing the Master Plan Goals. Review of the 2000 Master Plan and discussion about the Town's progress in achieving these goals as well as relevance of the goals to the next twenty years was a source for goal preparation. Goal development was also a common thread through all discussions during preparation of each element as well as during review of background information for the plan update. The following “Community Vision” (see box) is adapted from the 2000 Master Plan and updated based on the 2008-09 Master Plan process. This vision is intended to reflect the overall view of what Leicester should be in the future.

Community Vision

Leicester took the necessary steps ahead of time to encourage new development where residents had planned for it. There are neighborhoods in Leicester that represent the best of the old and the best of the new. Historic district designations were put in place that not only encourage renovation and infill, but also maintain historic development patterns and pedestrian character. Desired commercial and industrial development was targeted to specific areas and residential areas were preserved. New residential development is often on larger lots (50,000 - 80,000 s.f.), but the Town also allows smaller lot sizes in exchange for the permanent protection of open space. People in Leicester can still go around the corner to buy milk, work a reasonable distance from their home, and enjoy the quiet of country living at night. The Town has focused on providing recreational opportunities for all residents and developed a plan for the best long-term use of the Town-owned Hillcrest Country Club. Natural resources have been preserved for future generations. The Town continues to provide needed services for elders and has opened another Leicester Housing Authority senior housing complex. Maintaining housing affordability has encouraged both newer and older Leicester generations to remain in Town. The population has grown, but the friendly atmosphere continues and residents appreciate what they have in Leicester.

The final Master Plan Goals & Objectives on the following pages are based on all of the above. Specific recommendations are contained in the applicable Chapters, and repeated in the Implementation Chapter.

HOUSING

Housing Goal:

Leicester's housing goal is to ensure that housing opportunities are available that meet the needs of all of Leicester's residents and that future growth occurs in a controlled manner consistent with the Town's character and protection of the Town's resources.

Housing Objectives:

- Encourage the upkeep, maintenance and rehabilitation of existing housing.
- Provide housing opportunities for a variety of new housing types in areas identified in the Land Use Chapter as most suitable for new residential development.
- Maintain the historical character of existing homes and neighborhoods.
- Encourage student housing for Becker College and support the expansion of such housing within the guidelines of historic preservation policies
- Preserve existing neighborhoods and promote a variety of land uses within neighborhood areas to provide needed recreation and other services.
- Encourage housing development that limits impacts on the natural environment and avoids excessive energy consumption and infrastructure costs

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Goal:

Encourage mixed-use development with a variety of small-scale retail businesses in a more pedestrian-friendly town center, while promoting large-scale retail businesses and office parks in targeted areas away from the town center, and supporting the preservation of historic structures and the redevelopment of underutilized older structures.

Economic Development Objectives:

- Support and enable the newly reinstated Economic Development Committee so that its role is a catalyst for helping the Town strive to reach its economic development goal stated above.
- Consider changes to zoning bylaws, site plan design standards, and roadway design to encourage additional pedestrian scale development in the Central Business District to maintain its attractiveness to pedestrian traffic.
- Encourage the development of industrial land for office parks that house professional services, biotechnology and medical research businesses.
- Pursue state and federal programs to facilitate the redevelopment of underutilized properties.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Goal:

Leicester's transportation goal is to provide a well-maintained and efficient system of roadways, improve the safety of the street system, reduce energy and maintenance costs related to new roadway construction, encourage public transportation use, and support transportation improvements that protect and enhance pedestrian and bicycle transportation.

Transportation Objectives:

- Maintain appropriate levels of service at all intersections during peak periods to ensure traffic delays are kept to a minimum.
- Promote scenic roads and the preservation of stone walls in public and private road construction projects.
- Participate in and support regional transportation planning.
- Facilitate pedestrian access Town-wide for all ages of the population.
- Minimize through traffic in residential neighborhoods and discourage use of residential streets to access commercial development
- Promote the improvement of roadway extensions in front of new lots to existing or better standards than the existing way being extended in accordance with the Subdivision Control Act and the Leicester Subdivision Rules and Regulations.
- Encourage use of public transportation and car-pooling to reduce traffic congestion
- Promote circulation improvements, parking arrangements and site plan layout designs that grant maximum efficiency to the commercial and industrial land uses as an incentive to new and expanded development.
- Encourage Town acceptance of existing private ways improved to minimal safety standards when requested by a majority of the property owners adjoining such ways.

FACILITIES & SERVICES

Facilities & Services Goal:

Leicester's Facilities & Services Goal is to provide a level of public safety, Town services, and infrastructure that meets the current and future needs of the community, while ensuring an efficient use of resources and enhancing the quality of life in Leicester.

Facilities & Services Objectives:

- Maintain a high level of public services for all general government services.
- Provide fire, police, and EMS services that ensure public safety
- Maintain high quality standards and positive community reputation of the Leicester Public School System.
- Plan for the best long-term use of Town land and buildings

- Support the extension, expansion and consolidation of water and sewer districts in order to improve quality and availability of these services in a cost efficient manner.
- Continue to make protection of ground and surface water quality a high priority
- Ensure capital needs of all facilities and services town-wide are assessed and prioritized for the short term and the long term on a continuing basis.
- Pursue opportunities toward energy savings/conservation in all Town facilities.
- Increase access and delivery of Town information and services through utilization of the internet

NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

Natural & Historic Resources Goal:

Leicester's natural resources goal is to preserve, protect, connect, and enhance Leicester's environmental, cultural and historic resources and to support the goals identified in the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Natural & Historic Resources Objectives:

- Actively work to prioritize and implement the Five-Year Action Plan contained in the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan.
- Support and enhance the efforts of the Historical Commission to protect and maintain Leicester's unique cultural and historical resources
- Promote the rehabilitation, preservation and where feasible, the adaptive reuse of historically and architecturally significant buildings, landscapes and neighborhoods.
- Support all groups and organizations providing cultural venues and activities for all age groups of the community

LAND USE

Land Use Goal:

Leicester's land use goal is to use planning and regulatory techniques to preserve the quality of life for Leicester residents and provide for a balance of commercial and residential growth that uses resources and energy wisely, encourages redevelopment of already developed land over development of new land, and protects the natural resources of the Town of Leicester.

Land Use Objectives:

- Promote orderly growth through the synchronization of development with the availability of public facilities such as roads, sewers, water service to support it.
- Use the Town's infrastructure, particularly water and sewer, to direct growth to the most suitable locations and discourage infrastructure expansions into rural areas of Leicester.
- Encourage neighborhood-serving businesses and services in areas where such centers are an integral part of the neighborhood.

- Encourage light industrial, manufacturing office and research and development activities that will provide both employment opportunities and increase the tax base.
- Discourage airport related warehousing and distribution facilities and other commercial and industrial land uses on Worcester Airport property in Leicester.
- Promote the retention and expansion of existing college facilities within the guidelines of the historic preservation policies.
- Maintain and enhance the rural character of the Town of Leicester.
- Promote the implementation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Encourage the redevelopment of older commercial areas in Cherry Valley and Rochdale.
- Encourage increased setbacks, landscaping or other measures to provide physical and visual relief or buffers between land uses to minimize potential land use conflicts between dissimilar uses.
- Encourage the preservation of significant architectural, historical, and cultural landmarks whenever possible.
- Promote the development of special development and design standards within future designated historical districts that maintain the existing setback standards façade treatments and external items such as street lights and mailboxes consist with the historical description of the District.
- Ensure that quality of life issues (such as noise levels, clean air, etc) are incorporated into planning efforts.
- Incorporate the Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles into Leicester's land use policies, regulations, and bylaws wherever possible.

HOW THE MASTER PLAN IS ORGANIZED

As described above, the Leicester Master Plan includes all elements required by state planning law, but is organized based on prior planning efforts and to best suit the needs of the Town of Leicester. The following Chapter, Leicester Overview, provides some historical background and an overview of Leicester's population and regional context. The major plan elements follow this overview:

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Facilities & Services
- Natural & Historic Resources
- Land Use

Finally, the Master Plan contains an Implementation chapter that outlines a process for implementation of the Master Plan. The Implementation chapter also includes a prioritized listing of all recommendations from the above elements.

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LEICESTER OVERVIEW

The following provides a brief overview of the Town of Leicester, from the Town's history, to population changes over time, to Leicester's regional context.

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

The Town of Leicester's growth and development can be traced to the abundant water resources found within its borders. Settled as a farming community, Leicester thrived during the Industrial Revolution with the manufacture of hand and machine cards for the textile industry. Today, although Leicester is no longer an industrial center, some of its waterways continue to suffer from the effects of industrial development, both internal and from the nearby city of Worcester.

Agrarian European settlement by the mid-17th Century had in large part, replaced the local Native American population who had fished and farmed the fertile flood plains.

Leicester was purchased by a group of men from Roxbury from the Sachem Oraskaso of the Nipmuc nation, with the deed being signed on January 27, 1686. Original Inhabitants of the area had given it the name Towtaid. The period around the decade of the purchase was one of great hostilities in the area during the time of the King Phillip's War; the King William's War and the Queen Anne's War. Settlement did not begin here until after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

One of the few largely flourishing communities between Worcester and the Connecticut River in the early colonial period, Leicester was primarily a farming community with some pre-industrial mills operating. Roads developed to facilitate communications and marketing of goods. Modern day Route 9 is the most significant of these. Known formerly as Boston Post Road, many of its mile markers set by Benjamin Franklin in 1753 are still visible.

The first house was built in Leicester on plot one in 1713. Gone now, the former residence of the Rev. Samuel May built in 1834 still stands on the location. Reverend May had been one of the key figures in the anti-slavery movement in the United States and was the General Secretary of the Massachusetts Abolitionist Society.

The oldest house remaining in Town, the Henshaw Place, was built in 1720 by John Menzies who was a judge for the Court of the Admiralty and later a member of the General Court. The Henshaw family was one of the prominent Leicester families. It was Colonel William Henshaw who coined the phrase "minute men" at a meeting of the Committee of Safety held in Worcester in 1774. Colonel Henshaw was also chairman of the first Committee of Correspondence organized by Samuel Adams in 1772.

Established on February 15, 1713 in the County of Middlesex and incorporated as a Town by June 14, 1722, Leicester still has an open Town meeting style of government headed by a five member Board of Selectmen (through the board originally had three members). Although there were official meetings held from the settlement in 1713, the first recorded Town meeting was held on March 17, 1722.

Religion played an important role in the early life of the Town. One of the earliest buildings was the Congregational Meeting House built in 1719. In 1738, a society of Baptists was formed in Greenville, where they continue to this day in their second church, built in 1860.

The Society of Friends had a meeting house in 1732 in Mannville Village, now long destroyed for Worcester's reservoir system. The burial ground, which was next to the meeting house, continues to be used in its location.

The Episcopal Church was formed in the village of South Leicester (now Rochdale) in 1823 and the church building, the oldest in Worcester County, was built in 1824. The Unitarians organized their society on April 30, 1833 and constructed their church, which is still in use. It remains the oldest surviving of the original buildings on that side of Leicester Common.

In 1846, the Methodists built two Town meeting houses: one in the village of Cherry Valley and the other in the center of Town. The first Catholic Church, built in 1855, was moved to Rochdale by means of oxen, when the construction of the current church began in 1867 after membership grew too large for the smaller building. The famous architect Elbridge Boyden, who also designed Mechanics Hall in Worcester, designed the current church, completed in December 1869. Churches and their grounds continue to serve as centers of many social and recreational activities of the Townspeople.

The flood plains were cleared of forest and plowed, and the early settlers harnessed the waterways. Sawmills, gristmills, and blacksmith shops were built to supply the materials needed of the Town. In 1789, Pliny Earle, a local entrepreneur and mechanical tinkerer, began the production of "hand cards." Before cotton and wool fibers can be spun into thread, they must be dismantled and straightened. This is achieved by the use of hand cards. These cards consist of wooden paddles with wire teeth attached by means of a piece of punched leather. In 1790, Samuel Slater built the first American textile mill in Blackstone River Valley at Pawtucket, Rhode Island, signaling the start of the American Industrial Revolution. When established his mill, Slater could not make use of a carding machine of any type. Mr. Earle built a carding machine for Slater, thus allowing his mill to operate.

By 1814, all available water privileges were dammed up causing major ecological impacts for the first time. Water was harnessed to power the mill machinery, as well as used for the disposal of industrial and human waste. As more mills were built, villages grew around them to house the workers. The spread of settlements destroyed natural habitats for plants and animals. Villages often had a unique pride among the residents, which very often set them aside from their actual Town and other "rival" villages.

The textile industry would prove to become the largest in the area, and Leicester was no exception. However, Leicester remained focused on the production of hand and machine cards. By the mid-1800's, Leicester had many villages within its boundaries. These villages, all with their own mills included: Leicester Center, Mannville, Lakeside, Greenville, Cherry Valley, Woodville and Rochdale. The mills were initially powered by water, but as technology advanced, steam began to replace water as the dominant power source. There are a few remaining high brick chimneys of mill boiler houses, (once a common sight in Leicester). One chimney, in ruinous condition, still stands over the remains of the mill on Rawson Brook. Now in the beginning of the twenty-first century, silted ponds, mill ruins, and breached dams give testament to the decline of the industry in Leicester beginning in 1880's with the move of the card clothing industry to the south.

Leicester throughout its history has supplied much to the success of the City of Worcester. Ichobod Washburn, who made the American wire industry, got his start working in the wire mill on Rawson Street, drawing wire for the carding industry here. Henry Graton and Joseph Knight worked in a textile mill in Mannville Village. They bought the rights to produce all the leather belting to drive the machinery in the mill. They would open up their firm in Worcester, Graton and Knight, which produced virtually all leather belts for industrial and agricultural equipment in the United States.

Despite this success, Worcester also played a crucial role in the industrial demise of the Town of Leicester beginning in the middle of the 19th Century. Mill owners in the northern districts of Leicester had gone to great efforts to divert all available water to their ponds for use in powering the mills. When Worcester needed a new ample water source for the city, there seemed no better place than Kettle and Lynde Brooks since their water gathering systems were so elaborate.

The villages of Mannville and Lakeside were almost completely destroyed with the construction of Worcester Airport in the late 1950's. Half of the main runway is in Leicester and actually covers the location of Pliny Earle's house and first carding shop.

Through Leicester quite obviously played a key role in the Industrial Revolution, the Town was also very important in the American Revolution. Many historians have said that Leicester's importance in the revolutionary movement was second only to that of Boston, due in large part because of the citizens of Leicester. Colonel Henshaw and his family were crucial members of the Worcester County Convention of 1774.

Besides William Henshaw, five other Leicester residents served on the Committee of Correspondence in Boston. Leicester's response to the Stamp Act was the most highly developed in the Colonies. The instructions, sent to Representative Captain John Brown, were the most elaborate political statement to come out of the region for years. The author of those instructions, Thomas Denny, was the nephew of Thomas Prince, minister of the Old South Church in Boston.

When the British regulars marched toward Lexington, much of the stores of ammunition were moved to Leicester, which dispatched its minute company and standing companies to meet the British at Concord. Leicester men would fight at nearly all the major engagements of the war; Bunker Hill (at which Leicester resident Peter Salem, an African American, mortally shot the British Major Pitcairn), Flatbush, Trenton, Princeton, White Plains and Saratoga. The Leicester members of the General Court argued for the ratification of the Constitution of the United States.

The people of Leicester throughout its history have embodied everything that the American spirit had hoped to achieve; the same spirit exists strongly in the inhabitants today.

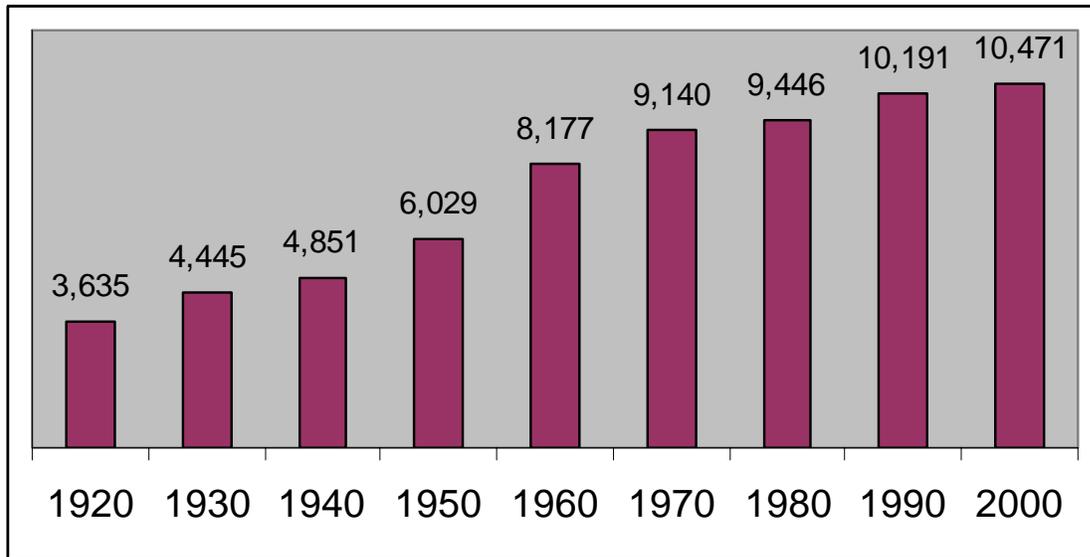
Source for History Section: Brooke, John L. The Heart of the commonwealth: Society and Political Culture in Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1713-1861. University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1992 and 2000 Master Plan

LEICESTER POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Population Growth

Leicester’s population has seen a steady increase over a long period of time as shown Figure 2-1. The fastest rate of population growth in Leicester between 1920 and 2000 occurred between 1950 and 1960, when population grew by 35.6 percent in only ten years.

**Figure 2-1
Leicester Population 1920-2000**



Source: US Census Bureau

Leicester’s population has historically been below projections made for population growth. For example, the 1971 Leicester Master Plan projected a population of over 16,000 by 1990; the 2000 Master Plan predicted a population of 11,091 by 1999. More recent projections are more conservative, predicting Leicester’s population to increase to 12,000 by 2030 (See Table 2-1).

**Table 2-1
Leicester Population Projections**

2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
11,000	11,100	11,300	11,600	12,000

Source: Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission, 3/2006

Compared to other communities in the region Leicester’s population is experiencing relatively slow growth in recent decades (see Table 2-2). While population grew nearly 8% between 1980 and 1990, population grew only an additional 2.7% from 1990 to 2000. Leicester’s estimated 2005 population was 10,967, a 4% increase over the 2000 population (US Census estimates

released 6/2006). Most of the other communities examined had higher rates of population increase than Leicester in both time periods.

Table 2-2

Population Size and Percent Change – Leicester & Comparable Communities 1980-2000

Figures in parentheses represent growth over previous decade.

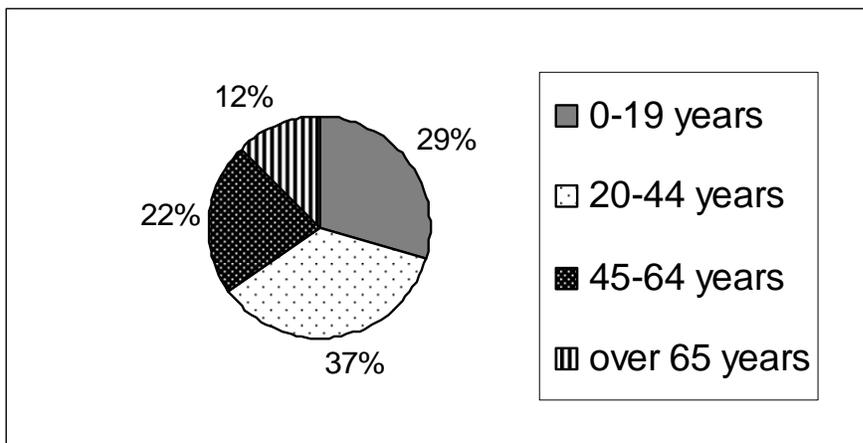
Year	Charlton	Dudley	Leicester	Oxford	Spencer	Uxbridge	Webster
1980	6,719	8,717	9,446	11,680	10,774	8,374	14,480
1990	9,576 (42.5%)	9,540 (9.4%)	10,191 (7.9%)	12,588 (7.8%)	11,645 (8.0%)	10,415 (24.4%)	16,196 (11.8%)
2000	11,263 (17.6%)	10,036 (5.2%)	10,471 (2.7%)	13,352 (6.1%)	11,691 (0.4%)	11,156 (7.1%)	16,145 (1.3%)

Source: US Census Bureau

Age

According to US Census figures, the median age in Leicester in 2000 was 36.4, compared to 32.2 years in 1990. Age profiles are shown in the Figure 2-2. The age group showing the highest increase between 1990 and 2000 was 85 years and over, which increased 100%. Residents over age 65 make up 12.3% of the total population, compared with 11% in 1990. In Massachusetts, residents over age 65 represented 13.5% of the population in 2000. Residents over age 65 are projected to increase to nearly 17% of Leicester’s population by 2020 (Massachusetts Institute for Social & Economic Research).

Figure 2-2
Age of Leicester Residents, 2000



Source: US Census Bureau

Other Population Characteristics from the US Census

- Of residents of listing one race in the 2000 US Census, there were 10,083 whites (97.3%), 134 blacks (1.3%), and 254 persons in American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander and other categories (1.4%). There were 127 persons of Hispanic origin (of any race).
- The total population in Leicester in 2000 was housed in 3,683 households with an average household size of 2.73 persons (down from an average of 2.82 in 1990). In Massachusetts, average household size was 2.51 in 2000.
- Family households make up the majority of household type in Leicester (73.5%). Only 38.4% of households have children under 18 years of age; 23.4% of households had individuals over age 65.
- Nearly 68% of residents over age 5 were living in the same house in 2000 as they were in 1995, compared to 59% statewide. Those persons taking up residence in Leicester between 1995 and 2000 came predominantly from other communities in Massachusetts with roughly 12% coming from outside of Massachusetts.
- In 2000, nearly 85% of Leicester residents are high school graduates or have achieved some higher education. Twenty percent hold a Bachelor's Degree or higher, compared to 33% statewide.
- The median per capita income was \$20,822 in 2000 (\$25,952 for Massachusetts); the median household income was \$55,039 (\$50,502 for Massachusetts). Persons for whom their status was determined to be below the poverty level was 4.3%, compared to 9.3% statewide.

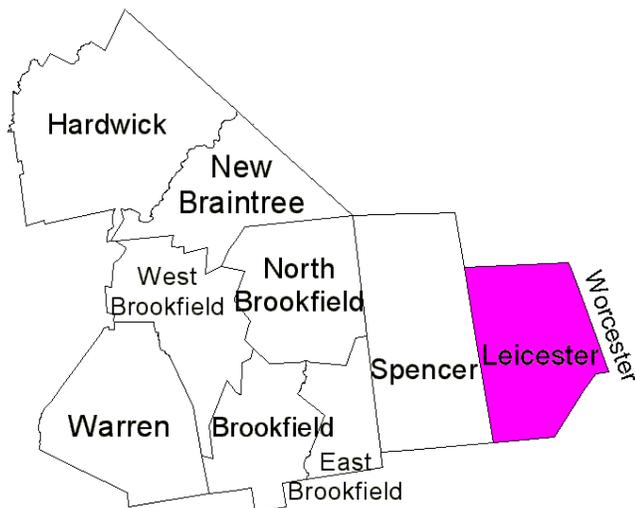
REGIONAL LOCATION

Leicester, in Worcester County, is bordered by Paxton on the north, Auburn and Worcester on the east, Charlton and Oxford on the south and Spencer on the west. Leicester encompasses an area of 24.53 square miles, or 15,900 acres. Two state highways run through the Town (State Routes 9 and 56) and carry considerable amounts of traffic to the Massachusetts Turnpike and to Worcester, the second largest city in New England. Leicester's regional identity is tied to the Worcester Regional Airport. Over half the land area and a significant portion of the longest runway at Worcester Regional Airport are located in Leicester.

The State of Massachusetts is divided into Regional Planning Districts, each overseen by a Regional Planning Agency. One role of the regional planning agency is to provide data and analysis at the regional level for use by member municipalities in local planning efforts. Leicester is a part of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning District. The District, which occupies two thirds of Worcester County, is centered around the metropolitan City of Worcester, the major employment center in central MA.

The area served by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission is divided into six sub-regions. Leicester is one of nine communities that comprise the Western Subregion. The other communities are Hardwick, New Braintree, West Brookfield, North Brookfield, Warren, Brookfield, East Brookfield, and Spencer (See Map 2-1).

**Map 2-1: Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
Western Subregion**



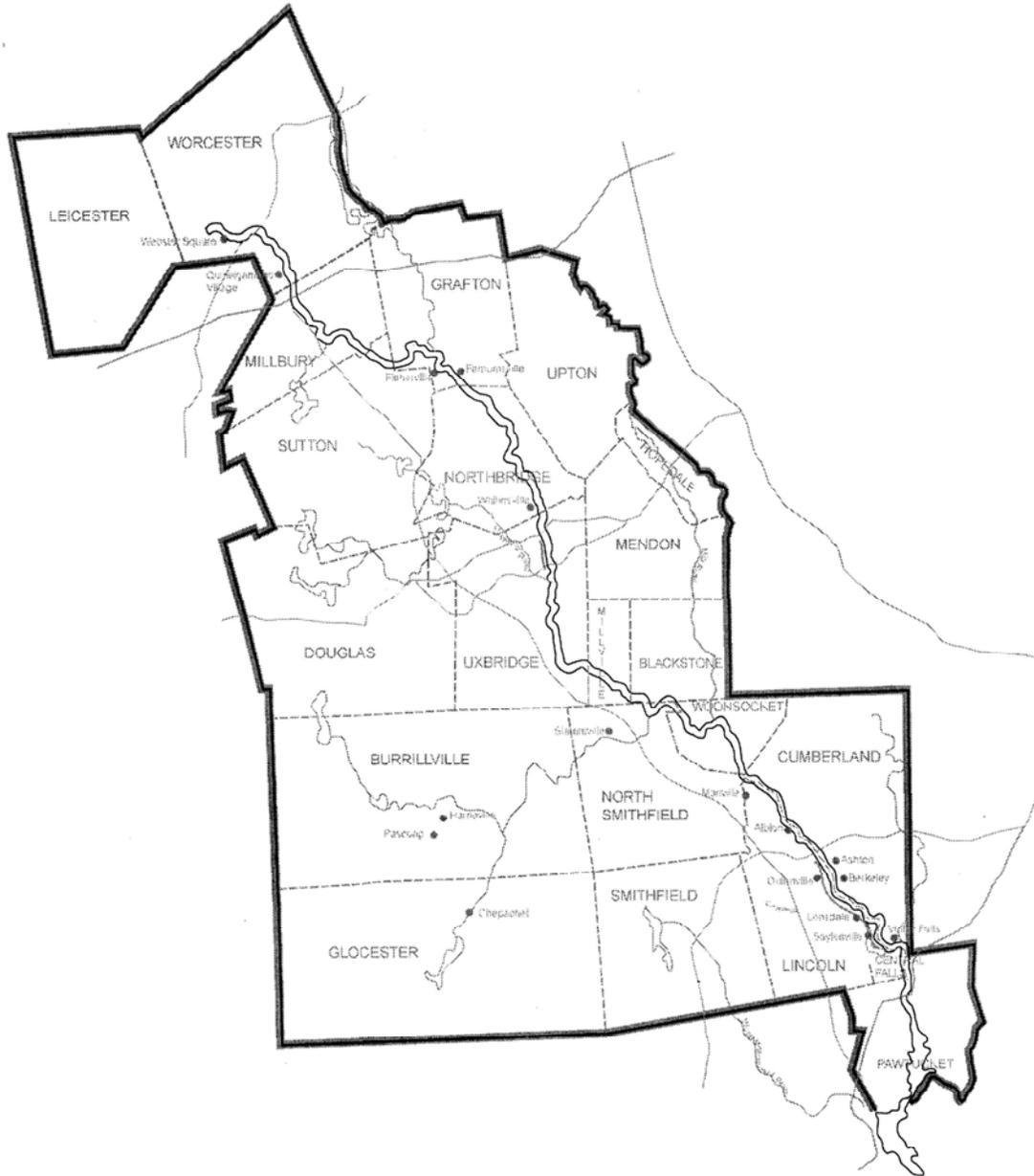
Source: Leicester Planning Office/CMRPC

Leicester has another regional identity important to planning. As a member Town of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (BRVNHCC), Leicester marks the originating point of the headwaters to the Blackstone River. The Corridor includes twenty four communities, and approximately 400,000 acres. According to the National Park Service:

The American Industrial Revolution began in the Blackstone River Valley. It changed the landscape of the Valley and transformed life in America. The Blackstone River provided the waterpower for the birth of industry in America with its 438-foot drop over a 46-mile length. Even today, the Valley retains its “wholeness” as a unique landscape with a concentration of historic, cultural and natural resources that represent 18th and 19th century industrial production in America. (Source: nps.gov)

Towns with the National Heritage Corridor (See Map 2-2) share common issues and opportunities for watershed protection, toxic clean-up, economic revitalization and the enhancement of a shared past in the Industrial Revolution.

Map 2-2
John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor



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HOUSING

Housing is the most common land use in Leicester. The type, cost and availability of housing affect the character and development of the Town. The following sections describe housing trends as well as issues and opportunities related to existing and future housing.

GENERAL HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Housing Construction Trends

In 2000, there were 3,826 housing units in Leicester, a 5% increase since 1990 (US Census). Of these, 73% are single-family dwellings. Table 3-1 illustrates the years of the highest housing construction rates in Leicester. Table 3-1 also shows that Leicester has a relatively old housing stock, with 55% of the housing stock more than 60 years old.

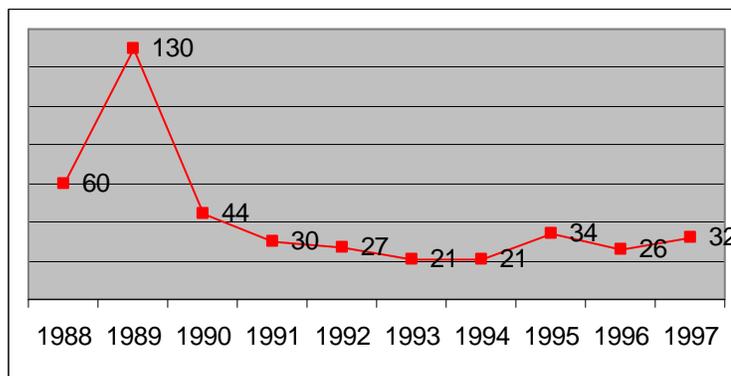
Table 3-1
Age of Housing, Leicester

Year Structure Built	#	%
1990-March 2000	371	9.7
1980-1989	479	12.5
1970-1979	508	13.3
1960-1969	352	9.2
1940-1959	1,154	30.2
1939-earlier	962	25.1
Total	3,826	100

Source: 2000 US Census

Building permits for an additional 383 housing units have been issued since 2000. Examination of building permit trends over the last two decades shows considerable variation from year to year, but a similar average number per year over each decade (see Figures 3-1 and 3-2).

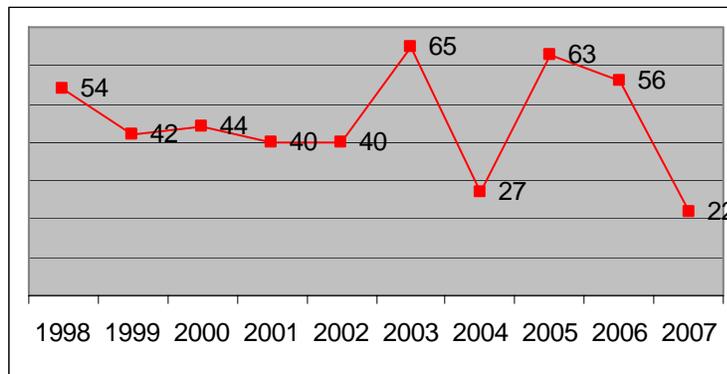
Figure 3-1
Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits, 1988-1997



Source: Leicester Building Permit Records

Between 1998 and 2007, the number of residential building permits per year averaged 45, compared with an average of 43 per year between 1988 and 1997. However, the number of permits for single-family homes has slowed considerably since 2003, when 63 permits for single-family were issued. This dropped to only 27 in the following year, and 33, 36, and 22 in the following three years. The increased numbers of housing units authorized in the years 2005 and 2006 reflect construction of multi-family Senior Village Development units.

Figure 3-2
Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits, 1998-2007



Source: Leicester Building Permit Records

Building permits for new housing continued to decline in 2008, with only 16 single-family building permits issued. Building permits for an additional 10 units of senior housing were also issued in 2008 (5 duplex structures).

Housing Types & Occupancy

With the exception of senior housing units built from 2005 and 2006, the overwhelming majority of units built in the last ten years have been single-family homes. Also, most housing in units are owner-occupied (76% in 2000) and have a vacancy rate of less than 1% (US Census). Only 24% of Leicester’s housing units are renter-occupied; the rental vacancy rate was 4.6% in 2000 (US Census). See Table 3-2 for a comparison with other Worcester County communities.

Table 3-2
Type of Occupancy, Leicester & Comparable Communities, 2000

	Charlton	Dudley	Leicester	Oxford	Spencer	Uxbridge	Webster
Owner Occupied Units	3,143 (83%)	2,655 (71%)	2,811 (76%)	3,801 (75%)	2,871 (63%)	3,139 (79%)	3,728 (54%)
Renter Occupied Units	645 (17%)	1,082 (29%)	872 (24%)	1,257 (25%)	1,712 (37%)	849 (21%)	3,177 (46%)

Source: 2000 US Census (adapted from a table in the Master Plan for the Town of Spencer)

Although housing construction has slowed, construction of new homes has somewhat outpaced population growth. According to US Census figures, Leicester’s population has grown less than 3% between 1990 and 2000; the number of housing units increased by 5%. This may reflect

smaller household sizes. The average household size in Leicester has declined from 2.82 to 2.73 between 1990 and 2000 (US Census). Trends contributing to smaller household size are that couples are having fewer (or no) children, an increase in single heads of household, and the aging population (See Chapter 2 for more detail about Leicester's population trends). The type of housing being constructed, large single-family homes with multiple bedrooms, may not meet the needs of smaller households.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY/NEEDS ANALYSIS

The following provides an overview of housing affordability issues in Leicester. Much of the data in this section uses 2000 Census information. Although 2000 Census figures are outdated, they provide the best information available for some housing-related information, and allow comparison with other communities and the region.

Housing Prices

Table 3-3 shows how Leicester compares to Worcester County as a whole with regard to housing affordability in 2000. It is generally assumed that monthly housing costs that are more than 30% of household income are unaffordable. As shown in Table 3-3, nearly 27% of renters were exceeding their affordability. This figure was lower for owners, at 18.9%. However, Leicester shows a greater degree of housing affordability than the average for the region.

Table 3-3
Selected Housing Related Statistics, Leicester & Worcester County, 2000

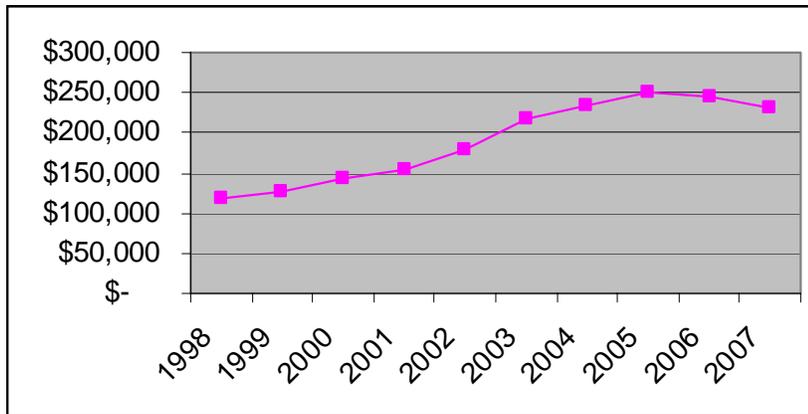
	Leicester	Worcester County
Median monthly owner costs for owner occupied units with a mortgage	\$1,113	\$1,220
Percent of owners that paid 30% or more of their monthly income on housing ownership costs	18.9%	21.0%
Median Rent	\$537	\$580
Percent of renters that paid 30% or more of their monthly income on rent	26.5%	33.7%

Source: 2000 US Census

As shown in Figure 3-3, the median sales price of single-family homes rose steadily between 1998 and 2005, when median prices peaked at \$250,000. Median prices fell in 2006 (to \$246,000) and again in 2007 (to \$230,000), an 8% drop in sales prices from the 2005 peak. The number of homes sold has also fallen, from a peak of 135 in 2004, to 88 in 2007. Sales prices continued to decline in 2008. The median sales price for single-family homes in Leicester in 2008 was \$193,000.

Condominium prices did not have similar declines until 2008. Median sales prices of condominiums have risen steadily in the same time period, from \$56,000 in 1997 to \$295,000 in 2007. The median sales price for condominiums declined to \$240,000 in 2008.

Figure 3-3
Median Sales Price of Leicester Single-Family Homes
1998-2007



Source: The Warren Group

Table 3-4, below shows the Median Sales Price and Median Rents in Leicester compared to neighboring communities. Sales prices are from 2007; rents are from 2000 but give a sense of prices compared with other communities. Leicester is below the average of these communities for both sale prices and rents.

Table 3-4
Median Sales Price of Single-Family Homes & Median Gross Rent of Renter-Occupied Units
Leicester & Comparable Communities

	Charlton	Dudley	Leicester	Oxford	Spencer	Uxbridge	Webster
Median Sales Price, 2007	\$310,000	\$255,250	\$230,000	\$242,000	\$227,500	\$230,000	\$230,000
Average:	\$246,393						
Median Gross Rent, 2000	\$563	\$548	\$537	\$584	\$560	\$552	\$517
Average:	\$552 (Worcester County Average was \$580)						

Source: The Warren Group (Sales Prices) and 2000 US Census (Rent)

The following table below provides an affordability analysis for Leicester rental units. The table outlines various renter income categories, the number of Leicester households in each income category, the number of rental units affordable to each category, and the gap/surplus for such rental units.

Table 3-5
Rental Unit Need/Demand Analysis, Leicester
 (Based on 2000 Census)

Income Group	Range of Incomes¹	Range of Affordable Rent²	# of Leicester Households	# of Actual Units	Deficit/Surplus
Very Low Income (30% of area median & below)	\$16,320 and below	\$332 and below	430	160	-270
Very Low to Low Income (30-50% of area median)	\$16,320 - \$27,200	\$332 - \$680	440	463	23
Low to Moderate Income* (50-65% of area median)	\$27,200-\$35,360	\$680 - \$884	586	160	-426
			1456	783	-673

Area median family income:
 (Worcester PMSA) \$ 54,400.00

Source: 2000 US Census, Leicester Planning Office

¹Low to moderate is typically defined as 50% - 80% of median; for the purposes of this analysis it is assumed that those households earning over 65% of median would be seeking home ownership, rather than rental units.

²Assumes that an affordable rent is no more than 30% of income

Although the absolute numbers have changed significantly since 2000, the general housing market in Leicester as it relates to the surrounding area has not, so the analysis can still provide a general idea of the demand for affordable rental housing.

Housing Units Eligible for the 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory

In 1969, the state passed Mass. General Law Chapter 40B with the goal of increasing the amount of affordable housing in communities throughout the Commonwealth (see box “What is Chapter 40B” on following page).s

The Leicester Housing Authority owns and operates 132 public housing units in Leicester, as shown in Table 3-6. All of the Leicester Housing Authority units are on the Subsidized Housing Inventory and count as “40B” units. As of April 2008, there was a waiting list of 55 people for the Leicester Housing Authority housing units in the center of Town (16 Leicester residents/39 non-residents). These units are available for the elderly and disabled. Typically the wait for these units is from six months to two years for local residents, and 1 to 5 years for out-of-town applicants.

Table 3-6
Leicester Housing Authority Properties

Location	Number of Units
Pleasant Garden (30 Pleasant)	40
Sunset Garden (1073 Main)	40
Rainbow Terrace (1075 Main)	44
Archway (6 Mulberry Street)	8
TOTAL	132

Source: DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory & 2000 Leicester Master Plan

What is Chapter 40B?

Also known as the Comprehensive Permit Law, Chapter 40B is a state statute enacted in 1969 to help address the shortage of affordable housing statewide by reducing barriers created by local approval processes, local zoning, and other restrictions. The goal of Chapter 40B is to encourage the production of affordable housing in all cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. The standard is for communities to provide a minimum of 10% of their housing inventory as affordable. Chapter 40B enables developers to override local zoning requirements through a comprehensive permit issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals in communities that haven't met the 10% requirement. The local Zoning Boards of Appeals (ZBAs) generally must approve affordable housing developments under flexible rules if at least 20% of the units have long-term affordability restrictions.

There are an additional 20 units of 40B Housing in Leicester, in a group home at an undisclosed location. Leicester's total percent subsidized as is counted under the 40B rules is 4.01% as of March 14, 2008. Table 3-7 shows how Leicester's percentage of low and moderate income housing stock compares to other Central Massachusetts Communities.

**Table 3-7
40B Qualified Affordable Units as a Percentage of Total Units
Leicester & Comparable Communities**

Charlton	Dudley	Leicester	Oxford	Spencer	Uxbridge	Webster
1.3%	2.5%	4.0%	7.7%	5.7%	6.1%	9.6%

Source: DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory, 3-14-2008

Table 3-7 indicates that Leicester falls slightly below the middle of the comparable communities in terms of its percentage of 40B qualified units. With 152 units currently counted towards Leicester's 10% affordable housing requirement, the Town would need to have an additional 227 such units in order to reach the 40B 10% goal. However, if non-subsidized housing continues to be built at a faster pace than affordable housing, Leicester's percentage of affordable housing will decrease.

HOUSING ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Large Lot Zoning

In November 2002, the minimum lot size in the Suburban Agriculture (SA) zoning district, was increased from 50,000 s.f. to 80,000 s.f. At the same time, the minimum frontage and lot size in the Residential A (RA) district were increased from 125 feet to 150 feet, and 30,000 s.f. to 50,000 s.f. respectively. This has likely contributed to the reduction in single-family housing construction in the last several years. At the time of adoption, it was estimated by the Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission that the total number of additional lots available for new housing full buildout in Leicester would be reduced from 4,350 to 2,501 through implementation of this bylaw. Total additional population growth at full buildout was projected to be reduced by 42.6%.

Although larger lot size and frontage requirements may limit housing growth, these requirements may also necessitate longer roads to access the land, and may increase the cost of housing as the supply of land available for new housing construction is reduced. Larger lots also lead to more sprawling housing development, which impacts infrastructure maintenance costs and the environment.

The Town of Leicester does not currently allow Open Space Residential Developments (also known as “Cluster Housing” bylaws), except for senior housing (detailed below). Open Space Residential Development bylaws allow a higher density of housing in exchange for the permanent protection of Open Space. The Planning Board made at least three attempts to pass a Cluster Bylaw in the mid 1990s (one amendment was entitled: “Open Space Development Zone”); no recent effort has been made due to the continuing public resistance to this type of development. The 2008 Master Plan survey indicated only 41% of respondents support such bylaws. However, another 28% indicated that they were not sure. Public education on this issue may be helpful.

Student Housing

The Leicester Campus of Becker College located on and around the Town Common, includes housing for a portion of their student population. The college has the capacity to house nearly 300 students on the Leicester campus in seven residence halls (dormitories). Some of these residence halls are in residential buildings originally constructed as large, single family homes on Old Main Street. These buildings are predominantly pre-1930 structures, well-maintained and offer benefits to the Town as a form of historic preservation. A new residence hall to serve 42 students was approved by the Planning Board in 2007 and construction was completed by June 2008.

Senior Housing

As noted in Chapter 1, the Town’s population over age 65 is increasing, and is projected to continue to increase. The Town passed a Senior Village Development bylaw in 2002 to address this demand. This bylaw allows increased density for senior housing projects (for residents over age 55), in exchange for the permanent protection of open space. Since adoption of the bylaw, the Planning Board has approved 553 units in 6 projects. However, housing units have only been constructed and sold in 3 of the approved projects, and only 60 units had been built as of December 2008. Site work was started in two of the remaining projects, but financial problems and the declining housing market have stalled these projects. The approval for the final project expired in 2008 for failure to commence work. Developers of the projects under construction are having difficulty selling units because of the downturn in the housing market.

Although the bylaw allows assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and continuing care communities, only standard housing with no services (other than community centers) has been proposed. In February 2009, two amendments to the Senior Village Development Bylaw were adopted, as follows: 1) to allow unmarried partners and a wider range of live-in care providers to provide greater flexibility to residents and developers of Senior Village Development projects; and 2) to reduce the maximum number of Senior Village units from 25% of total single-family housing units to a fixed 600 units. Further amendments and or other regulatory changes may be needed to address the changing housing market.

Accessory Apartments

In 2003, the Town adopted an accessory apartment bylaw that allows a small (no more than 700 s.f.) accessory apartment to be constructed in, or attached to a single family home. Unlike in many other communities, these units do not require a hearing and review by a permit-granting authority; they are allowed with only a building permit. The purpose of this bylaw was to allow residents to built small accessory units either for aging parents, adult children, or simply to rent. While this type of housing has been fairly controversial in some communities, this bylaw passed easily at Town Meeting. However, only seven accessory apartments have been built since adoption of the bylaw. Although there has been some interest in the potential of affordable accessory units counting towards Leicester's 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, there are significant hurdles to this option. Any such units would have to be deed restricted to maintain affordability. In addition, such units would be subject to the requirement for a fair marketing plan, and 40B regulations specifically prohibit accessory units to be rented to family members. Changes to 40B laws and regulations to make counting of accessory apartments easier are under consideration.

Phased Growth Bylaw

At Annual Town Meeting in 1997, the residents of Leicester voted to adopt a Phased Growth Zoning Bylaw to ensure a steady manageable growth rate, to relate the timing of residential development to the Town's ability to provide services, and to preserve enhance the existing community character. The Bylaw limits the number of units that can be authorized by building permits during a rolling 24-month period to 100. Developers must also phase projects, with only a percentage allowed each year. Dwelling units for senior housing projects are exempt from the Bylaw. The overall building permit "cap" has not been used because applications for building permits have not exceeded 100 over any 24 month period since the bylaw's adoption. However, projects have had to phase construction over 5 years.

Subdivision Regulations

Leicester's Subdivision Regulations specify road construction standards for new roadways (e.g. requirements for road width, pavement depth, sidewalks, streetlights, storm drain systems, etc.). Issues related to road construction standards and the impacts of these standards are addressed more fully in both the Transportation & Land Use Chapters. However, it should be noted that road construction standards for new subdivisions have an impact on both the rate and cost of new housing construction.

Housing Affordability/40B Housing

As addressed earlier in this Chapter, Leicester has a very low percentage of 40B eligible units. This, combined with fairly restrictive housing related Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations, may leave the Town vulnerable to future 40B applications. Leicester may want to work more proactively to encourage affordable housing that meets the needs of Leicester residents in suitable locations. Some options to consider are the following:

- Inclusionary zoning bylaws, which either require or encourage (through density bonuses) that residential developments include a percentage of affordable units.
- Town-sponsored or supported development of affordable housing, particularly housing with services for elderly residents, (assisted living, nursing care, etc.) and housing for the disabled (including disabled veterans).

The affordability analysis included in this Chapter is only a very basic analysis. A more thorough review and analysis should be undertaken when the housing market is stabilized and 2010 Census data is available.

Older Housing

As noted above, Leicester has a relatively old housing stock. Much of this older housing is located in Cherry Valley and Rochdale. Although no comprehensive inventory has been compiled, it is quite likely that many of these older residences may need rehabilitation (either to meet current housing codes and/or to improve energy efficiency).

Declining Housing Market

Consistent with national trends, the Leicester housing market was experiencing declines in housing prices and an increase in foreclosure rates at the time of preparation of this plan. The Massachusetts Foreclosure Monitor: Third Quarter 2008 (published by the Massachusetts Housing Partnership) lists the Town of Leicester in the top 20 communities in the state with regard to foreclosure petitions in 2006, with a 18.2 housing units affected per 1,000. Leicester was no longer in the top 20 in 2007 or 2008. However the rate of foreclosure activity continues to be a problem. There were 24 foreclosure actions in 2007, and 43 in 2008 in Leicester. It is too soon to know how long these trends will continue. However, the current market may lead some developers to abandon unfinished projects currently under construction.

Community Preferences:

The Master Plan survey indicates that existing Leicester residents would like to continue to limit new residential construction. A majority of survey respondents (51%), think that the minimum lot size of 80,000 s.f. in most of Leicester is “just right.” Also, when asked what types of housing Leicester needs more of, the number one answer was “None” at (43%), followed by “Elderly housing” (25%). The biggest single problem or concern related to new housing construction was “strain on public services” (31%), followed by closely by “loss of open space” and “too much housing is being constructed (at 20% and 17%, respectively). Sixty-seven percent (67%) of survey respondents supported reuse of vacant Town buildings and land for elderly housing; 28% supported reuse for low and moderate income housing. However, much larger percentages of survey respondents supported reuse of Town buildings and vacant land for other purposes such as parks (86%), open space (79%), or other Town uses (73%).

HOUSING GOAL, OBJECTIVES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing Goal:

Leicester’s housing goal is to ensure that housing opportunities are available that meet the needs of all of Leicester’s residents and that future growth occurs in a controlled manner consistent with the Town’s character and protection of the Town’s resources.

Housing Objectives:

- Encourage the upkeep, maintenance and rehabilitation of existing housing.
- Provide housing opportunities for a variety of new housing types in areas identified in the Land Use Chapter as most suitable for new residential development.
- Maintain the historical character of existing homes and neighborhoods.

- Encourage student housing for Becker College and support the expansion of such housing within the guidelines of historic preservation policies
- Preserve existing neighborhoods and promote a variety of land uses within neighborhood areas to provide needed recreation and other services.
- Encourage housing development that limits impacts on the natural environment and avoids excessive energy consumption and infrastructure costs

Housing Recommendations

- H1. Develop an Open Space Residential Design Bylaw (“Cluster” Bylaw”) to encourage the preservation of open space. Consider including incentives such as a requirement for “green” building in exchange for smaller lot sizes.
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board
- H2. Consider a more proactive Town 40B policy, whereby the Town would plan for and solicit development proposals to meet the 10% requirement, rather than having to react to privately-proposed projects. Give priority to development of affordable senior housing units, particularly housing with services for elderly residents, (assisted living, nursing care, etc.) and housing for the disabled (including disabled veterans).
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (Other entity involved: Leicester Housing Authority)
- H3. Apply for Community Block Grant Funds and/or other available state funds to establish a housing rehabilitation program that helps low and moderate income residents (including the elderly and disabled) to correct outstanding code violations and make necessary repairs. In addition to or as an alternative, work with banking institutions to establish and implement a low-interest loan program for the same purposes.
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (Other entity involved: Planning Board)
- H4. Work cooperatively with Becker College to ensure that expansion of student housing for Becker College Students is consistent with the Town’s historic preservation goals.
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission
- H5. Monitor the housing market and consider more aggressive action to use performance guarantees to complete roadway construction in partially-completed subdivisions (instead of granting extensions), to protect residents living in these projects.
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board
- H6. Consider changes to Zoning Bylaws to expand housing choices and affordability (such as Inclusionary Zoning). One option is to allow two-family “by-right” rather than by special permit in the Residential A (RA) district if the additional units meet Chapter 40B affordability requirements.
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board
- H7. Evaluate and consider changes to multi-family zoning requirements in light of expansion of land zoned for multi-family housing, particularly the Business (B) district in the Cherry Valley area.
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board

- H8. Amend zoning district requirements as necessary to allow rental housing on upper floors of commercial buildings in Business (B) and Central Business (CB) districts.
Responsible Entity: Planning Board
- H9. Consider further amendments to the Senior Village Development bylaw and/or regulatory or policy changes to allow for successful completion of approved projects and to encourage a wider range of types of senior housing (e.g. assisted living).
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board
- H10. Undertake a more comprehensive housing affordability needs analysis when the housing market has stabilized and more current income data is available based on the 2010 US Census.
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board (other entity involved: Leicester Housing Authority)

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development includes efforts to attract businesses and jobs to a community. This is often based on the desire on the part of the community to increase its non-residential tax base by increasing the stock of businesses that are located in the community. Other benefits include providing local shopping and services, as well as local employment. Leicester currently has a variety of commercial and industrial uses, but there is interest in increasing commercial activity that is consistent with maintaining the character of the Town of Leicester.

EMPLOYMENT, TAX BASE, & REGIONAL ECONOMIC TRENDS

Leicester's Labor Force

As shown in Table 4-1 below, the total number of employed Leicester residents has fluctuated in small increments over the last 10 years, with the 2007 total number about 3% higher than the 1998 number. The town's unemployment rate was at 3.2% at the start of the ten years shown, dropped to a low of 2.7 % in 2000, and rose to a high of 6.1 % in 2003. It is currently at 4.8 %. For five of the ten years shown, Leicester's unemployment rate was higher than the state's, three years it was slightly lower, and the other two years it was the same as the state rate.

Table 4-1
Employment Status of Leicester Residents
(Not seasonally adjusted)

Year	Total Residents in Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate of Unemployment	State rate of Unemployment
1998	5,892	5,702	190	3.2	3.4
1999	5,918	5,701	217	3.7	3.3
2000	5,879	5,722	157	2.7	2.7
2001	5,941	5,740	201	3.4	3.7
2002	6,054	5,733	321	5.3	5.3
2003	6,095	5,726	369	6.1	5.8
2004	6,068	5,741	327	5.4	5.2
2005	6,064	5,739	325	5.4	4.8
2006	6,085	5,787	298	4.9	5
2007	6,077	5,785	292	4.8	4.4

Source: MA Department of Employment & Training

As with the rest of Massachusetts (and the US), unemployment rose in late 2008. The Leicester unemployment rate for December 2008 was 6% (compared with 6.5% statewide).

Where Leicester Residents Work

According to the 2000 US Census Journey to Work data (the most recent of this data available), there were some noticeable changes in commuting patterns between 1990 and 2000. As shown in Table 4-2, the percentage of residents working in town remained the same (17%), however, the percentage of Leicester residents commuting to jobs in Worcester dropped dramatically during this period from 52% to 37%. This correlates to the decrease in manufacturing jobs in the City of Worcester (and the region in general) during this period. The percentage of residents commuting to places outside of Southern Worcester County (including out of state) increased from 8% to 18%. Not surprisingly, the average commuting time for Leicester residents increased over 20% during this period, from 22.5 to 27.1 minutes. This mirrors the increase (19%) in the average commuting time experienced by the state’s residents for the same period (MassINC).

**Table 4-2
Where Leicester Residents Work**

Place of Work	1990		2000	
Leicester	936	18%	936	17%
Worcester	2,675	52%	2,041	37%
Spencer	114	2%	118	2%
Auburn	282	5%	360	6%
Shrewsbury	125	2%	180	3%
Westborough	57	1%	133	2%
Elsewhere in So Worc. Cty	546	11%	721	13%
Outside of So.Worc.Cty, includes out of state	427	8%	972	18%

Source: 2000 CENSUS/CMRPC Journey to Work by Residence & Place of Work

Number & Types of Jobs in Leicester

Due to the change from SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) to NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) codes, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Massachusetts Office of Labor and Workforce Development do not have comparable data available prior to 2001. As a result, only the years of 2001 to 2006/2007 were used while analyzing Leicester’s employment data for this report. See box “North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) on following page” for explanation of NAICS categories.

Table 4-3 shows the changes that have transpired in the various sectors of Leicester’s local economy between 2001 and 2006 according to the Massachusetts Office of Labor & Workforce Development. While the number of establishments in the town increased by 17.8% over that period, the number of jobs in town has decreased by 5.2%, an indication that the number of employees per business in Leicester has decreased.

Two sectors lost jobs during this period -- Trade, Transportation, and Warehousing lost the largest number (384) and highest percentage of jobs (47%), with retail trade representing most of that loss. The manufacturing sector lost 26% of its jobs, which mirrors the deindustrialization that has occurred in Worcester County and in much of the state during this period.

Several sectors saw gains, with Professional Business Services more than tripling its number of jobs for a total of 262. This was the largest gain of any sector during this period. The Financial Activities sector gained 20 jobs for a 48.7% increase and Leisure & Hospitality increased by nearly 28.6%. The sector with the most in-town jobs in 2006 is Education & Health Services, with 28% of the town's jobs. Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, held that title in 2001 with 38% of the jobs; it was 21% in 2006. The Professional Business Services sector represents the third largest sector in town, with 13% of the jobs in 2006.

**Table 4-3
Leicester Employment & Wages**

Description	2001	2006	% Change
Annual Payroll	\$64,933,311	\$67,653,147	+ 4.2 %
Avg wkly wages	\$590	\$648	+ 9.8 %
Total # of establishments	191	225	+ 17.8 %
# of Workers	2118	2007	- 5.2 %
Construction	149	193	+ 2.9 %
Mfg	207	153	- 26%
Trade, Transportation & Warehousing	810	426	- 47 %
Information	10	13	+ 3 %
Financial Activities	41	61	+ 48.7 %
Professional & Business Services	81	262	+ 223 %
Education & Health Services	541	561	+ 3.6 %
Leisure & Hospitality	157	202	+ 28.6 %
Other Services	56	75	+ 33.9 %

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment & Training

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)

Trade, Transportation & Warehousing: retail & wholesale trade and all types of transportation (includes air travel).

Information: publishing, cable, libraries, radio & TV broadcasting

Financial Activities: insurance, banking, investment counseling, and others.

Professional & Business Services: lawyers, accountants, engineering, bldg inspections, computer programming, graphic design, marketing, computer-related, architectural, advertising, public relations, photography, veterinary, landfills, travel agencies.

Leisure & Hospitality: Recreation, theaters, dance companies, zoos, museums, amusement parks, golf courses, ski areas, fitness centers, bowling, hotels/motels, restaurants, bars

Other Services (except Public Administration): establishments engaged in providing services not specifically provided for elsewhere in the classification system - such as equipment and machinery repairing, promoting or administering religious activities, grant making, advocacy, and dry cleaning and laundry services, personal care services, death care services, pet care services, photofinishing services, temporary parking services, and dating services.

Source: CMRPC

In-Town Job Projections

CMRPC provides employment projections (along with population and households) for the 40 communities in its region, which are periodically updated. They were last updated in 2006, using the numbers from the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA -- the precursor to the Massachusetts Division of Employment & Training – Mass. DET), regional forecasts by the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), and reviewing historical trends in employment. Some data is withheld by DUA/Mass. DET to prevent disclosure of confidential information; therefore the Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) was used by CMRPC to fill in the gaps. Input was also solicited directly from the region's 40 communities to assist in the accuracy of these projections.

CMRPC projected 2,250 jobs in Leicester for 2005, however the Massachusetts DET counted only 2,007 jobs for 2006. This may be partly due to this agency withholding some data as explained in the previous paragraph. CMRPC's projections for 2010 is 2370 jobs (an 18% increase from the actual number for 2006) and 2450 by the year 2015 (5.9% increase), a more modest increase.

Leicester's Largest Employers:

Leicester's largest employers include:

- *Becker College, 964 Main St:*
Of the 376 total employees, 150 work at the Leicester campus and the rest work at the Worcester campus. The school offers degree programs in business, education, veterinary sciences, health care, and the arts. An expansion is underway at the Leicester campus, with construction of a new residential hall and athletic field completed in 2008.
- *Leicester School System*
Has 308 employees and includes the following 4 schools:
 - Primary School (PK – Grade 2)
 - Memorial School (Grades 3 -5)
 - Middle School (Grades 6-8),
 - High School (Grades 9-12)
- *Millbrook, 88 Huntoon Highway (Rte 56)*
This is a wholesale distributor of specialty foods, health and beauty items, and general merchandise. The company has approximately 200 employees at this location, and they have operated in Leicester since 1980.
- *Walmart, 1620 Main St (Route 9)*
This is a 210,000 square foot Supercenter that includes a pharmacy, hardware store, and a full-scale supermarket (the only supermarket in town). There are currently 330 employees.

These employers account for approximately 49% of the total number of jobs in Leicester.

Local Tax Base

In Fiscal Year 2007, Leicester levied a total of \$10,045,551 in taxes, based on a local tax rate of \$9.31 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Leicester homeowners accounted for 92.94% of the total 2007 tax base (\$9,336,075), while the businesses and industries accounted for approximately 6% and the personal property tax took up the remaining 1.1%. Table 4-4 and 4-5 show how Leicester

compares to six of its adjacent communities on the amount and proportion of commercial and industrial taxes levied.

Table 4-4
Commercial Tax Base Comparison, FY2007

Community	FY 2007 Tax Rate	Commercial Taxes Levied	Assessed Valuation	% of Total Tax Levy
Leicester	\$9.31	\$412,594	\$44.3 m.	4.1 %
Spencer	\$7.92	\$561,222	\$70.8 m.	6.1 %
Charlton	\$8.62	\$615,393	\$71.4 m.	4.5 %
Oxford	\$10.60	\$914,587	\$86.3 m.	6.3 %
Auburn	\$20.89	\$8,024,726	\$384.1 m.	28.6 %
Paxton	\$11.92	\$175,933	\$14.8 m.	2.5 %
Holden	\$11.56	\$757,420	\$65.5 m.	3.2 %

Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Revenue

Table 4-5
Industrial Tax Base Comparison, FY2007

Community	FY 2007 Tax Rate	Industrial Taxes Levied	Assessed Valuation	% of Total Tax Levy
Leicester	\$9.31	\$181,766	\$19.5 m.	1.8 %
Spencer	\$7.92	\$280,819	\$35.4 m.	3 %
Charlton	\$8.62	\$452,776	\$52.5 m.	3.3%
Oxford	\$10.60	\$772,928	\$72.9 m.	5.3%
Auburn	\$20.89	\$3,011,542	\$144.1 m.	10.7%
Paxton	\$11.92	\$48,461	\$4 m.	.7%
Holden	\$11.56	\$325,113	\$28.1 m.	1.3%

Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Revenue

Leicester collected the second smallest amount of commercial and industrial taxes when compared to these communities – only Paxton is lower. The proportion of commercial and industrial taxes that Leicester collects as compared to the entire tax base (4.1% and 1.8% respectively), exceeds only the towns of Holden and Paxton, and is lower than Spencer, Charlton, Oxford, and Auburn. The Town of Auburn’s commercial and industrial tax base dwarfs many of the communities of Central Massachusetts.

While the number of business establishments in Leicester increased by almost 18% between 2001 and 2006, the economic sector’s contribution to the Town’s tax base steadily decreased from a high of 12% in 2001 to 7.1% in 2007. This is a region-wide phenomenon.

Regional Economic Trends

There have been two recent economic development profiles prepared for Central Massachusetts. The first was prepared in 2004 by the Center for Economic Development, University of Massachusetts – Amherst, which evaluated the employment characteristics of 2,486 companies in Central Massachusetts. The second was prepared in March 2006 by the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, which evaluated 14,930 companies in Central

Massachusetts; a much larger sample than the University of Massachusetts study. The key findings of both studies are outlined below.

University of Massachusetts 2004 Study:

- Approximately 77% of all companies in the Central Massachusetts region employ less than 50 people. At the opposite end of the spectrum, only 4% of the companies employ more than 500 people.
- Just over half (51%) of the companies surveyed reported sales volumes between \$1 million and \$5 million, with another 17% reporting sales volumes between \$5 million and \$10 million.
- Of the companies surveyed, 46% were service-oriented, 15% were manufacturing operations and 10% were of the finance/insurance/real estate category.
- Almost half (47%) of the new companies established during the last five years fall within the service sector.

Department of Workforce Development 2006 Study:

- Just under half (46%) of all Central Massachusetts unemployment claimants in 2005 came from the four largest economic sectors: manufacturing (13%), construction (12%), administrative support services (11%) and retail trade (10%).
- Slow labor force growth continues to characterize both Massachusetts and the Central Massachusetts region. During 2005 the State's labor force increased by less than 1% and the Central Massachusetts labor force actually declined by 18 potential workers.
- Small employers dominate the Central Massachusetts workforce. Among the 14,930 establishments surveyed, approximately 86% had fewer than 20 employees (remember: this is based on a much larger sample size than the 2004 University of Massachusetts study). These firms, however, accounted for just 23% (55,000) of the total number of jobs (238,648) in Central Massachusetts.
- By contrast, there were 407 establishments (or roughly 3% of all establishments) that reported having at least 100 employees. These firms were responsible for almost half (117,953) of all jobs in Central Massachusetts.
- For 2005, the major industry groups suffering the most serious job losses were manufacturing (-399), information services (-320), educational services (-291), and leisure and hospitality (-239).
- The major source of industry growth was in the health care and social science sector, which gained 715 jobs in 2005. More than half of the growth in this sector occurred in hospitals. The retail trade sector also added nearly 500 jobs. The professional and technical service sector also added 200 jobs.
- In Central Massachusetts, the three largest employment sectors in 2005 were health and social services (roughly 35,000 jobs), retail establishments (roughly 28,000 jobs) and manufacturing (roughly 27,500 jobs).
- Between 2003 and 2004 the annual average wage in Central Massachusetts increased by \$1,286 or 3.2%, while the State annual average increased by \$2,601 or 5.6%. The 2004 annual average wage for Central Massachusetts was \$41,548, well below the State's annual average wage of \$48,934.

- In Massachusetts, the professions earning the highest annual average wage for 2004 included management (\$96,880), legal services (\$89,280) and computer and mathematics (\$76,550). Conversely, the professions earning the lowest annual wage in 2004 included food preparation/serving (\$21,420), farming/fishing/forestry (\$24,930), and personal care services (\$26,020).

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):

The Greater Worcester Area Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee is the regional entity charged with forging an economic strategy for Central Massachusetts. The Committee is staffed by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, the Worcester City Manager's Office of Economic Development, and the Greater Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Committee is comprised of representatives of communities from across the 40-community region. The Committee prepares an annual report that outlines its regional economic development strategy, notes trends in the regional economy and includes a comprehensive, updated list of the region's economic development projects. Having a regional CEDS Committee is a prerequisite for obtaining grants from the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. The town of Leicester was represented at two 2007 CEDS meetings, however no Leicester projects were listed on the 2007 CEDS Report.

COMMUNITY PREFERENCES

Economic Development Public Forum

An Economic Development Public Forum was held on November 28, 2007 at 7:00 PM at the Leicester Town Hall. Below is a summary of the feedback received on the preferences for types and locations of businesses in Town.

Preferences for the types of business establishments in town within the two broad categories of Retail & Services and Industrial/Office Parks:

Retail & Services:

- Most Preferred: Professional Services received the most votes, with movie theaters and restaurants receiving the second and third highest votes
- Least Preferred: Fast food establishments, clothing stores, and large-scale retail stores received the least number of votes.

Industrial/Office Parks:

- Most Preferred: Office Parks received the most votes, with Biotechnology and Medical Research receiving the second and third highest votes.
- Least Preferred: Heavy manufacturing, freight shipping, defense industries and warehousing received the least number of votes.

Preferences for locations for Retail/Service type businesses and Industrial/Office Park type businesses:

Most of the participants' preferences for Industrial and Office Park business locations were clustered along both sides of Huntoon Highway (Route 56) in the Highway Business-Industrial 2 District and along Route 9 (or off Route 9) west of Burncoat Street in the Highway Business-Industrial 1 District. There were just a few participants that selected Stafford Street (just north of

Auburn Street) in the Business-Residential-1 District and along the north side of Route 9, east of Chapel Street, in the Business District.

As for preferences for Retail/Service business locations, the participants clustered their selections along Route 9, east of Waite St, and along Route 9 west of the Leicester Country Club, in the Highway Business-Industrial 1 District. A few participants expressed preferences for these businesses to be located in the Central Business District and even fewer participants selected the southern tip of town on Stafford Street near Pleasant and Mill Streets. (See Appendix for more detailed information regarding this Public Forum).

Master Plan Survey

There were several questions in the Master Plan Survey that relate to economic development. Respondents indicated that they would like to see more restaurants, small retail, and professional services. More respondents want the amount and types of businesses to remain unchanged than want decreased business activity. The types of businesses that the most respondents indicated they would like to see decreased were big box retail (26%), industrial development (23%), and fast food restaurants (18%).

Sixty-five percent (65%) respondents felt that more tax revenues was the major potential benefit of additional commercial development, followed by more in-town jobs (60%). Major potential disadvantages of economic development identified by survey respondents were: “More traffic” (79%) and “Loss of Open Space” (56%).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES & IMPEDIMENTS

If Leicester’s commercial and industrial sectors do not grow and increase their contribution to the local tax base, the tax burden on homeowners will continue to grow. Leicester has much vacant or underused commercial and industrial zoned land to accommodate a number of new businesses. While the current economy is experiencing a slow-down, more could be done to encourage economic development in town, as described below.

Local Economic Development Strengths & Opportunities

Availability of Economic Development Assistance:

There are several state and federal programs and grant sources designed to assist communities in their economic development efforts, including the following:

- The Massachusetts Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP):
- MassDevelopment
- EPA Brownfields Grants
- Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD)
- Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development (MAED)
- The Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
- Department of Housing and Community Development’s (DHCD) Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.
- National Trust for Historic Preservation’s National Main Street Center

Details of each of these programs may be found in the Appendix (Resources).

Excellent Transportation Network:

- Leicester is located on two busy state-numbered routes (9 & 56)
- It is served by the Worcester Regional Transit Authority
- It borders the City of Worcester, which is serviced by the WRTA and commuter rail, with 10 daily 2-way trips to Boston.

In addition, the Worcester Regional Airport is partially located in the northwestern section of town and is owned by the City of Worcester. The 2000 Leicester Master Plan stated that expansion of the airport was planned as well as improved access to it, which was expected to generate economic development for Leicester. However, neither of these improvements has occurred and as of this writing, the future of the airport is uncertain.

Vacant, Developable Commercial & Industrial Zoned Land:

CMRPC completed a buildout analysis for Leicester in 2001 as part of its EO418 project, and again in February 2008, as part of developing this chapter. (See box “Mass GIS Buildout Analysis” for methodology.) A build-out analysis is a planning tool that determines the amount of vacant, developable land in town and assesses the potential impacts if this land were fully developed under the town’s existing zoning standards. A buildout analysis does not attempt to determine *when* a community will reach full buildout; rather, it simply attempts to determine what the community would look like if it were fully built out according to the town’s current Zoning Bylaws.

While conducting the buildout analysis, each of the zoning districts was assigned a number used as an identifier on the Economic Development Analysis Map (See Map 4-1 at the end of the chapter) and in the buildout analysis description below.

The following five districts were determined to be mostly or fully built-out, with little or no vacant land available for new development:

- Industrial District labeled as #10 on the map and located on Chapel St (I),
- Central Business District (CB)
- Two of the Business districts, labeled as # 9 and # 11 on the map. One is located in Cherry Valley and the other is located near the Oxford Town Line.
- The Business Residential district (BR-1), a very small district labeled as # 2 on the map and located on Route 9, west of the Town Center

Mass GIS Buildout Analysis Methodology

Using GIS, an analysis of remaining developable land and the potential floor space represented by that land is calculated by starting with the total amount of land in each district, then deducting the following:

1. developed land, along with existing roadways and water bodies is determined using orthographic photos.
2. permanently protected land in each district, as provided by the town assessor
3. undevelopable land (land within 100 ft buffer of rivers as required by the River Protection Act, floodplains, slopes > 25%)

The remaining developable land for each district is then divided by a figure calculated using factors included in zoning bylaws: required frontage, minimum lot size, required setback, required parking.

CMRPC analyzed the remaining nine districts that allow commercial or industrial development and still have remaining development potential. Table 4-7 presents the results of the buildout analysis.

**Table 4-7
Commercial Buildout Analysis**

District	Size of District	Raw Developable Land ¹	Potential Floor Space ²	Potential New Jobs ³	Estimated Tax Revenue ⁴
B (#13)	222.7 acres	74 acres	291,650 s.f.	1,166	\$163,790
NB (#6)	72.4 acres	12 acres	39,620 s.f.	158	\$22,250
BI-A (#4)	74.9 acres	62 acres	73,839 s.f.	221	\$31,485
BR-1 (#1)	25.1 acres	17 acres	22,891 s.f.	92	\$12,856
BR-1 (#3)	901.3 acres	728 acres	678,307 s.f.	2,713	\$380,937
HB-1 (#14)	749.3 acres	561 acres	1,686,482 s.f.	6745	\$719,116
HB-2 (#7)	261.6 acres	186 acres	410,058 s.f.	1,640	\$174,848
I (#8)	57.8 acres	33 acres	146,848 s.f.	294	\$43,296
RIB (#5)	67.8 acres	26 acres	52,092 s.f.	156	\$22,212
Totals	2,407.8 acres	1,613 acres	3,401,787 s.f.	13,185	\$1,570,790

¹ Raw Developable land is available land after roads and already-developed parcels are subtracted. Much of this raw developable land may be undevelopable due to site constraints (steep slopes, etc.); site constraints are addressed in development of Potential Floor Space.

² The Potential Floor Space is based on the number of buildable lots (which is calculated by deducting the acres of land deemed undevelopable due to constraints such as: steep slopes, wetlands and the River Protection Act regulations) multiplied by the building square feet per minimum lot size.

³ The new jobs figure is based on 4 employees per 1,000 square feet of commercial floor space and 2 employees per 1,000 square feet of industrial floor space (multiplier supplied as part of the EOEa buildout methodology). For districts that allow both business and industrial uses, the figure is based on 3 employees per 1000 square feet of space.

⁴ The estimated tax revenue is based on the 2009 tax rate (\$10.40 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation) and the average assessed value of new floor space from the Assessor's Cost Table Report (\$53.91 per square foot for commercial uses and \$28.35 per square foot for industrial uses, \$41 for District BI-A with both uses allowed).

According to this table Leicester has enough vacant developable land in these nine districts to potentially build 3,401,787 square feet of new floor space, yielding a very sizable amount of new jobs and tax revenues. What follows is a closer examination of these nine districts and their development potential.

Business District (#13): This district, located along Route 9 from the Central Business district east to the Auburn Street area, has a fair amount of vacant land left in it – 74 acres, which could accommodate 291,650 square feet of floor space. It is fully served by

a private water company and there is municipal sewer provided in a small portion of the west section. A small section of this district is located in the Town's Watershed Protection Overlay District, which restricts the types of businesses that can be located there.

Greenville Village Neighborhood Business District (#6): There are only 12 acres of developable land left in this linear mixed-use district along Pleasant Street in the Greenville Area, which could potentially accommodate approximately 39,620 square feet of commercial floor space. It is served by water throughout and sewer in the southern section.

Business Industrial-A (#4): This small district located on the northwest side of Stafford Street, not far from the Worcester City Line is mostly vacant with 62 acres left as developable; this could yield up to 73,839 square feet of new floor space. It is not serviced by municipal water or sewer and there is an intermittent stream that runs through the center of it. In the southwest portion of the district, the Stafford Street frontage has been developed, which may impede development of the land behind it. However, the other half of this district's frontage has not been developed.

Business Residential-1 (#1): There are only 17 acres of developable land left in this tiny district that borders Spencer on the north side of Route 9, which could yield up to 22,891 square feet of additional commercial floor space. It is served by water and sewer.

Business Residential-1 (#3): This district is located on Stafford Street (both sides) west of Rte. 56. This economic development district has a large amount of buildable vacant land (728 acres), which could yield 678,307 square feet of commercial floor space. It is however, zoned for both business and residential uses. Overall the existing development is fairly mixed, with a handful of light industrial and/or warehouse uses, and a strip mall with a restaurant. All recent development has been residential. There are some gaps in frontage access on Stafford Street, however much development is still possible. This district also lacks municipal sewer and water, which will impede development, though there are water and sewer lines near the southwestern edge. If the remaining 728 acres are developed commercially, the district could accommodate approximately 678,300 square feet of commercial floor space, however this is unlikely given the recent trend of residential development in this district.

Highway Business-Industrial-1 (#14): This very large district along Route 9 west of the Town Center nearly to the Spencer Town line has a huge amount of potential floor space (1,686,482 square feet) – the highest in the community. It is served by water and sewer by the Leicester Water Supply District. However the current water system limits fire suppression in this district, putting the onus on a large developer to pay for a water tower or other such facility. The Route 9 frontage in the eastern half of the district has been developed, however the western half is fairly free of development. The results of the public forum show this as one of the two sections of town where commercial and industrial businesses are most preferred. There was also a comment from the forum that the HB-1 District requires too much frontage (200 feet) and too large of a minimum lot size (60,000 square feet – the largest of all the districts). However, these requirements are designed to limit curb cuts and to leave land available for large-scale commercial development. Other zoning districts (such as B and CB) are more suitable for small scale

commercial development. The Wal-Mart Superstore opened in 2007 on land that had been part of the Soojian Farm. The remaining 69 acres of Soojian Farm were considered as undeveloped in the GIS buildout analysis, as were the 38 acres occupied by West End Paint Ball. The 21-acre Leicester Drive-In Theater, considered as developed by the GIS buildout analysis, is currently for sale. In addition, there are several residential properties located in this district along Route 9 that are on the market and it's expected that they will be turned into commercial properties once sold.

Highway Business-Industrial-2 (#7): This district, located along both sides of Route 56 between Clark and Stafford Streets, is serviced by water. Sewer service exists nearby along the southern edge. These 186 vacant acres seem primed for development, which could accommodate 410,058 square feet of commercial or industrial space.

Industrial (#8): This district is a small triangular shaped area located at the far southern edge of town, within the triangle formed by Stafford and Watch Streets, Carleton Road, and the Oxford Town Line. There are only 33 acres of vacant developable land currently zoned exclusively for Industrial use and they are all in this district. This represents 146,848 square feet of floor space. Transportation access is excellent in this district, with frontage on three roads, (including Stafford Street) and Route 56 (Huntoon Highway) nearby. With water and sewer close by in adjacent districts and the existence of a rail line, this district has a lot of development potential as currently zoned. Much of the vacant land (23 acres) is under the control of a single landowner. Although desirable for development for the reasons described above, the Town may want to consider if this area is appropriate for the intensity of development allowed by zoning, given the close proximity of residential development in the area.

Residential-Industrial-Business (#5): This narrow linear district along Route 56 (Huntoon Memorial Highway) has 26 acres of vacant developable land remaining and is partially serviced by water, but not sewer. It has the potential for 52,092 square feet of floor space, however since residential development is a permitted use, its commercial potential is somewhat limited.

The town of Leicester cannot reasonably expect to accommodate the total amount of new floor space calculated in this analysis. However, the town does have several economic districts with excellent development potential, specifically districts # 7, 13, 14, and 8 described above. As the town becomes more developed, it will also need to closely monitor its options for the re-use of existing commercial structures for new economic development.

Vacant and Underused Commercial Buildings

In addition to the vacant land identified in the above buildout analysis, Leicester has a large number of previously developed sites that are suitable for re-development. This includes much of the Cherry Valley area Business District (B #11), which is technically built-out. There is some interest in town to look at reuse options for a large mill on Chapel Street, which has several impediments, including a dam that needs repairs. There are a number of other structures in Cherry Valley that are vacant or not fully used that are ideal for redevelopment, particularly

given the proximity to abutting higher density residential neighborhoods both in Leicester and Worcester. A recent success story in this district was the relocation of an expanded Eller's Restaurant into a formerly vacant building. Also technically built out is the Central Business District in Leicester Center (2 acres of vacant land remaining). However, there is a great deal of potential for reuse and renovation of the existing commercial and residential structures in Leicester Center, including the mill on Water Street. Similarly, there are a number of older large mills and other commercial structures throughout Leicester that have potential for renovation and reuse. Redevelopment often has fewer environmental impacts and can provide less expensive development opportunities for small business owners.

Impediments to Economic Development

Water/Sewer Issues

The Leicester Water Supply District is unable to provide adequate water capacity/pressure for fire suppression along the western stretch of Route 9. This puts the onus on a developer to install a water tower and/or other equipment to meet the water requirements for fire suppression. The lack of water and sewer in the Business Residential District along Stafford Street (BR-1) hinders development in that district. In addition, having several independent subscriber-owned districts (as opposed to a single municipal water and sewer district), each with different regulatory and permitting requirements, can make development in Leicester difficult.

Zoning Issues

The current trend of residential development in the Business Residential District along Stafford Street (BR-1) could lessen the attractiveness of this district for larger businesses. In addition, the use table in the Zoning Bylaw is very outdated which makes it difficult to determine the category that new businesses should fall into. Also, the requirements for a particular commercial use often vary depending on the district. See the Land Use chapter (Chapter 8) for more detailed zoning analysis.

Lack of Town-controlled Industrial Land

Leicester does not have any town-controlled land to offer new businesses and industries. Many Massachusetts communities create industrial parks on town-owned land to attract the types of businesses/industries they want and offer them a coordinated delivery of municipal services. In Leicester, it is up to a new business to identify a suitable property and work with the various Town departments to obtain the necessary municipal services as best as it can.

Development Constraints in Leicester Center

This District in the center of town consists of aquifers, recharge areas and watersheds and is almost entirely within the Watershed Overlay Protection District. This makes new development in this section of town more difficult.

Lack of Coordinated Economic Development Effort

Historically, there has not been a long-term coordinated economic development strategy in Leicester. The Town has a recently re-activated Economic Development Commission that is attempting to move forward with economic development initiatives. Hopefully, this committee can serve an expanded role in coordinating the Town's efforts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL, OBJECTIVES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Development Goal:

Encourage mixed-use development with a variety of small-scale retail businesses in a more pedestrian-friendly town center, while promoting large-scale retail businesses and office parks in targeted areas away from the town center, and supporting the preservation of historic structures and the redevelopment of underutilized older structures.

Economic Development Objectives:

- Support and enable the newly reinstated Economic Development Committee so that its role is a catalyst for helping the Town strive to reach its economic development goal stated above.
- Consider changes to zoning bylaws, site plan design standards, and roadway design to encourage additional pedestrian scale development in the Central Business District to maintain its attractiveness to pedestrian traffic.
- Encourage the development of industrial land for office parks that house professional services, biotechnology and medical research businesses.
- Pursue state and federal programs to facilitate the redevelopment of underutilized properties.

Economic Development Recommendations

E1. Review town policies and regulations and develop an economic development strategy for Leicester.

In order to serve as a catalyst for helping the Town reach its Economic Development goal, the newly reinstated Economic Development Committee should start by reviewing the Town's zoning scheme, tax policies, road improvement plans, and water and sewer expansion plans as they relate to the Town's ability to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses. The commission could then work with the various municipal boards and departments to develop an economic strategy for Leicester.

Responsible Lead Entity: Economic Development Committee

E2. Incorporate appropriate changes to site plan design standards and zoning bylaws to maintain the pedestrian-friendliness of the Business District and Central Business District.

Responsible Lead Entity: Town Planner/Planning Board

E3. Pursue technical services of the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Massachusetts Downtown Initiative National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center to help maintain and improve Leicester Center (See Appendix - Resources)

Responsible Lead Entity: Town Planner/Planning Board

E4. Apply for 43D/Expedited Permitting for larger commercial/industrial sites

To encourage development of larger commercial/industrial sites in the outlying commercially-zoned areas, the Town could apply for the 43D/Expedited Permitting. This involves the Town designating one or more Priority Development Sites that it

guarantees will receive municipal permitting decisions within 180 days of application. Each site must yield at least 50,000 square feet of office space and be approved at Town Meeting. If the State approves the application, the Town will be provided with national marketing for the sites and the Town's ability to obtain PWED, CDAG and MORE funding will be enhanced.

Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen

E5. Work to Provide Adequate Fire Suppression Capacity in the Route 9 West Area (HB-1)

To improve the development potential of the Highway Business-Industrial 1 District, located along Route 9 west of the Center, the Town should consider working in partnership with the Leicester Water District or with a development partner to provide adequate fire suppression capacity.

Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen

E6. Work in partnership with owners of industrially-zoned land to encourage development

As mentioned previously, most of Leicester's industrially zoned land is under private ownership so it is important that Leicester work in partnership with the owners of industrial land to make sure this land is developed in accordance with the Town's objectives and render assistance when possible. Such assistance could be in the form of extending municipal infrastructure, or simply helping the landowners access the technical assistance made available by the many private/public entities that promote economic development.

Responsible Lead Entity: Economic Development Committee.

E7. Develop a Computerized Database of Available Commercial Properties

The Town should develop a computerized database of its available commercially zoned properties as a service for new industries investigating Leicester as a potential location. The database should be searchable by parcel size, availability of water and sewer, proximity to major roadways, easements on the property and any other information that a potential developer may find useful. Not only would such a database be very useful to potential developers, it would show that Leicester is business-friendly and willing to provide resources in support of new economic development.

Responsible Lead Entity: Economic Development Committee (Other entity involved: Board of Assessors)

E8. Pursue grant funding and technical assistance to redevelop underused or abandoned properties (Brownfields)

To redevelop underutilized or abandoned properties, the Town should look into the Brownfields programs offered by Massdevelopment and the EPA. Redeveloping Brownfields uses existing infrastructure, helps to preserve town centers/mill neighborhoods, increases property values, and ultimately increases local tax revenues. (See Appendix - Resources).

Responsible Lead Entity: Economic Development Committee (Other entities involved: Board of Assessors and Planning Board)

E9. Promote preservation of historic buildings and tourism-related economic development in coordination with the John H. Chaffee Blackstone Valley National

Heritage Corridor Commission

Leicester should engage the John H. Chaffee Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission to assist in obtaining funds for preserving its historic buildings and creating tourism attractions around its old mill buildings and other sites it may have of historic significance. The town could start the process by compiling a list and description of its historic resources and share this information with the Corridor's Community Planner located in Woonsocket, RI.

Responsible Lead Entity: Economic Development Committee (Other entity involved: Historical Commission)

- E10. Hire a consultant to conduct a study of constraints to development (wetlands, topography, infrastructure, etc.) and market analysis for the Route 9 West Corridor (HB-1 Zoning District).

Responsible Lead Entity: Economic Development Committee (Other entity involved: Planning Board)

- E11. Re-evaluate Industrial Zoning in Rochdale to allow development consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, such as adding buffer requirements and other site development standards consistent with other commercial districts in Leicester.

Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board

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TRANSPORTATION

A safe, efficient and well-maintained transportation system is an important priority for all communities. This Chapter will provide an overview of the existing Leicester transportation network for various forms of transportation (automobile, public bus, bicycle, pedestrian, etc.), and identify key issues and concerns.

TRANSPORTATION TRENDS & DATA

Roadways

There are two transportation corridors in the Town of Leicester: Route 9 and Route 56. State Route 9 traverses the Town east/west from the boundary with Worcester to the boundary with Spencer. State Route 56 traverses the Town north/south from the Town boundary with Paxton to the Town boundary with Oxford. The State Highway Department maintains Route 9 and the Leicester Highway maintains Route 56.

Minor arterials include Pleasant Street (the portion which is not Route 56) and Stafford Street which is a high volume east/west roadway traversing the southern sector of Town and providing access to Charlton to the western boundary.

In Leicester, local streets are in various stages of improvement with some streets being developed to full standard and accepted by the Town as public ways and others being maintained in an unimproved condition as private ways. The Town is also responsible for a few public, unimproved ways.

Leicester does not have direct access to any of the region's interstate highways, although the Massachusetts Turnpike (Exit 10) is in the neighboring community of Auburn.

Roadway Improvements since the last Master Plan

There have been several roadway improvements completed by the Massachusetts Highway Department in Leicester since completion of the last Master Plan in 2000, including the following:

- Route 9 & 56 (re-configuration of travel lanes and timing of lights)
- Route 56 & Stafford (new traffic light, widening of intersection)
- Resurfacing of Route 9
- Resurfacing of Route 56
- Re-alignment of Route 9 in the vicinity of Leicester Country Club (to reduce curve)
- Route 9 & Water Street (new traffic light)
- Parker Street Bridge (replacement of old bridge)

In addition, maintenance and improvement of Town roads (including road resurfacing) has continued by the Leicester Highway Department.

Leicester Route 9 Corridor Study

Route 9 is a critical arterial serving the Town of Leicester. The demands placed upon Route 9, also known as Main Street, currently result in traffic flow delays and several safety concerns. In addition, the local economy depends largely on how well Route 9 can accommodate traffic demands, now and in the future. Recognizing the importance of Route 9, the Town hired MS Transportation, Inc. to prepare a Route 9 Corridor Study (completed in 2008). The two major goals of the study were 1) to assess the existing and future travel conditions along Route 9 and its key intersecting streets; and 2) to develop an overall plan for improvements to Main Street and key intersections in order to alleviate the growing congestion problems and to accommodate the projected growth of the Town.

The Corridor Study included detailed technical analyses, public participation, and examination of a range of alternatives. Historical data as well as a new set of traffic counts collected during September 2006 formed the basis of the network analysis. Analysis was completed for existing conditions as well as a 20 year (Year 2026) forecast that incorporated a number of current and planned or potential land development projects including the Wal-Mart (opened March 2007), Old Sibley Farm (a mixed residential/commercial project in Spencer) and a number of residential projects in the community that could result in a total of 620+ units of new housing. Following the analysis and the determination of needs, potential improvements were identified and evaluated. A summary of existing conditions and recommendations follows below:

Route 9 is a two-lane road that falls under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Highway Department. It is a major east-west highway that crosses the entire State from Boston to Pittsfield. The commercial center of Leicester and the town government are located on or just off Route 9. Prior to the new Wal-Mart opening west of Leicester Center, the roadway was observed to carry 16,000 to 18,000 vehicles on a weekday with the higher value on the eastern portion of the corridor. The roadway varies in character – not only in terms of context but also in its horizontal and vertical alignment.

Traffic signals exist at the Route 9/Route 56 intersection and the new Route 9 intersection with the Wal-Mart site drive. The geometries of a number of intersections along the corridor are considered less than adequate or have features that affect operations or safety. Traffic signal warrants are essentially satisfied at the Route 9 intersection with Auburn Street and Old Main Street. While pedestrian volume was observed to be relatively low along the corridor, the travel speeds, visibility and the lack of adequate identification of crossings results in difficult and potentially hazardous crossings.

Considering historical and known future growth, it is projected that peak hour traffic volumes on Route 9 could increase between 36% and 149% depending on the peak hour and location. This is based on a significant amount of commercial and residential growth that is either ongoing or expected. This growth results in projected PM peak hour two way flows on Route 9 between 2,628 and 3,265. These volume levels will result significantly in congested, low speed conditions along the corridor and poor levels of services at the major intersections without improvements.

Based on the assessment of current roadway conditions and a determination of future needs, a range of alternatives were examined. As a result of the evaluation, a recommended plan for the Route 9 corridor was developed, as summarized in the Table 5-1.

**Table 5-1
Summary of Recommended Plan
Route 9 Corridor, Leicester, Massachusetts**

Location	Action	Estimated Constr. Cost	Next Step
<u>Immediate Term</u>			
Route 9 at Church Street /Bottomly Street	warning sign in EB direction advance ped sign in EB	<\$1,000 <\$1,000	discuss with MHD
Route 9 at Waite Street	advance ped sign in WB direc.	<\$1,000	discuss with MHD
Route 9 at Henshaw Street	clear veg./regrade NW corner	<\$1,000	discuss with MHD
Route 9 at Lake Avenue	advance warning sign in WB direc.	<\$1,000	discuss with MHD
Route 9 at Route 56	signal timing/lane config. modif.	\$10,000	discuss with MHD
		\$15,000	
<u>Short Term</u>			
Route 9 at Auburn-Old Main	Signalize, geometric improve.	\$600,000	PNF*/design phase
Route 9 at Rawson Street	install turn lane, improve radii and visibility	\$100,000	PNF/design phase
Route 9 in West End	land use-access master plan	\$40,000	area specific master plan
Route 9 at Pine Street	monitor loc. for full signal control	\$5,000	traffic counts, warrants analysis
Pedestrian – various locations	high visibility crossings	\$30,000 - \$50,000	design/bid
		\$795,000	
<u>Long Term</u>			
Route 9 at S. Main Street- Henshaw Street	improve control (i.e. signal, roundabout), define curbing	\$1.0M	PNF/functional design study/design
Route 9 - Worcester Line to Auburn Street	Reconstruct to 2 & 3 lane section with improved sidewalks, streetscape	\$2.0M	conceptual plan
		\$3.0M	
Enhance East-West Capacity	identify/plan improved links	--	concept plan/feas. study

* PNF – project need form

Source: *Route 9 Corridor Study, Leicester Massachusetts, 2007*

In late 2009, a “Corridor Profile” study for Rte 9 from Gardner Square in Worcester to the East Brookfield line at Rte 49 will be completed by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission for the use of the host communities and the MassHighway District #3 office. It will examine existing and projected conditions and will suggest a series of improvement options.

Roadway Safety & Traffic Data

The Route 9 Corridor Study described above provides detailed information regarding accidents and other safety data for Route 9 and its intersections with side roads. For the Master Plan, MHD data on accidents throughout the Town of Leicester for the years 2004- 2006 was reviewed. This accident data is summarized in Table 5-2. (Please note that a detailed analysis was not done. The following includes aggregate numbers of crashes for all intersections with more than one accident; it does not differentiate severity or type of accident.)

**Table 5-2
Number of Accidents at Selected Leicester Intersections, 2004-2005***

Intersection	2004	2005	2006	Total
Henshaw/Willow Hill	2	1	0	3
Huntoon/Pleasant	1	2	2	5
Huntoon/Stafford	8	6	2	16
Main/Auburn	3	2	5	10
Main/Lake	0	3	0	3
Main/Locust	0	0	2	2
Main/Pine	1	2	0	3
Main/Pleasant	6	3	1	10
Main/Rawson	2	2	2	6
Marshall/Paxton	8	6	6	20
Pine/Charles	2	1	0	3
Pleasant/King	1	0	2	3
Pleasant/Laurelwood	3	0	0	3
Rawson/Burncoat	1	0	2	3
River/Baldwin	7	1	1	9
River/Charlton	3	0	1	4
Stafford/Atwood	3	0	0	3
Stafford/Auburn	0	1	2	3
Stafford/Elmwood	2	1	0	3
Stafford/Henshaw	1	0	2	3
Stafford/Old Stafford	2	1	0	3
Stafford/Pleasant	5	2	1	8

*Includes intersections with more than one accident in at least one of the three years included

Source: MassHighway Crash Data Files, 2004-2006

The Marshall Street/Paxton Street had the highest number of accidents (20) over the course of the three year period, followed by Huntoon/Stafford, Main/Pleasant, and Main/Auburn. There may be fewer future accidents at two of these intersections (Huntoon/Stafford and Main/Pleasant intersections) because of recent improvements. In addition, as noted earlier, the Corridor Study recommends improvements at the Main Street/Auburn Street intersection. The Marshall Street/Paxton Street intersection may warrant further study and possible improvements.

Traffic Volumes

Table 5-3 summarizes traffic growth on selected roadways in Leicester using historical traffic data. The data indicate significant growth in traffic on many Leicester roads, including Route 56, Marshall Street, and River Street. Traffic has increased on Route 9 and Stafford Street, but at a much slower rate. The Route 9 Corridor Study projects that the background growth rate for Route 9 will be 1% per year for the period 2006-2016 and .5% per year for the 2016 - 2026 period. However, if the full development potential along Route 9 is realized, traffic growth could be significant. Table 5-4 summarizes projected traffic increases on Route 9. More detailed information regarding Route 9 traffic and projected future traffic is provided in the Route 9 Corridor Study.

**Table 5-3
Traffic Growth on Select Roadways in Leicester**

Location	Count Date		Average Daily Traffic Volume (vehicles/day)		Percent Change	Annualized Growth Rate (average percent growth/year)
	First Year	Last Year	First Year	Last Year		
Stafford Street at Worcester City Line	1986	2006	8,100	8,166	1%	0.0%
Stafford Street W of Route 56 (Huntoon Hwy)	1985	2007	2,882	5,172	79%	3.5%
Route 9 at Spencer Town Line	1985	2007	13,626	14,012	3%	0.1%
Route 9 at Worcester City Line	1985	2006	19,270	17,102	-11%	-0.5%
Route 56 (Paxton St) at Paxton Town Line	1985	2007	1,084	3,383	212%	9.2%
Route 56 (Huntoon Hwy) S of Stafford Street	1985	2007	7,250	8,472	17%	0.7%
Marshall Street at Worcester City Line	1985	2006	2,764	4,900	77%	3.5%
Marshall Street W of Route 56 (Paxton St)	1988	2004	1,617	3,780	134%	7.9%
Pine Street at Spencer Town Line	1985	2007	1,337	3,154	136%	5.9%
River Street N of Charlton Street	1985	2004	2,301	5,491	139%	6.9%

Source: Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO), Daily Traffic Volumes & Peak Period Turning Movement Counts, 12/07

**TABLE 5-4
Projected Peak Hour Traffic Increases on
Main Street 2006 – 2026**

	AM Peak Hour				PM Peak Hour			
	2006	2026	Increase	% Δ	2006	2026	Increase	% Δ
Main Street								
East of Auburn Street	1,315	1,789	474	36%	1,636	2,628	992	60%
East of Route 56 (Pleasant St)	1,274	1,809	535	41%	1,358	2,490	1,132	83%
East of Rawson Street	1,268	2,065	797	62%	1,453	3,265	1,812	124%
West of Burncoat Street	1,081	1,902	821	75%	1,259	3,139	1,880	149%

Source: Route 9 Corridor Study, Leicester, Massachusetts

Public Transportation

Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) Bus Service

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) service area includes over half a million in population and is the second largest regional transit authority in Massachusetts, serving 35 communities. Two routes serve the Town of Leicester: Routes 19 and 33. Route 19 provides service along Route 9 from Worcester City Hall to the Super Wal-Mart in Leicester. Route 33 also travels on Route 9, providing service from Union Station in Worcester to Brookfield Center with two stops in Leicester (Leicester Center and Wal-Mart). The WRTA also provides paratransit service for the elderly and disabled in the region, in addition to a variety of special services for elderly and disabled residents in the entire service area.

Train Service/Union Station

Initially constructed in 1911, Union Station enjoyed decades of activity until the railroad industry began its decline. In 1975, Union Station's owner abandoned the building and for the subsequent twenty years the building deteriorated. Acquired by the Worcester Redevelopment Authority in 1995, the station underwent a complete renovation and was re-opened in 2000. The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority or MBTA commuter rail currently operates twelve round-trip trains per day between Union Station and Boston. In addition to commuter rail, Amtrak, the national passenger railroad, operates a ticket office in Union Station, with daily service available to Albany, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Union Station also features taxi as well as intra and inter-City bus service. There are five bus ports as well as service, ticketing, baggage drop-off and pick-up areas for customers utilizing intercity motorcoach service provided by Greyhound Bus Lines and Peter Pan bus lines.

Worcester Regional Airport

The Worcester Regional Airport (WRA) is partially located in the northwestern section of Leicester on 814 acres owned by the City of Worcester. Worcester Regional Airport (also known as ORH) is a regional transportation facility that provides national air transportation access to the Greater Worcester Region. Worcester Airport is owned by the City of Worcester, and is managed by the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) through an agreement with the City that was recently extended until December 31, 2009. The City and Massport are currently discussing options for managing Worcester Airport.

Passenger traffic, totaling 49,727 in 1999, grew to 106,145 in 2000, but a shrinking economy and 9/11 reduced air traffic down (from an expected redoubling) to 130,566. In 2002, air traffic fell sharply, and in the years 2003 through 2005 there were fewer than 5,000 annually, as scheduled commercial service was cancelled in early 2003. Commercial service was briefly restored in 2005 with low-cost service to Florida; however this service was discontinued in 2006. In September 2008, limited non-stop service from Worcester to Florida by DIRECT AIR started. However, Worcester Regional Airport at this time is a primarily general aviation airport. According to the CMMPO Regional Transportation Plan, general aviation at Worcester Airport “includes not only business and corporate flights, but also medical, air taxi, charter, crop dusting, flight training, and personal and recreational trips.” (CMMPO Regional Transportation Plan)

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission (MAC), the City of Worcester, and Massport cooperated to prepare a Worcester Regional Airport Master Plan (the “ORH Master Plan”) to provide guidance for planning and development of ORH through 2020 within the context of the New England Aviation System. This plan was completed in June of 2008. Under a medium growth scenario envisioned by this plan, Worcester Regional Airport would operate as an active corporate/general aviation airport with commercial airline activity targeted to business and leisure markets. A summary of the plan recommendations is included in Table 5-5 on the following page.

The ORH plan also identifies areas for non-airport related commercial development, including land in the Town of Leicester. See Map 5-1 at end of Chapter.

Table 5-5
Summary of Recommendations from the
Worcester Regional Airport Master Plan Study (ORH Master Plan)
Medium Growth Scenario

	Priority (safety and infrastructure improvements)	Demand-driven (to meet operational demands as forecasted growth occurs)
Near Term (through 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading the Airport’s runway safety areas • Upgrading runway pavement; • Design of new Airport Rescue and Fire-fighting Facility (“ARFF”) that also may accommodate security and policing functions • Vegetation management planning, and tree and brush clearing • Ongoing maintenance of existing airport facilities • Security-related improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terminal improvements • Additional parking facilities • Airport roadway improvements • Design of a new airfield maintenance facility • Utility infrastructure for aviation-compatible development parcels; • Ongoing maintenance of existing airport facilities • Category (“CAT”) I/I Instrument Land System (“ILS”) - Phase 1 actions: feasibility study.
Long Term (2011-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runway and taxiway pavement rehabilitation and upgrades • Construction of a new ARFF Facility • Ongoing maintenance of existing airport facilities • Security-related improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category I/I ILS (Phase 2 actions: implementation and construction; • New airfield maintenance facility; • Terminal improvements • Parking facilities; • New aircraft maintenance facilities • Fuel farm improvement; • Additional airport roadway improvements • Aviation-compatible commercial development infrastructure • New taxiway parallel to Runway 11/29.

Source: ORH Master Plan 2008

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Pedestrian & Bicycle Circulation

The majority of Leicester roadways are narrow, rural roadways. The Planning Board requires sidewalks in new subdivisions, but most existing local roads outside of Leicester Center do not have sidewalks. Most of Leicester’s roadways are also not suitable for safe bicycle transportation. The speed of automobile traffic is also a common area of concern among residents. These conditions discourage pedestrian and bicycle transportation.

Worcester Regional Airport

While the Worcester Regional Airport is relatively inactive at this time, increased air traffic or other commercial development on airport property could affect the Town of Leicester. For example, one use under consideration is a commercial solar facility on land in Leicester. Potential new access route(s) through the Town of Leicester would impact traffic patterns. Commercial development would also increase traffic, potentially through residential neighborhoods. (See Map 5-1.)

Worcester Regional Mobility Study

The Worcester Regional Mobility Study is a partnership between the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC). It is a comprehensive state-sponsored study of the transportation network within the greater Worcester area. This study will include the city of Worcester and portions of all surrounding towns, including the eastern half of Leicester. The project's main focus will be to improve overall transportation mobility for residents, businesses and visitors and enhance economic opportunities along transportation corridors while maintaining safety and minimizing impacts to neighborhoods and communities. The study began in July 2008 and is anticipated to be completed by September 2009. (Source: CMRPC website, *cmprc.org*)

Potential Massachusetts Turnpike Exit

In March 2008 the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority gave the Board of Selectmen authorization to study the possibility of a Massachusetts Turnpike Exit on Route 56 near the Oxford-Leicester line. The Town was advised to work with CMRPC and CMMPO to conduct a study. This study would involve the Towns of Charlton, Oxford, Spencer and the City of Worcester, as well as the Worcester Regional Transit Authority and the Worcester Regional Airport. The interchange is being considered as a way to potentially attract more commercial development to the Town of Leicester and to provide an alternate means of access to the Worcester Regional Airport. At the present time, there is not a separate study underway, but the boundaries of the Worcester Mobility Study (described above) were modified to include the Route 56 area and the Massachusetts Turnpike for this purpose. See Map 5-2 at the end of this Chapter.

Rawson Street Bridge

The current Rawson Street bridge is a one-lane bridge, and was originally intended as a temporary bridge to replace a deficient bridge. The Town has been unable to obtain state assistance for a permanent replacement because the state does not classify it as a bridge. Although there is some neighborhood concern regarding potential traffic increases on Rawson Street, the Town would like to find a more permanent solution that restores two-way traffic.

Community Preferences

Excessive traffic was identified by 30% of Master Plan survey respondents as something they found undesirable about living in Leicester. Also, 79% of survey respondents thought that "more traffic" was a major potential disadvantage of encouraging commercial development in the Town of Leicester. The Highway Department was rated favorably by survey respondents, with 63% rating the Department as excellent or good. Although difficult to quantify, in an open-ended question asking for additional comments about the quality of Town government or services, many respondents commented about wanting better road maintenance, including snow plowing.

However, many of these respondents indicated that the problem was with inadequate funding/staff for the Highway Department.

Transportation Improvement Program

The region's Transportation Improvement Program, commonly referred to as the "TIP," is a federally required planning document that lists all highway, bridge, transit and intermodal projects in the Central Massachusetts planning region that are programmed to receive federal-aid funding. In the most current TIP, projects are listed for federal fiscal years 2008 through 2011. Projects of regional & statewide significance, such as the Route 146 major infrastructure improvement project, as well as projects that improve air quality are also listed in the TIP document. Non federal-aid (NFA), or state-funded, projects are included as well. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) transportation staff, working on behalf of the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO), revises the TIP project listing on an annual basis. The annual process begins by soliciting project proposals from the region's communities. In order to be considered, project requests must come from the community's highest elected official.

After project proposals are formally submitted by the community's highest elected official, project proposals are screened by the CMMPO. Throughout the development of the TIP, the CMMPO oversees an extensive outreach effort that provides ample opportunity for public involvement. When the TIP process is completed, the endorsed TIP is for combined with the TIPs produced by other state regions. The resulting document, referred to as the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), is forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval. Only after obtaining this approval can federal aid transportation funds be made available to construct the projects included in the TIP.

The current 2008 – 2011 TIP only includes one project in the Town of Leicester (resurfacing of Route 56), which has already been completed.

Access Management

The Town of Leicester currently has limited ability to control access drives (curb cuts) on roadways. This is particularly a concern on Routes 9 and 56, where there are large areas of commercially-zoned land. Multiple curb cuts slow traffic and affect the safety and convenience of automobile traffic. Currently, Leicester's commercial zoning (HB-1 and HB-2) along Routes 9 & 56 encourages only one curb cut per lot, and only allows two per lot. However, there is no existing effective mechanism that would require shared driveways or other mechanisms to reduce curb cuts (such as service roads). The Route 9 Corridor Study, unfortunately, did not provide detailed recommendations on this issue. The Corridor Study recommended a separate access management plan to provide guidance on techniques to address access, including: number and spacing of driveways, service roads, provision of turn lanes, and submittal requirements for traffic studies.

TRANSPORTATION GOAL, OBJECTIVES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Transportation Goal:

Leicester's transportation goal is to provide a well-maintained and efficient system of roadways, improve the safety of the street system, reduce energy and maintenance costs related to new roadway construction, encourage public transportation use, and support transportation improvements that protect and enhance pedestrian and bicycle transportation.

Transportation Objectives:

- Maintain appropriate levels of service at all intersections during peak periods to ensure traffic delays are kept to a minimum.
- Promote scenic roads and the preservation of stone walls in public and private road construction projects.
- Participate in and support regional transportation planning.
- Facilitate pedestrian access Town-wide for all ages of the population.
- Minimize through traffic in residential neighborhoods and discourage use of residential streets to access commercial development
- Promote the improvement of roadway extensions in front of new lots to existing or better standards than the existing way being extended in accordance with the Subdivision Control Act and the Leicester Subdivision Rules and Regulations.
- Encourage use of public transportation and car-pooling to reduce traffic congestion
- Promote circulation improvements, parking arrangements and site plan layout designs that grant maximum efficiency to the commercial and industrial land uses as an incentive to new and expanded development.
- Encourage Town acceptance of existing private ways improved to minimal safety standards when requested by a majority of the property owners adjoining such ways.

Transportation Recommendations:

- T1. Prohibit left turns onto Warren Avenue from Route 9 eastbound during the morning peak period (6-9AM). This measure is aimed at discouraging the use of Warren Avenue, a local street, as a route to avoid the Route 9/Route 56 signal in order to gain access to Route 56 northbound.
Responsible Lead Entity: Highway Department
- T2. Work to upgrade the temporary one lane bridge on Rawson Street
Responsible Lead Entity: Highway Department (Other entity involved: Board of Selectmen)
- T3. Inventory all locations where sidewalks end abruptly, develop a plan for future sidewalk installation and incorporate the Plan into the Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
Responsible Lead Entity: Highway Department

- T4. Amend the Subdivision Regulations to specifically require bus stop areas and shelters in subdivisions over ten lots.
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board
- T5. Prioritize and Implement the Recommendations of the Route 9 Corridor Study
Responsible Lead Entity: Highway Department (Other entities involved: Board of Selectmen and Planning Board)
- T6. Pursue development of an access management plan for major roadways, and/or develop zoning bylaws or other methods such as such as reciprocal easement driveway arrangements for curb cut limitations along arterials for all land uses
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board (Other entities involved: Highway Department)
- T7. Undertake a comprehensive study of the impacts of a potential Turnpike exit connecting to Route 56 (i.e., impact on traffic patterns, residential & commercial growth projections, etc.)
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (Other entities involved: Planning Board, Highway Department)
- T8. Amend the Subdivision Regulations to strengthen requirements for developer upgrades to existing public ways where necessary to provide adequate access to proposed subdivisions.
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board (Other entities involved: Highway Department, Board of Selectmen)
- T9. Work with and closely monitor the City of Worcester, Massport and the Massachusetts Highway Department if, through the regional transportation planning process, an access road is proposed to maximize time travel efficiencies to and from the Worcester Regional Airport and I-290, I-90 and I-395.
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (Other entities involved: Planning Board, Highway Department)
- T10. Develop a scenic roads bylaw that incorporates the preservation of existing stone walls and trees in roadway rights-of-way
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board (Other entities involved: Historical Commission, Highway Department, Tree Warden)
- T11. Actively follow Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process and request inclusion of Leicester transportation projects on the annual TIP listing
Responsible Lead Entity: Town Administrator (Other entities involved: Highway Department, Town Planner)
- T12. Continue participation in the Worcester Mobility Study and consider implementation of recommendations when available
Responsible Lead Entity: Town Administrator (Other entities involved: Highway Department, Town Planner)

T13. Implement the following policies for proposed subdivision roadways:

- a) Obtain right-of-way for future use for sidewalks and pedestrian circulation, including school bus stop shelter locations, at every opportunity in the development review and permit process
- b) Encourage the protection of stone walls and other historic and scenic resources
- c) Encourage consistent through street names; avoid names for new streets that resemble names of existing streets.
- d) Require any extension of a private way to provide an emergency turn around per subdivision standards or to the requirements and approval of the Fire Chief
- e) Explicitly require in subdivision decisions the developers responsibility to maintain and provide services on all roadways they build (including snow plowing and street sweeping) unless and until roads are accepted as public ways.
- f) Strictly enforce Subdivision Regulations and grant waivers sparingly. For example: require private way extensions to dedicate a minimum of 40-foot right-of-way to the Town and require sidewalks on all new roadways, regardless of the existing status of the way being extended or adjoining roadways

Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board

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FACILITIES & SERVICES

The reputation of the Town's School System, relatively affordable housing, and the high quality of other municipal facilities and services enhance Leicester's advantageous location contiguous to the second largest city in New England. Growth and development have made it more difficult to maintain the level of services and type of facilities residents have come to expect. This is due in part to the type of development, predominantly residential, and the fact that the passage of Proposition 2½ in 1980 has restricted the Town's ability to raise revenue. Although residential growth has slowed in recent years, this is likely to rebound when the housing market improves. Also, increased costs for fuel and energy, as well as un-funded state mandates, continue to strain public services.

OVERVIEW OF LEICESTER FACILITIES & SERVICES

General Government

Municipal Town Offices are located in the Leicester Town Hall in the Leicester Town Center at 3 Washburn Square, on the Town Common. In late 1999, the majority of the Town Offices moved from the original Town Hall built 1939 to offices in the Old Center School Building adjacent and attached to the original Town Hall. Phase II of the project involved relocating the remaining offices into the basement of the Old Center School Building in 2003. This refurbishment and rehabilitation was accomplished upon the conclusion of a study by the Town Hall Building Committee. The newly refurbished Town Hall Offices are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This building houses the following staffed general government offices: Board of Selectmen, Treasurer, Town Accountant, Town Clerk, Assessors, Veterans Services, Emergency/EMS, Code Enforcement, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, and Planning Board. Development-related offices (Code Enforcement, Conservation, Board of Health, and Planning) were placed next to each other to facilitate development applications.

Leicester Town Hall is also used for Town Meetings, and has several meeting rooms in the basement level for evening meetings. The Municipal Town Offices expansion (1999-2003) will accommodate future administrative and service needs provided from these offices for the life of the planning period. The second floor of the building remains vacant, although is under consideration for use as school administrative offices. Town Meeting approved \$9,000 for a Town Hall study in May 2008. This study, anticipated to be underway by late 2008, will evaluate the feasibility and cost of reuse of the second floor, which will require an elevator and bathroom upgrades to comply with ADA requirements.

The Town also received grant funding for a comprehensive energy audit for the Town Hall to evaluate lighting, insulation, and heating options. This study was completed February 2009 (Energy Conservation Improvement Program Audit, 2/09), and focuses on an evaluation of the existing heating system, which was installed in 1939. The study recommends making improvements to the existing heating system to increase efficiency (a new heating system was found to be prohibitively expensive). The study also recommends further evaluation of other

conservation measures. The Town has undertaken some preliminary efforts to reduce energy consumption, including closing the Town Hall on Fridays, and installing window sealing.

The Highway Department, located at 59 Peter Salem Road, is centrally located to meet the needs of the Highway Department. It is located on 39 acres that include less than 10 usable acres for future expansion because of power lines traversing the site and extensive wetlands. The Highway Department has insufficient room for additional equipment in the existing structure, and needs an additional small building.

Public Safety & Health

Police

Since completion of the last Master Plan in 2000, the Town has constructed a new Police Department building at 90 South Main Street. Funding for this project was approved at the 2003 Annual Town Meeting, and the new Police Station opened in 2005. The previous Police Department building at 1037 Main Street was overcrowded and did not meet the needs of the Police Department. This former Police Department building was sold to a private party in 2006, and is now a physical therapy office.

Fire

The Fire Department is housed at three locations. The main headquarters station #1 is near the Town Center on Water Street (just off Route 9). The Cherry Valley sub-station #2 is located on Main Street, Cherry Valley. The Rochdale sub-station #3 is located on Stafford Street, Rochdale.

The Fire Headquarters Building #1 has been found to be inadequate and in need of replacement. At the Annual Town Meeting in 2006 voters approved funding to conduct a study to determine location and space needs for a new Fire & EMS Headquarters. The Town hired the MMA Group to conduct the study, completed in early 2008.

MMA Group evaluated all the Town's fire stations, and evaluated potential alternative locations for a new main fire station. The two sub-stations provide adequate coverage for the current and anticipated future needs for fire services. Both sub-stations are in adequate condition. The MMA study recommended that the Town consider a long-range plan to consolidate station #2 and #3 into one new station. Six locations were evaluated for a new Fire Headquarters:

- A. 1203 Main Street
- B. 1600 Main Street block
- C. 325 Pleasant Street
- D. 1164 Main Street
- E. South of 325 Main Street
- F. 1122 Main Street

Land adjacent to Town Hall (3 Washburn Square) was also examined, although a full analysis of the site was not done. All sites were impractical for various reasons (cost, topography, fire response time, etc.). Location A may be given further consideration. Also, the Town may evaluate the mill on Water Street adjacent to the current Fire Headquarters. After a location is determined, the Town will seek funding for land purchase, design, and construction.

The Fire Department developed a policy in the late 1990's for a new type of fire service facility: water cisterns. The cisterns are required as a part of the land subdivision process and augment water supply availability in newly developing areas. The cisterns are typically 15,000 gallons

and located for fire protection action using a standard of 1,000-feet of hose. The developer grants easement rights for location and access. The Fire Department is responsible for monitoring and maintaining of all cisterns.

Leicester is a member of the Mutual Aid system for fire services with twenty-six surrounding communities, including the City of Worcester. The mutual aid agreement provides additional fire resources and suppression capabilities for each member community, as well as other communities throughout the state, in the following three levels:

1. Local Mutual Aid is provided to and received from bordering/surrounding communities as part of fire alarm run card.
2. Fire District Mutual Aid is provided through Fire District Seven which the Town of Leicester is a member. District Seven has 5 Strike Teams that are set up by geographic areas. As Fire Departments use up their local mutual aid they then can request Strike Team response from District Seven. Strike Team equipment is set up for response to Structural fires, brush fires, disasters and tankers.
3. State Mobilization response is for incidents for which a community has exhausted both its local and District wide mutual aid and the incident could be long in duration. The Leicester Fire Department is part of the State Mobilization response plan for both Fire and EMS coverage.

Emergency Medical Services

The Town provides 24-hour Emergency Medical Services (EMS) coverage. Leicester has EMS technicians certified at the paramedic level, the highest service level available and is able to provide advanced life support (ALS) services.

Leicester's EMS Department is a member of the Mutual Aid Agreement with surrounding Towns and Worcester. Not all of the participating municipalities have ALS services, thus creating a high demand for Leicester services. The Department is reimbursed for services through Medicaid, private insurance companies and the surrounding municipalities.

The EMS Department has several concerns for the future. There is an immediate need for more building space for the service. Reductions in Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement for services rendered presents a challenge to maintain service levels at a time when the aging of the areas population increases service demands.

911 Service

Since the last Master Plan was completed in 2000, the Town has added Enhanced 911 (E911) and Reverse 911 capabilities. Enhanced 911 automatically associates a physical address with the calling party's telephone number, providing emergency responders with the location of the emergency without the person calling for help having to provide it. This can be useful for fires, break-ins, kidnapping, and other events where communicating one's location is difficult or impossible. Reverse 911 allows emergency services to quickly contact members of a community or organization with information. This system allows emergency services to do the "reverse" of a 911 call, usually to inform the public of a known hazard.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

The Town of Leicester has an organized and trained Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to respond to emergency situations. CERT team members are volunteers that are not

associated with Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). During emergencies, Police, Fire and EMS personnel are normally activated and may be unavailable to address all needed emergency services in a large-scale emergency.

The primary function of the CERT team is two-fold. One group will be responsible for setting up and manning temporary shelters. The other group will be responsible for the sheltering of the domestic animals belonging to the people being sheltered. The animal sheltering will be coordinated by the Animal Control Officer who is also a CERT team member. In some instances when shelters are not necessary, the CERT team may be activated to assist in other various capacities however needed.

The CERT function will be under the direction of the Emergency Management Director (EMD). Due to the responsibility of the Director having to be at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during an emergency event, one of the Co-Deputy Directors will be responsible for the CERT team at the shelters. When appropriate, the alternate Co-Deputy Director will assist at the EOC.

All CERT team personnel have been trained by The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). All team members have attended the specific training provided by MEMA. The two CERT team members with the most extensive training and experience have been delegated as the Co-Deputy Directors. In addition, all CERT members are Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) checked before being involved with Emergency functions.

Board of Health

The Board of Health has entered into a mutual aid agreement with surrounding public health agencies in the region. The purpose of this agreement is to provide for mutual aid and assistance between the municipalities entering into the agreement when resources normally available to a municipality are not sufficient to cope with a situation which requires public health action.

Additionally, the Board of Health takes an active role in all hazards planning for the community. Through the direction of State and Federal guidelines, the Board continues to develop plans for all types of events that may affect public health and ensure the continuity of operation of essential services during these events. As the Town continues to expand, the plans must be updated and enhanced in order to meet the public health response for the community.

Schools

The Leicester Public School System is administered through the Superintendent of Schools Office, located in the Administration Building at 1078 Main Street. The Administration Office Building is owned by the Town, as are the School Buildings. Maintenance is provided by the School System. Leicester is served by four schools, as shown in Table 6-1.

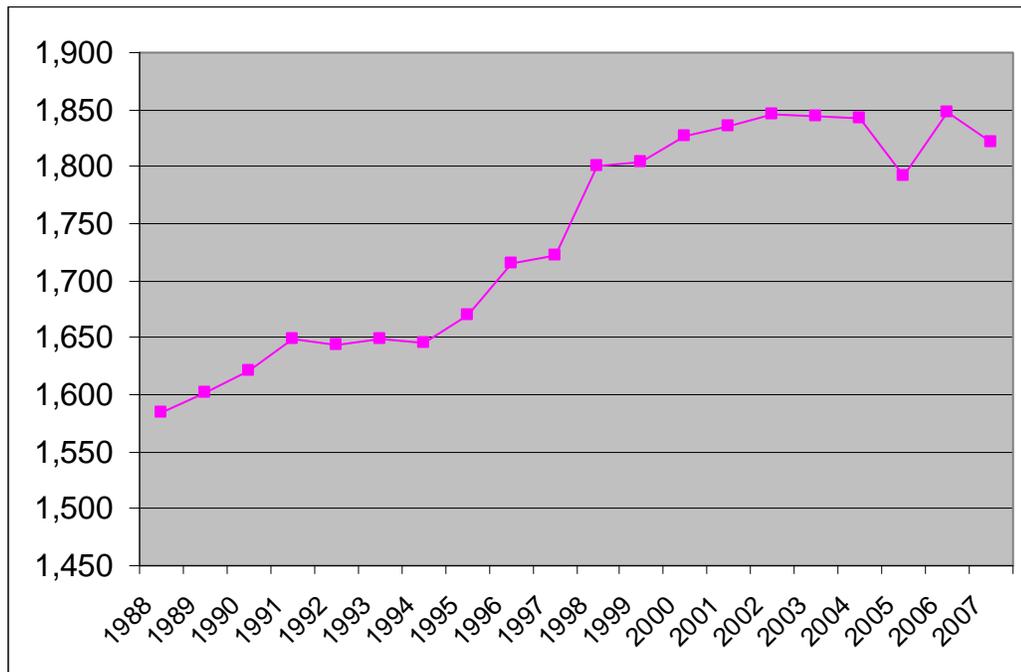
**Table 6-1
Leicester Public Schools**

School	Location	Grades	Date Built	Enrollment 2007/2008
Primary School	170 Paxton Street	PK - 2	1974	504
Memorial School	11 Memorial Drive	3 - 5	1954	392
Middle School	70 Winslow Ave	6 - 8	1961 (expanded in 1974)	463
High School	174 Paxton Street	9 - 12	1995	563
Total Enrollment (includes pre-school)				1,922

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

The School System faced enrollment increases during the 1990s, when enrollment went from 1,585 in 1988 to 1,800 in 1999 (a 13% increase). While enrollment growth continued for several more years, school enrollment has leveled off recently (See Figure 6-1).

Figure 6-1
Leicester Public School Enrollment (Grades K-12)
1988-2007



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

Enrollment is anticipated to continue to decline slightly in the near future. Enrollment projections produced by the New England School Development Council indicate a decline in enrollment of 4.2% between the 2005-2006 and 2010-2011 school years. (Source: NESDC report, 1/23/06)

The School Department has significant capital needs. Table 6-2 (on following page) shows Capital projects submitted to the Capital Improvement Committee. Many projects have remained on the list for several years.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) recently completed a study of wind and solar alternatives for the Leicester School system. This was presented to the Town in early 2009 (Leicester Energy Study, 2/09). Wind facilities were found to be impractical, primarily because of the proximity of the Worcester Airport. Solar facilities, however, could provide a short payback period and significant cost savings in the long-term. The Town will be seeking grant funding based on this study for solar facilities to be installed on the High School, and possibly other school buildings.

**Table 6-2
Leicester School Department Capital Improvement Projects
2009-2013**

Dept	Description of Project	Total
Sch-Caf. Comb.	Expansion of serving areas - (Primary, Middle & Memorial)	\$34,500
Sch-All	Energy management (Primary & Middle)	\$70,000
Sch-All	Roof repair/replacement (Middle)	\$214,000
Sch-All	Roof repair/replacement (Primary)*	\$340,000
Sch-All	Storage facility	\$70,000
Sch-All	Windows (Central Office)	\$12,600
Sch-All	Irrigation Expansion	\$20,000
Sch-All	Replacement tractor	\$32,000
Sch-All	Snowblower/lawn machine	\$30,000
Sch-Comb.	Classroom renovation (Middle & Memorial)	\$56,000
Sch-Comb.	School Door replacement (Memorial)	\$20,000
Sch-Admin	Roof replacement	\$10,000
Sch-Admin	New Building (Est cost 450,000- sale of current structure est 350K)	\$100,000
Sch-Admin	Generator	\$65,000
Sch-High Sch.	Bleacher system, athletic fields	\$145,000
Sch-High Sch.	Computer room air conditioning	\$75,000
Sch-High Sch.	Interior partitions	\$15,000
Sch-High Sch.	Roof study/repair/replacement	\$0
Sch-Middle	Heating convector replacement - Middle School	\$240,000
Sch-Middle	Reconstruction of cement walkways	\$10,000
Sch-Middle	Replace driveway/parking lot	\$75,000
Sch-Middle	Boiler study & asbestos abatement study	\$10,000
Sch- Memorial	Parking lot resurfacing	\$25,000
Sch-Primary	Window replacement	\$150,000
Sch-Primary	Parking lot resurfacing	\$25,000
	Total Projects and Equipment (Gross)	\$1,844,100

* Project funded in FY200; construction completed in 2008.

Source: 2009 5-year Capital Improvement Program

Library

There is one municipal library located at 1136 Main Street, built in 1895 by Architect Earle. The Leicester Library maintains a full time schedule of hours open to the public including Saturdays and evenings designed to coordinate with the Public School System schedule on a seasonal basis. In 1974-75 a children's room was added to the municipal library to provide more room upstairs for consolidated library activities. The Historical Society and the Historical Commission maintain inventories of historical artifacts and a small museum on the library's third floor.

The Library Board of Trustees for the library is working to address remodeling and rehabilitation needs in order to become fully compliant with American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The Board recently acquired a small parcel of land from an abutting property owner, which will allow for an expanded parking lot and redesigned driveway and entrance to the Library. The Board of Trustees is near the end of a grant-funded design for this project, which will also include an approximately 6,300± s.f. addition to the Library. The design work is being done by Durland Van Voorish Architects, and the conceptual design and initial construction estimates were completed in 2008. It is anticipated that the construction costs will be \$6.5 million. The Library Trustees will be seeking funding through the Town, a State Library Construction grant, fundraising efforts, and other grant sources as available.

The Copeland Library, River Street, is a Historic Building that was restored at its original location in the mid 1990's. At this time, the building remains vacant. Productive reuse is limited by the building's lack of parking and basic infrastructure (water, plumbing, electricity, and heat).

Elder Services

The Council on Aging oversees efforts to address the needs of the senior population. Most Council on Aging services in Leicester are provided in the Senior Center, which opened in 1999. The Senior Center is approximately 4,200 square feet and is located on a 5 acre parcel previously part of the Middle School property. The Senior Center hosts regular health clinics, social events, education on senior-related issues, as well as regular meals for seniors Monday through Friday. The Council on Aging also coordinates Meals on Wheels and bus transportation for seniors needing a ride to the Senior Center, shopping, or other appointments.

Recreational Facilities

The Town owns and maintains the following recreation sites: Burncoat Park, Towtaid Park, Community Field, Rochdale Park, Russell Memorial Field, Hillcrest Country Club, the Town Common and the Bandstand. Hillcrest Country Club was purchased by the Town since the 2000 Master Plan (purchased in 2003), and was partially funded by a Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. All of Leicester's recreational facilities are addressed in detail in the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Solid Waste/Recycling

Private contractors provide solid waste disposal services to residents of Leicester. The Town Landfill was closed in the 1980s and was purchased by the Town of Leicester. The site was certified for reuse as a Recycling Center. Leicester's volunteer recycling operation operates on Manville Street on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Saturdays of the month. The operation is self-supporting, staffed by volunteers and participation is voluntary.

Volunteer Services

A significant contribution to the public services available to the residents of the Town of Leicester is provided by the residents of the Town of Leicester themselves. There are volunteer committees and individuals operating continuously to provide programs at all area facilities including the Senior Center, the libraries, recreation facilities and at the Recycling Center. Volunteers also serve on many Town Boards and Committees that enable the Town to provide services with limited staffing.

Water Facilities

There are three existing water districts that service different portions of Leicester: Cherry Valley/Rochdale Water District, Hillcrest Water District, and the Leicester Water Supply District (See Map 6-1 at end of Chapter). Each of these districts is separately administered and maintains and operates their own facilities for water service. In addition, the Moose Hill Reservoir is a potential future source of water, and is overseen by the Moose Hill Water Commission.

**Table 6-3
Household Water Rates-1999 & 2006**

District	Typical Annual Cost	
	1999	2006*
Leicester Water Supply	\$360.00	\$390.00
Cherry Valley/Rochdale	\$679.00	\$679.00
Hillcrest Water	\$220.00	\$540.00
Average Cost Statewide	\$199.00	\$363.00
Town of Spencer	\$290.00	\$353.00
City of Worcester	\$227.00	\$313.00

Source: 1998 & 2006 Water Rate Surveys, Tighe & Bond

*2008 Rates remain the same as 2006

Cherry Valley & Rochdale Water District

The Cherry Valley and Rochdale Water District adopted a Master Water Plan in 1990 and a 1.5 million-dollar Capital Improvement Program. The Master Water Plan is reviewed annually and updated on a five-year cycle. The Cherry Valley and Rochdale Water District has two water sources: Henshaw Pond and a Grindstone Well. The District has the highest annual average water cost of all the districts, \$679.00 and is significantly higher than the statewide average cost of \$363.

The District had been at maximum capacity starting in the late 1980s and under a state of water emergency. Starting in 1989, the District was subject to a building moratorium starting limiting new service hookups to six per year. This moratorium was lifted in 2005 after a new grindstone well was activated. See table 6-3 for water capacity information. However, like all water suppliers in Massachusetts, future capacity is constrained by Mass DEP Water Management Act (WMA) Requirements.

Hillcrest Water District

The Hillcrest Water District supplies water service to approximately 350 homes and the Memorial School. The water source for the Hillcrest Water District is two wells (Rock Well #1 and #2). Rock Well #2 has limited pumpage available since 2004 and is temporarily out of service. Rock well #1 is a drilled well located approximately 200 feet west of the intersection of Pleasant Street and Route 56 in Leicester. The well can provide more than 60 gallons of water per minute. The active well is located in an aquifer with a high vulnerability to contamination due to the absence of hydrogeologic barriers (i.e. clay) that can prevent contaminant migration. Water is purchased from LWSD in the summer months (approximately 4 million gallons per year).

**Table 6-4
Water Capacity-2008**

District	Leicester Water Supply	Cherry Valley / Rochdale Water	Hillcrest	Moose Hill Water
Service Connections	726-most residential	1,201 (2007 DEP Water Supply Annual Statistical Report)	388	n/a
Existing Capacity	460,000gpd	375,000 gpd	170,000-gpd 370,000-gpd standpipe	n/a
Used Capacity	240,000	234,000 gpd	Over 90%	n/a
Available Capacity	120,000	140,460 gpd*	Minimal	Potential Future Capacity 1.5 million gpd
# Future Service Connections	150-200 homes	New Service Hookups are limited by the provisions of Mass DEP Water Management Act Permit or Registration	Minimal	Not determined at this time
Future Needs / Comments	Permit needed to expand existing capacity			Funding and cooperative effort with water & sewer districts needed for development as a public water supply

Source: District Interviews, 2008 (except where noted)

* Adjusted available capacity as per WMA 270,000 gallons per day minus 234,450 average galls per day equals 35,550 (270,000-234,450 = 35,550)

Leicester Water Supply District (water)

The Leicester Water Supply District (LWSD) provides water to about 3,300 residents in the central area of Leicester. The District was originally established in 1888 and, in the 1990's expanded service boundaries and added services. LWSD recently installed 15,000 feet of new water transmission main along the Route 9 corridor to attract commercial development.

Water supply comes from four wells located in the Town of Paxton and two wells in Leicester (located on Whittemore Street and Rawson Street). The Paxton wells original groundwater source is the Blackstone River and Leicester's source is the French River. The wells are located in an aquifer with a high vulnerability to contamination due to the absence of hydrogeologic barriers (i.e. clay) that can prevent contaminant migration. The Whittemore Street well was removed from service in 2002 because of issues with Arsenic and Radionuclides.

LWSD had planned to construct a water storage tank on Blueberry Lane to improve fire suppression capacity. This project has been discontinued because of significant abutter concerns. Until these issues are resolved, fire service to the west end of Route 9 is limited and will affect the Town's ability to attract commercial development.

Moose Hill Water Commission

A fourth potential water district is evidenced by the existence of the Moose Hill Water Commission. The Moose Hill Reservoir Dam is located on the border with the Town of Spencer.

The Dam impounds water along Shaw Brook and has a maximum storage capacity of approximately 2,140 acre feet or 785 million gallons. The Moose Hill Reservoir Dam is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) and was constructed in late 1960s or early 1970s to provide flood control capacity, water supply, and low flow augmentation.

The Moose Hill Water Commission has a primary objective to construct a 16-inch water transmission main line from the Moose Hill Reservoir to Route 9 (connecting to Leicester Water Supply District water lines). The Commission hired SEA Consultants to prepare a Moose Hill Reservoir Feasibility Evaluation in 2008 to determine the cost and feasibility of creating a public water supply (study completed June 2008). Creation of a public water supply would require: 1) a new water treatment plant; 2) a transmission line along Moose Hill road, Watson Street and Rte. 9; and 3) a water storage tank off Route 9. The Moose Hill Reservoir has a designated average daily yield of 1.5 million gallons per day.

The SEA study completed in June 2008 concluded that it is feasible to develop Moose Hill Reservoir as a public water supply with a collaborative effort between the Town and water and sewer districts. However, development would involve considerable expense, ranging from \$6.5± million for a .5 MGD water treatment plan to \$8.9± million for a 1.5 MGD water treatment plant. If approved as a public water supply, the Moose Hill Reservoir would have the potential to serve as a supply to the Leicester Water Supply District, Hillcrest Water District, and Cherry Valley Rochdale Water District. In addition, the reservoir could serve as a primary or secondary water source for communities bordering Leicester.

Sewer Facilities

There are four existing sewer districts within the Town boundaries of Leicester: Cherry Valley Sewer District, Hillcrest Sewer District, Leicester Water Supply District, and Oxford/Rochdale Sewer District (See Map 6-2 at end of Chapter). See Tables 6-5 and 6-6 for a summary of sewer capacity and sewer rates.

Cherry Valley Sewer District

The Cherry Valley Sewer District in late 1999 has a main sewer interceptor line in place to tie into the City of Worcester lines to the east for transmission to the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District Plant in Millbury for treatment. This District previously only served Route 9, but service to the entire District was completed in 2005. The provision of this infrastructure may trigger redevelopment and reuse of older developed properties previously constrained by Title V requirements.

Hillcrest Sewer District

The Hillcrest Sewer District (HSD) has no treatment plant and has entered into intra-municipal agreements with both Oxford Rochdale Sewer District (ORSRD) and Leicester Water Supply District (LWSD) to process the effluence from HSD users. HSD prepaid for capacity to these districts based on the number of homes and empty house lots with street frontage at the time of design. Currently, there is no additional capacity for additional connections from HSD to either ORSRD or LWSD.

Leicester Water Supply District (Sewer)

Most of the Leicester Water Supply District (LWSD) is sewerred. The District has an informal policy to serve as needed and considers all requests for annexation based on petitioners' desires,

land use and impact on available capacity. LWSD has limited single-family connections available and has a self-imposed moratorium to reserve capacity for development on Route 9. LWSD is completing a comprehensive analysis to update the treatment facility.

**Table 6-5
Future Sewer Capacity-2008**

District	Leicester Water Supply	Oxford / Rochdale Sewer	Hillcrest Sewer	Cherry Valley Sewer
Service Connections	550±	850± residential & commercial	n/a – sewer provided by Leicester Water Supply	357
Existing Capacity	270,000gpd	370,000 gpd		240,000 gpd
Used Capacity	240,000gpd permit = 270,000gpd	296,000 gpd + 37,000 gpd committed but not used		50,323 gpd
Available Capacity	0 (reserving 30,000gpd for Rte. 9 development)	27,000 gpd until updates to wastewater treatment plant are complete*	None	189,677 gpd
# of Future Connections	0	Not projected	None	139
Future Needs / Comments		10,000 gpd to Oxford		District at full build-out – No plans for expansion.

Source: District Interviews, 2008

* 157,000 gpd when updates to wastewater treatment plant are complete in 2010.

**Table 6-6
Household Sewer Rates-1999 & 2006**

District	Typical Annual Cost	
	1999	2006**
Leicester Water Supply	\$540.00	\$540.00
Oxford/Rochdale	\$400.00	\$400.00
Cherry Valley Sewer	\$1077.00*	\$820.00
Average Cost Statewide	\$317.00	\$485.00
Town of Spencer	\$252.00	\$384.00
City of Worcester	\$158.00	\$338.00

Source: 1998 & 2006 Sewer Rate Survey, Tighe & Bond

*includes annual betterment assessment: typical user cost equals \$400 according to District Survey

**Rates the same in 2008 (District interviews).

Oxford-Rochdale Sewer District

The Oxford-Rochdale Sewer District serves over 800 homes and several commercial/industrial enterprises in southern Leicester and in a small part of northern Oxford. The District, established in 1957, completed a major rehabilitation of treatment facilities in 1995, added a pump station in 1998 for the aforementioned sewer extension, and has upgraded at least 60% of its sewer lines. Upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant to increase capacity are anticipated to be completed by 2010. The District sets aside approximately \$20,000 per year for capital needs and has a policy designating revenue for new connection fees to the capital program. This district

currently has \$500,000 in a stabilization account. Since the last Master Plan, service has been extended to Millbrook Distributors and Grandview Estates (a senior housing development).

United States Post Offices

There are two post offices in Leicester, each with their own Postmaster and one postal station. The Leicester Post Office (zip code 01524) is located at 1199 Main Street and the Rochdale Post Office (zip code 01542) is at 1138 Stafford Street in Rochdale. The Cherry Valley Section of Leicester is served by the City of Worcester and has a Worcester zip code (01611).

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Community Preferences

The Master Plan Survey included several questions related to Town facilities and services. Residents were asked to rate various departments as Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor (no experience with the Department was also an option). After subtracting out respondents unfamiliar with the each Department, the percentage excellent and good provides a general sense of the Departments most highly regarded by the public.

Department	% rated Excellent or Good
Fire	96%
Library	87%
Police	87%
School Department	76%
Highway	65%
Building Inspector/Code Enforcement	64%
Board of Health	59%
Board of Selectmen	51%
Planning Department/Planning	51%
Zoning Board of Appeals	50%
Conservation Commission	49%

As might be anticipated, Departments that are responsible for issuing permits receive the lowest ratings. Detailed survey results are contained in the Appendix.

Survey results were mixed regarding consolidation of the various water and sewer districts, with 45% of respondents indicating that they supported consolidation, but 39% indicating “Not Sure.” Similarly, responses were mixed regarding reuse of vacant or obsolete Town-owned land and buildings. Similar percentages of respondents supported “Reuse/use for Town purposes” (39%) and “Sell for Private use” (35%). Regarding reuse options for Town properties, the highest rated options were: parks & recreation, open space/conservation, community center, and elderly housing. Development of low income housing, commercial development, and industrial development of vacant Town properties were not supported by survey respondents. Proposed Town projects were all supported by a majority of survey respondents, as shown below

Proposed Project	% Support
Renovation of the Town Hall upper floor for school administrative offices	70%
Conversion of a portion of Burncoat Park to athletic fields	73%
Conversion of the Town-owned Hillcrest Golf Course to athletic fields	54%
Development of Moose Hill Reservoir as a Town water supply	65%
Construction of a new Fire Station in Leicester Center (to replace the Water Street station)	60%

Water & Sewer Districts

As described earlier in this Chapter, water and sewer service in Leicester is provided by several independent water and sewer districts. This presents a challenge to the Town in its ability to effectively plan and manage long-term growth. The interests of a particular water or sewer district may or may not be consistent with Town interests and priorities. Where water and sewer is centrally managed by a community, the community can target certain areas for residential and commercial growth, and limit development in areas that are unsuitable. Fragmentation of water and sewer services makes effective long-term community wide planning for water and sewer difficult.

Capital Projects

The Town of Leicester, through the Capital Improvement Planning Committee, prepares a Five-Year Capital Improvement Program that is updated annually. This plan includes projects or assets that defined as follows: 1) the asset or project is over \$10,000, 2) the asset or project is purchased or undertaken at intervals of not less than 5 years, and 3) the asset or purchase has a useful life of at least 5 years. Each year, Departments and Committees may submit capital requests to be included in the Capital Improvement Budget. There are however, many more requests than can be accommodated in the current financial situation of the Town. For example, the Capital Improvement Program for FY2009 – FY2013 includes \$1.1 million in needed projects for FY2009, but only two projects totaling \$66,000 were funded. See table 6-7, below for a summary of the current 5 year Capital Improvement Program (See Appendix for more detail).

**Table 6-7
Summary of Leicester Capital Improvement Program, 2009 - 2013**

Department	Description	Amount
Highway	Dump Trucks, Catch basin cleaner unit, mower	\$494,000
Fire/EMS	EMS Headquarters Station & New Truck for Forestry Unit	\$4,545,000
Library	Slate roof maintenance	\$50,000
Selectmen	Town Hall Renovations (design/construction), Rawson Bridge, underground storage tank replacement, copy machine/printer	\$745,289
Town Clerk	New voting machines*	\$26,600
THBC	Town Hall boiler, window, & door replacement	\$500,000
CIPC	Expected life study (all town owned facilities)	\$15,000
EMS	Cardiac monitor replacement (\$35,500)*, and new ambulance	\$148,500
School Dept	Miscellaneous Capital Improvement Projects (see Table 6-2 for details)	\$1,844,100
Total Projects and Equipment (Gross)		\$8,368,489

* Items funded in FY2009

Source: 2009 5-year Capital Improvement Program

In recent years, the Town has relied on funds from the sale of property to fund capital projects. This has proved to be insufficient to maintain Town assets. There is concern that continued delayed maintenance will result in higher costs in the long run. The Capital Improvement Committee is currently discussing options related to revising the rating system for capital project requests.

Energy Efficiency/Conservation

With the rising cost of energy the Town of Leicester is struggling to balance budgets. Oil and energy prices affect many aspects of what local governments can do, from providing basic services such as road maintenance and emergency response to planning for long-range investments. Rising energy costs, along with growing concern about environmental consequences of greenhouse gas emissions, have led many communities to develop long-range plans to address energy use. Several Massachusetts communities, including Worcester, Northampton, Medford, and Newton have developed such plans, called “Energy Action Plans” or “Climate Action Plans.” Such plans typically address energy efficiency, cleaner energy sources, transportation, and solid waste. While many energy plans are broadly focused and include efforts to reduce private energy use, at a minimum the Town of Leicester should examine its own municipal facilities and services. Leicester has made some efforts related to energy efficiency, such as funding of an energy assessment and implementing a four-day work week to save energy. In addition, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) recently completed a study of wind and solar alternatives for the Town of Leicester as described earlier in this chapter. Continued efforts, including a comprehensive energy plan would help the Town to better plan for future energy needs and look comprehensively at methods to reduce municipal energy consumption (and cut costs).

Streetlight Policy

The Town, through the Planning Board, has traditionally required streetlights in new subdivision roadways. After road acceptance, the Town accepts responsibility for the cost of electricity for streetlights. To minimize cost, streetlights are typically only required at roadway intersections, at the end of cul-de-sacs, and at locations identified as a hazard because of a curve, etc. (rather than at fixed distances along proposed roadways). The rising cost of electricity and limited Town budgets has led to concern about streetlight requirements. The Board of Selectmen does not support additional streetlight installations that will be paid for by the Town of Leicester. To address this concern, the Planning Board has begun to work with developers on streetlight options that will not cost the Town (e.g. solar-powered streetlights, streetlights tied into abutting homes, streetlights paid for by homeowners’ associations, etc.). In the longer-term, the Planning Board should amend the Subdivision Regulations to more fully address this issue.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater runoff has been a source of great concern for many years. It can pollute lakes and streams, including drinking water supplies. As a result, the 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act required the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to address storm water runoff in two phases. Phase I of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Water Program began in 1990 and applied to large and medium municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4) and 11 industrial categories including construction sites disturbing five acres of land or more. NPDES Phase II Storm Water Program became effective March 2003. It regulates municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) located within "urbanized areas" as defined by the latest U.S. Census (including Leicester) and construction activities that disturb between 1 and 5 acres. NPDES Phase II Permits are five-year permits jointly issued by EPA and MassDEP. The initial five-year Phase II permit issued in 2003 has expired; 2008 permit requirements will be available in late 2008. Under this program,

communities are required to meet six minimum control measures (see box “Phase II NPDES Permit Requirements” below).

Phase II NPDES Permit Requirements

1. **Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations** - This measure addresses runoff from municipal operations such as DPW yards, salt storage areas, vehicle maintenance yards, road construction, and includes what practices towns should undertake to operate the stormwater system effectively. Towns must:
 - a. Develop an operations and maintenance plan for their stormwater system.
 - b. Train employees on how to incorporate pollution prevention and good housekeeping practices into their activities (e.g., vehicle and building maintenance, salt piles, and catch basin cleaning).
2. **Must have an Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) Program** - Illicit discharges are non-stormwater discharges to the storm drain system. Because illicit discharges typically contain bacteria and other pollutants, the MS4 Permit requires towns to develop and implement an IDDE program that includes these elements:
 - a. A legally enforceable mechanism prohibiting illicit discharges.
 - b. A storm sewer map identifying the location of all storm drain outfalls.
 - c. A plan to detect and eliminate illicit discharges.
3. **Construction Site Runoff Control** - The federal Construction General Permit already requires owners/operators to file a Notice Of Intent for construction activity disturbing more than one acre of land. Towns may wish to adopt stricter local rules. Minimum requirements include adoption of:
 - a. Legally enforceable mechanism to control erosion during construction
 - b. Procedures for municipal site plan review of construction projects
4. **Post Construction Runoff Control** - This measure requires ongoing stormwater management after construction is completed. Requirements include:
 - a. Adopt a legally enforceable mechanism to control stormwater after construction
 - b. Establish procedures for long-term operation and maintenance of BMPs
5. **Public Education and Outreach** - Towns are encouraged to form partnerships to distribute educational materials to diverse local audiences within the community as part of a formal public education program.
6. **Public Participation and Involvement** - EPA suggests that communities give the public the opportunity to play an active role in developing and implementing the MS4 program. Towns must comply with applicable public notice requirements and determine the program's implementation goals and strategies.

Source: www.mass.gov/dep/water/mc_stormw.htm

The Highway Department has taken a lead role in addressing compliance with NPDES Permit requirements and recently prepared an Annual Report addressing the six control measures. Also, a new Stormwater Management Committee began meeting in 2008 to assist in the effort. The Town has undertaken additional steps to address NPDES requirements. With grant funding, a stormwater bylaw was prepared and was adopted at Town Meeting in May of 2008; this Bylaw will not go into effect until related Stormwater Regulations are adopted by the Planning Board. However, subdivisions and commercial projects that trigger review by the Planning Board are reviewed for compliance with Stormwater Management requirements. The new Bylaw and planned regulations are primarily intended to clarify requirements and eliminate confusion and overlap of jurisdiction.

FACILITIES & SERVICES GOAL, OBJECTIVES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Facilities & Services Goal:

Leicester's Facilities & Services Goal is to provide a level of public safety, Town services, and infrastructure that meets the current and future needs of the community, while ensuring an efficient use of resources and enhancing the quality of life in Leicester.

Facilities & Services Objectives:

- Maintain a high level of public services for all general government services.
- Provide fire, police, and EMS services that ensure public safety
- Maintain high quality standards and positive community reputation of the Leicester Public School System.
- Plan for the best long-term use of Town land and buildings
- Support the extension, expansion and consolidation of water and sewer districts in order to improve quality and availability of these services in a cost efficient manner.
- Continue to make protection of ground and surface water quality a high priority
- Ensure capital needs of all facilities and services town-wide are assessed and prioritized for the short term and the long term on a continuing basis.
- Pursue opportunities toward energy savings/conservation in all Town facilities.
- Increase access and delivery of Town information and services through utilization of the internet

Draft Facilities & Services Recommendations:

- F1. Re-activate long-range planning committee for Hillcrest Country Club and plan for best long-term use of this facility
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (Other entities involved: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Committee)
- F2. Prepare a comprehensive Energy Action Plan for the Town which includes evaluation of energy use and costs for all Town facilities and services, as well as review of Town maintenance, construction and renovation policies and regulations.
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- F3. Seek funding, including grants and loans, to fund Town energy efficiency improvements (See Appendix - Resources).
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- F4. Hire a consultant to evaluate organization and staffing of Town Departments to plan for best meeting public needs with limited funding constraints
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen

- F5. Plan for and support the future Moose Hill Reservoir proposed by the Moose Hill Water Commission Plan support and promote the Town as a wholesale purveyor of water from the Moose Hill Reservoir once economic viability has been established
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen/Moose Hill Water Commission
- F6. Plan for eventual consolidation of existing water and sewer districts
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (Other entities involved: all water & sewer districts)
- F7. Amend Subdivision Rules & Regulations to address streetlight requirements
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board
- F8. Implement the recommendations contained in the NPDES Phase II Annual Report for Leicester, including seeking funding through grants and Town Meeting. (See Appendix - Resources).
Responsible Lead Entity: Highway Department (Other entities involved: Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, all water & sewer districts)
- F9. Adopt Stormwater Regulations to Implement the Stormwater Bylaw adopted in May, 2008.
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board (Other entities involved: Conservation Commission, Highway Department, Zoning Board of Appeals)
- F10. Implement the recommendations of the WPI Energy Study
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen
- F11. Seek a suitable productive use for the Copeland Library
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- F12. Seek funding for land purchase, design, and construction for a new Fire Station
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen/Fire Department

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NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Town of Leicester completed an Open Space and Recreation Plan in November 2007. As is noted in the Chapter 1 (Introduction), the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan serves as the state required Open Space & Recreation Chapter of this Master Plan. The recent Open Space Plan also addresses and much of the required Natural Resources Chapter. This Chapter, therefore, will identify key issues related to Natural Resource protection, and in particular will more fully address historic preservation issues not addressed in the 2007 Open Space Plan.

NATURAL RESOURCES

As noted above, natural resources are addressed in full detail in the recently completed Open Space and Recreation Plan, summarized below.

Open Space & Recreation Plan Summary

Leicester's development over time can be traced to the abundant water resources found within its borders, much of which provide drinking water for neighboring towns. Settled as a farming community, Leicester thrived during the Industrial Revolution in the manufacture of hand cards for the textile industry. Today, although Leicester is no longer an industrial center, its waterways continue to suffer the effects of industrial development.

At the headwaters of three drainage basins, Leicester affects numerous communities downstream; the Blackstone, French and Chicopee River Watershed regions collectively drain over fourteen hundred square miles. As a member of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, it shares remnants of the region's industrial past as well as the support of regional redevelopment efforts. Protecting water resources in Leicester, especially ground water resources, is a priority for the town, as is recognizing and protecting cultural and historic resources.

Water resources encouraged industrial development in Leicester; they have also limited residential development. Ranging in size from less than one acre to more than 100 acres, ponds, lakes, and reservoirs cover approximately 850 acres of Leicester. Surface waters, including thirty-seven streams and twenty-six bodies of water, seven of which are drinking water reservoirs, are evenly distributed throughout the town. Four of the seven reservoirs serve the city of Worcester and are located in the northeast quadrant of town, within the Blackstone River Watershed. Despite the numerous water resources within the town, no town beaches are open to the public for swimming, and there are few points of access for fishing. Many in town indicated in the Open Space Plan survey that existing recreational facilities are inadequate, but the town has not conducted a comprehensive analysis of its recreation and conservation needs and existing resources.

Forest and agricultural lands account for the majority of open land in Leicester. While dairy farming was once the dominant agricultural business in the town, today only one working dairy farm remains. Other agricultural business in Leicester includes nurseries, swine, horse stables, llama farms, maple sugaring, vegetables, and Christmas trees. Active agriculture contributes to Leicester's rural character and provides a continued source of fresh, locally grown produce and dairy products. Residents have identified a range of visually, culturally, and historically significant resources that contribute to Leicester's character, including the Cooper's Hilltop Farm (the town's only active dairy farm), the Town Common, reservoirs, lakes, ponds, and farmlands.

Approximately one quarter of Leicester is protected to some degree in an open space program (the second highest amount of open space among all Blackstone Valley municipalities); however, approximately 28% of these protected lands are temporarily in Chapter 61 (which provides a tax incentive to property owners managing their land for forestry, agriculture, or recreation), and risk development. According to a growth strategy prepared by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) in 2004, the west subregion of Central Massachusetts, which includes Leicester, lost roughly 3,000 acres of farmland (the most of any of the subregions) and gained roughly 3,500 acres of new residential development between 1985 and 1999. The protection of agricultural and rural land is not only regionally important, it is important to Leicester's residents.

The community of Leicester is working towards acquiring and protecting land to protect open space and support recreational needs. Since the last Open Space and Recreation Plan update in 2000, the town has adopted a stormwater bylaw, and has acquired a 310-acre mixed conservation and recreation site (Hillcrest Country Club) with assistance from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Trust for Public Land.

The 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan suggests a course of action by which the town may protect natural resources, protect native habitats and ecosystems, promote optimal land management, and take advantage of existing opportunities to preserve its scenic, rural, and historic landscape and direct growth appropriately. Recommendations are summarized by five overall goals:

- Preserve, protect, connect, and enhance Leicester's conservation and natural land resources.
- Provide, maintain, and improve diverse recreational opportunities to meet the needs of Leicester's growing population.
- Preserve and improve the quality, character, and health of Leicester's community and environmental resources by remediating degraded lands, protecting common resources, and preserving cultural heritage.
- Build a strong constituency of open space and recreation advocates through education and collaborative partnerships.
- Identify funding and other resources to support implementation of the actions identified in the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update.

The Open Space & Recreation Plan included a Five-Year Action Plan which includes specific tasks to implement each goal, identifies the responsible agency or board, and recommends a timeline (See Appendix).

Two of the recommended actions have been recently addressed, as described below:

1) Stormwater Bylaw

At the 2008 Annual Town Meeting Approved a new Stormwater Bylaw was adopted. This new bylaw is intended to consolidate and streamline the review and enforcement of stormwater management. The bylaw will apply to projects that disturb more than 10,000 square feet of land. Most of these will be subdivisions and commercial projects already requiring Site Plan Review by the Planning Board. The Planning Board will administer, implement and enforce the bylaw and will adopt Stormwater Rules and Regulations relating to the procedures and administration of the bylaw. The new Stormwater Bylaw will not go into effect until Stormwater Regulations are adopted.

2) Local Wetland Bylaw

A new Local Wetlands Bylaw was also adopted at the 2008 Annual Town Meeting. The new Bylaw provides for improved regulation and enforcement of wetlands. In addition, the Bylaw includes a new fee structure designed to help fund the operations of the Conservation Commission, as well as the ability to collect fees for outside consultant review of applications.

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Master Plan Chapter 2 (Leicester Overview) includes a detailed history of the community. One legacy of this history is a wealth of historic sites, buildings and early settlements. The following describes recent efforts related to historic and cultural resources as well as future issues and opportunities.

Washburn Square-Leicester Common National Register District

One of the success stories related to Leicester's historic preservation efforts was the 2006 designation of the Washburn Square-Leicester Common National Register District. Listing of the Washburn Square District provides recognition of Leicester's historic importance and assures protective review of Federal or State projects that might adversely affect the character of the district. However, this designation does not regulate or limit construction or remodeling within the district. A National Register District designation is primarily an honorary designation, except where Federal or State funds are used (such as with road widening). See box "There is a Difference" on the following page for details on National Register Districts versus Local Historic Districts.

Local Historic Districts

Leicester does not currently have any *Local* Historic Districts. A Local Historic District (LHD) is established and administered by a community to protect the distinctive characteristics of important areas, and to encourage new structural designs that are compatible with the area's historic setting. A District Study Committee is appointed to conduct a survey of the area and to prepare a preliminary report for local and state review. A final report is then submitted to the local governing body for approval of the local historic district ordinance or by-law. Once a LHD is established, a Local Historic District Commission (LHDC) is appointed to review all applications for exterior changes to properties within the district. This design review process assures that changes to properties will not detract from the district's historic character. Review criteria are determined by each city and town and vary for each local district.

There is a Difference...

There are substantial differences between Local Historic Districts & National Register Districts

National Register Districts

A National Register District is part of the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the list of individual buildings, sites, structures, objects and districts deemed important in American history, culture, architecture, or archaeology. It is a federal designation and is administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Massachusetts Historical Commission as the State historic Preservation Office.

Listing in the National Register:

- recognizes that the area is important to the history of the community, state, or nation.
- allows the owners of income-producing properties certain federal tax incentives for rehabilitation.
- provides limited protection from adverse effects by federal or state involved projects

If there is no state or federal involvement in a project (such as federal licenses, permits, or funding) and no pertinent local or regional regulations (such as a local historic district), then listing in the National Register of Historic Places does not in any way limit an owner's handling of the property.

Note: A National Register District cannot be listed if a majority of the property owners submit notarized objections. Every owner of record of private property has the opportunity to comment and/or object to the nomination, and has one vote regardless of whether they own a single property, multiple properties, or a portion of a property.

Source: Adapted from the Massachusetts Historical Commission Brochure "There's a Difference"

Local Historic Districts

In general, local historic districts are far more effective at preventing inappropriate changes than a National Register District. In a local historic district, a locally appointed Historic District Commission reviews proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public way. For instance, if a building addition is proposed in a local historic district, the property owner must submit an application to the Historic District Commission. The Historic District Commission holds a public hearing and makes a determination on whether the new addition is appropriate. If the addition is deemed appropriate, the Historic District Commission issues a Certificate, allowing the work to progress. Many Historic District Commissions have prepared *Historic District Design Guidelines* that clarify how proposed projects should respect the existing historic character.

Following the steps outlined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, Local Historic Districts are established by a two-thirds majority City Council or Town Meeting vote.

Many proposed changes are exempt for review. In a local historic district, there is no review of interior features. In addition, a variety of exterior features are often exempt such as air conditioning units, storm doors, storm windows, paint color, and temporary structures. The decision on which features are exempt from review depends on how the local bylaw or ordinance is written and passed by your city council or town meeting vote.

During the last update of the Master Plan completed in 2000, the Master Plan Update Committee sought the assistance of the Town's Historical Commission to identify historic resources and to put forth a program for historic district designation. The following text and Map 7-1 (at end of Chapter) suggests three districts and lists significant historic resources by district. Map 7-1 further illustrates other historic resources not proposed in a district.

Leicester Center District

The proposed boundaries of this district start north from 882 Main Street up to and including Rawson Brook Burial Ground, including the west side of Water Street, ending at Watson's Carding Factory; then south from 883 Main Street to the intersection of Pine Street including all of Washburn Square, Town buildings and Becker College buildings.

The Leicester Center District includes, Paxton Street (Route 56) north to the intersection of Harberton Drive and south to the intersection of Winslow Avenue, as well as, Route 56 south

of Pleasant Street from Main Street to 130 Pleasant Street on the west side and to 109 Pleasant Street on the east side, including all of High Street. The historic resources within this proposed district include homes prominent to people in our nation's history such as the Reverend Samuel May, John Russell and Leonard Wood. Other resources include:

- Swan Tavern
- early 18th Century Tannery on High Street
- Watson's Card Factory
- 18th & early 19th Century historic buildings
- Ben Franklin Mile Marker (included in the State Register of Historic Places and the National Register)

Greenville Village Historic District

The boundaries for this district would be from the 619 to 718 section of Pleasant Street on the east to the 660 to 794 section of the west side of Pleasant Street, including Stony Knoll Farm. Then the boundary proceeds to the first two houses on the north side of Clark Street to River Street from both sides of Pleasant Street to the intersection of Charlton Street, including the Green Tavern on the west side. Historic resources within this district include:

- Greenville Fire Station
- Copeland Library
- Samuel Green House 1724
- Thomas Green House 1717
- Greenville Baptist Church
- Greenville Cemetery
- Samuel Upham House 1720

Rochdale Village Historic District

The Rochdale Village Historic District boundaries begin on the north side of Stafford Street at Route 56 to the intersection of Sinai Road and continue on the south side of Stafford Street from the intersection of Carleton Road to the intersection of Pleasant Street; then south on the east side of Pleasant Street to the intersection of Dale Street and turning east on Dale Street to the intersection of Denny Place. The west side of Church Place south of Stafford Street is included in the district boundary. Historic resources within this district include:

- original St. Joseph's Church and Rectory
- numerous mill houses
- Carleton Mill 1856
- late 18th and early 19th Century homes and churches
- Firefighter's Memorial

Architectural Conservation Districts

Local Historic Districts, which provide the highest level of protection, can be difficult to implement in a community because of a time-consuming and somewhat cumbersome process and because of sometimes negative reputation of Local Historic Districts as being overly-restrictive. Local Historic Districts also require 2/3rd approval at Town Meeting. Another type of district that has recently been promoted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission is an Architectural Conservation District (see box "What is an Architectural Conservation District?" on following page for more detail). These Districts may be a good alternative in communities where adoption of a Local Historic District faces local opposition, and provide a "middle ground" level of protection between National Register Districts and Local Historic Districts.

What is an Architectural Conservation District?

An Architectural Conservation District (ACD) is a district in which major additions, major alterations, demolitions and new construction are reviewed and require approval before work can progress. An Architectural Conservation District bylaw protects the overall character of the neighborhood by regulating the demolition and major alteration of buildings and making sure new construction respects the scale, massing, setback and materials of the historic buildings. This type of district is recommended as an alternative to a Local Historic District for a large area where changes have occurred, but where maintenance of the overall scale and massing will preserve neighborhood character, and where local historic district requirements would be considered too restrictive.

How is it adopted?

An Architectural Conservation District Bylaw typically is a general bylaw that requires a simple majority vote of Town Meeting or City Council. At present there is no state legislation and is, therefore, adopted pursuant to Home Rule authority. It is typically initiated by the Local Historical Commission or a neighborhood group interested in preserving its neighborhood historical and architectural context. A study committee prepares an Architectural Conservation District Study Report that includes the reasons for proposing an architectural conservation district, public input, descriptions of historic resources in the area, an explanation of how the architectural conservation district would work, design guidelines, a map of the proposed district, a list of the properties included in the district and the bylaw.

How does it work?

The bylaw or ordinance establishing an architectural conservation district seeks to encourage the protection of the built environment and its setting through a combination of binding and non-binding regulatory review. The majority of proposed changes to exterior architectural features in an architectural conservation district are generally either exempt from review or subject to non-binding advisory review. Only major alterations, additions, demolitions and new construction that exceed a certain percentage and are visible from the public way receive a binding regulatory review. Architectural conservation district reviews are triggered by an application for a building (or demolition) permit. If a project does not require a building (or demolition) permit, then the project is exempt.

An Architectural Conservation District (ACD) is best administered by an Architectural Conservation District Commission. The District Commission should include architects, contractors or trained building designers genuinely interested in protecting the unique character of the district. In addition, property owners and residents of the district should be members of the District Commission. In administering an ACD, the Commission determines whether mandatory or advisory review is required, holds a public hearing that has been properly noticed, and issues a decision on the compatibility of the proposed project.

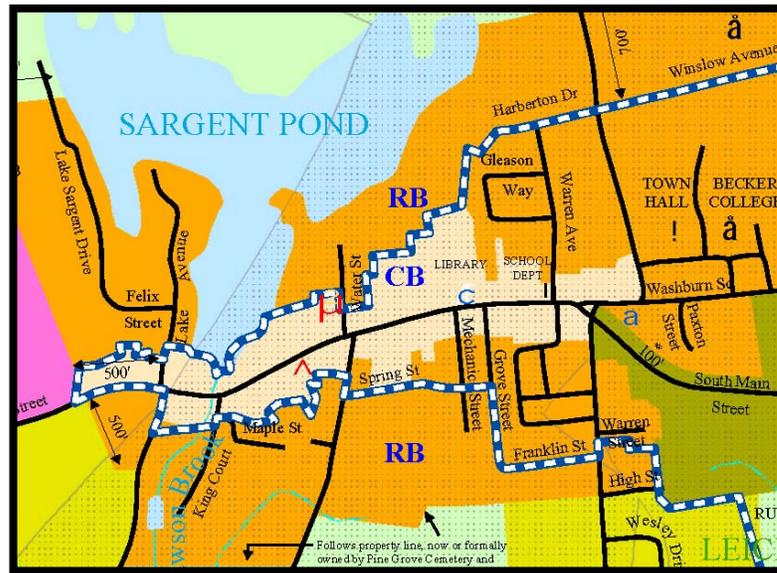
Central Business District Zoning

In May of 2006, a new Zoning District called Central Business (CB) was created. The district extends from the intersection of Rte. 56 and Route 9 (Main Street) to Rawson Street on the south side of Route 9, and to 500' west of Lake Avenue on the north side of Route 9 (see map 7-2). The purposed and intent of this district is as follows:

The purpose of the Central Business District is to encourage development and redevelopment of Leicester Center while preserving the area's pedestrian-oriented characteristics, mixed uses, and existing structures of historical significance. New construction should complement the existing historical nature of the Central Business District. Projects which interrupt the continuity of pedestrian circulation, require large expanses of land, or involve demolition of historic structures are discouraged. The requirement for a special permit for most commercial development in this district is intended to allow the Town to address the unique character of Leicester Center and is not intended to discourage commercial development in general.

This area was previously zoned Business (B) and Residential B (RB). The B district was only 200 feet wide (100 feet on either side of Route 9). The Central Business rezoning eliminated the split zoning of properties abutting Route 9. In addition, the CB district provides greater protection of historic structures through a special permit process. Most uses within the district require a special permit from the Planning Board.

Map 7-2: Central Business District and Surrounding Area



 **Central Business (CB) District**

Source: Town of Leicester Zoning Map 2006 prepared by CMRPC
(modified by Leicester Planning Office to show relevant area only)

As noted in the intent of the district, this was not intended to discourage commercial development, but to protect significant historic resources. Longer term, it may be advantageous to remove the special permit requirement if this area is designated as a Local Historic District or Architectural Conservation District. This would allow easier (and faster) reuse of structures where there is no major alteration or demolition of historic structures.

Adaptive Reuse Bylaw

In November of 2006 the Town adopted an Adaptive Reuse Bylaw that is designed to encourage the redevelopment of vacant or underused historic buildings, religious buildings, and former municipal buildings.



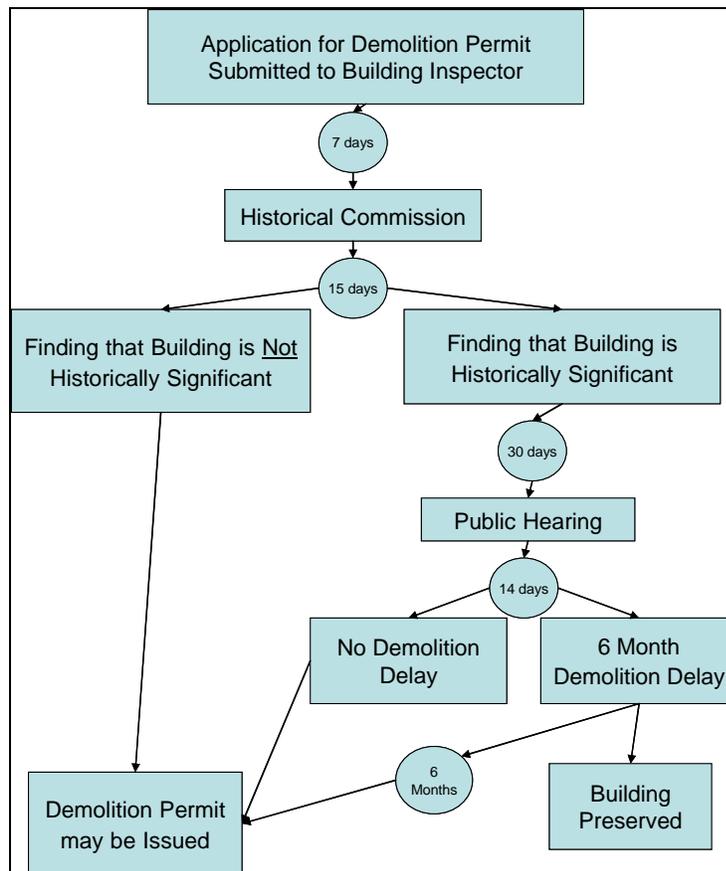
Chapel Street Mill, 2006 (Source: Leicester Planning Office)

The intent of the Adaptive Reuse Bylaw is to prevent deterioration of buildings that have become obsolete for their original purposes, increase tax base, and encourage preservation of historic structures. The Adaptive Reuse Bylaw allows the Planning Board to waive the normal dimensional and other requirements of the Zoning Bylaw, by Special Permit, for projects that use these historic structures. While the bylaw has not yet been used, it is hoped that this bylaw will allow creative use of historic buildings in Leicester.

Demolition Delay Bylaw

In September 2005, the Town of Leicester Adopted a Demolition Delay Bylaw. Figure 7-1 shows the Demolition Delay process. The bylaw applies to structures one hundred years or more old, and allows the Town to require a delay of up to six (6) months prior to demolition. While the demolition delay bylaw cannot ultimately prevent demolition, it allows the Town the opportunity to seek alternative options to demolition (such as relocation of building or alternative use that would not require demolition). At a minimum, it allows the opportunity for the Town to document and photograph significant historical structures before demolition.

**Figure 7-1
Demolition Delay Bylaw Process**



Note: All time limits are the maximum time allowed. If the Historical Commission does not act within the specified time limits, a demolition permit may be issued.

Source: Leicester Planning Office

Heritage Landscapes Inventory

In December of 2006, the Town of Leicester was awarded a technical assistance grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the John H. Chafee Blackston River Valley National Heritage Corridor to conduct a “National Heritage Corridors Reconnaissance Survey” to identify and provide protection strategies for heritage landscapes in Leicester. Heritage landscapes are special places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past. Examples include local farms, mill villages, and unique natural features. A consultant team, through a public process, identified and prioritized the landscapes that embody Leicester’s character and history. This was followed by fieldwork to document each landscape selected, and a final report with recommendations (Leicester Reconnaissance Report, June 2007).

The priority heritage landscapes were the following (and are shown on Map 7-3 at the end of this Chapter):

1. Manville
2. Johnson Farms
3. May House & Grounds
4. Swan Tavern
5. Ballard Hill
6. Southgate Pasture Cemetery
7. Coopers Hilltop Farm

This report provided specific recommendations to protect and enhance these priority landscapes, as well as a general “Guide to Preservation and Planning Tools for Heritage Landscapes” that contains useful information for Town-wide historic preservation efforts. The three priority recommendations of this report were as follows:

1. Adopt the Community Preservation Act
2. Work for Passage of Open Space Residential zoning and Adaptive Reuse Overlay
3. Establish Washburn Square-Leicester Center as a Local Historic District

As noted earlier in this Chapter, the Town adopted an Adaptive Reuse Bylaw in 2006.

Scenic Roads

The issue of scenic roads was not addressed in the Open Space & Recreation Plan, but is an important issue related to natural and historic resources in Leicester. Leicester has a number of rural roads of scenic character. Massachusetts General Law (Ch. 40, Section 15, “The Scenic Roads Act”), allows communities to designate roads as scenic roads. This may be done upon recommendation or request of the Planning Board, Conservation Commission or Historical Commission. After a road has been designated as a scenic road any repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work done with respect thereto cannot involve or include the cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, except with the prior written consent of the Planning Board, after a public hearing. A scenic roads bylaw proves no review authority for work not directly impacting the road or on private property. A scenic roads bylaw only applies to trees and stonewalls within the public right-of-way.

Cultural Resources

Leicester has a variety of community and cultural facilities and organizations that operate throughout the Town. The following is a partial listing:

Clubs and Organizations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends of the Copeland Library • Leicester Friends of the Elders • Knights of Columbus • Leicester Business Association • Leicester Lions Club • Leicester Mother’s Club • Leicester Women’s Club • Leicester Historical Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leicester Rod and Gun Club • Soccer Club • Senior Citizen’s Club • LHS Booster Club • Cherry Valley Legion • Rochdale Legion • Leicester Garden Club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends of the Leicester Library • Leicester Snowmobile Club • Boy Scouts • Girl Scouts • Campfire • Little League • Girls Softball Association
Town Committees, Commissions and Buildings		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks & Recreation Committee • Leicester Arts Council • Leicester Historical Commission • Memorial Day Parade Committee • Harvest Fair Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling Committee • Copeland Library Town Museum • Leicester Tenants Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leicester Council on Aging • Leicester Housing Authority • Leicester FISH Program • Bandstand Committee
Religious Organizations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenville Baptist • Temple Baptist • St. Aloysius-St. Jude Catholic • Christ Episcopal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church of Christ • St. Joseph’s Catholic • St. Pius the X Catholic • Jehovah’s Witness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leicester Federated • First Congregation • Morning Star

NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMUNITY PREFERENCES

Master Plan Survey

The results of the Master Plan survey indicate strong support for protection of natural and historic resources. When asked about how the Town should prioritize planning efforts over the next 5-10 years, protection of natural resources was ranked the highest priority out of five options (protect historical and cultural resources ranked 4th, although 46% ranked this “moderate priority”). Seventy-eight percent (78%) of respondents supported use of vacant Town-owned land as Open Space/Conservation. Nearly 58% of respondents supported the creation of Local Historic Districts to regulate changes to historically-significant buildings.

Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey

The Open Space Plan Survey Results indicated interest in development of new trails, swimming areas (pool/swim team), ice skating/ice hockey rink, and an indoor sport facility. Respondents also indicated a desire to see improvements at existing Town parks and fields, particularly Burncoat Park. Survey respondents identified “Water Quality” and “Open space for recreation use” as the most important conservation issues. The highest ranked reasons for protecting open spaces and natural areas were “to protect wildlife habitat” and “To potentially raise property values”. See the Open Space and Recreation Plan for detailed survey results.

NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES GOAL, OBJECTIVES, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Natural & Historic Resources Goal:

Leicester's natural resources goal is to preserve, protect, connect, and enhance Leicester's environmental, cultural and historic resources and to support the goals identified in the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Natural & Historic Resources Objectives:

- Actively work to prioritize and implement the Five-Year Action Plan contained in the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan.
- Support and enhance the efforts of the Historical Commission to protect and maintain Leicester's unique cultural and historical resources
- Promote the rehabilitation, preservation and where feasible, the adaptive reuse of historically and architecturally significant buildings, landscapes and neighborhoods.
- Support all groups and organizations providing cultural venues and activities for all age groups of the community

Recommendations:

- N1. Re-activate the Open Space & Recreation Committee or establish another mechanism to implement the goals and objectives of the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board (Other entities involved: Conservation Commission and Parks & Recreation Commission)
- N2. Prioritize the tasks identified Five-Year Action Plan contained in the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan
Responsible Lead Entity: Open Space & Recreation Committee or Master Plan Implementation Committee (Other entities involved: Conservation Commission and Parks & Recreation Commission)
- N3. Create a "top ten" list of threatened open space or conservation parcels that the Town should work to protect
Responsible Lead Entity: Conservation Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board and Parks & Recreation Commission)
- N4. Adopt Stormwater Regulations and related amendments to the Zoning Bylaw to administer the Stormwater Bylaw adopted at the 2008 Annual Town Meeting
Responsible Lead Entity: Planning Board (Other entities involved: Conservation Commission, Highway Department, and Zoning Board of Appeals)
- N5. Identify priority scenic roads and develop a Scenic Roads zoning bylaw that incorporates the preservation of existing stone walls and trees in the public right-of-way.
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board, Tree Warden, and Highway Department)

- N6. Develop a “top ten” list of threatened historic resources in Town and search for adoptive individuals, organizations and companies to assist in their preservation. Consider seeking the assistance of a college intern to assist with this effort.
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Historical Society)
- N7. Publish a booklet, in cooperation with the Historic Commission, to assist property owners on alterations and construction additions to identified historic structures. Grant funding may be available for this type of project (See Appendix - Resources)
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission
- N8. Continue to support and provide recognition for Becker College’s contribution towards historic preservation through efforts such as assistance with grant applications, public recognition of historically-appropriate new construction, etc.
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- N9. Actively seek National Register District, Local Historic District or Architectural Conservation District designation as appropriate for areas with clusters of significant well preserved buildings and landscapes, as recommended by the Historical Commission.
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- N10. Update and computerize the list of historic resources; achieve consensus in the community as to the properties listed; distribute the list to all interested parties and to property owners. Consider having this done as an Eagle Scout Project.
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- N11. Establish protection guidelines for historic sites, buildings and possible archeological sites in conjunction with the Worcester Regional Airport Commission, the Worcester Water Department and private property owners for resources located on their land in Leicester
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- N12. Integrate historic sites with recreational and open space areas whenever possible
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- N13. Prioritize and implement the recommendations contained in the Leicester Reconnaissance Report (Heritage Landscapes Inventory)
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)
- N14. Institute an annual Leicester Preservation Award program and/or other methods to recognize local property owners that have made significant preservation efforts through press releases and other methods
Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)

N15. Seek matching funds and pursue grant funding for historic preservation projects in Leicester (See Appendix - Resources)

Responsible Lead Entity: Historical Commission (Other entities involved: Planning Board/Town Planner)

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LAND USE

Land use in a community may consist of a variety of uses including residential, commercial, industrial, public, and institutional areas, as well as open space, forests, parks, and recreational areas. Changes in land use patterns over time are the result of factors such as economic conditions, access to transportation networks and employment, and availability of land. As communities plan for their future, determining how and where growth should occur will provide the basis for planning where investments for municipal services will be needed, as well as to determine what tools will be needed to protect valuable resources while promoting economic development. Land use, therefore, is the primary focus of any Master Plan.

Communities have the ability to control land use and development patterns through a variety of mechanisms, including zoning and subdivision regulations, provision of public utilities and infrastructure, and protection of open space lands through acquisitions and conservation restrictions. Some of these methods have been addressed in earlier Chapters. The following sections provide an overview of land use patterns in Leicester over time, zoning and land use regulation, and issues and opportunities for future land use.

LAND USE TRENDS

Changes in Land Use, 1971-1999

A review of the existing land uses in Town and identification of land use trends assists in developing a future land use plan. Table 8-1 on the following page provides a breakdown by land use category and changes over time between 1971 and 1999 (most current available). The greatest increase between 1971 and 1999 was in the category of low-density residential development. Agriculture and urban open land saw the greatest declines in this time period. This is consistent with regional trends. According to the 2020 Growth Strategy for Central Massachusetts – An Update (CMRPC, 2004), the west subregion of Central Massachusetts, which includes Leicester, lost roughly 3,000 acres of farmland (the most of any of the subregions) and gained roughly 3,500 acres of new residential development between 1985 and 1999.

Commercial and industrial land use has seen modest increases. Although the percent increases between 1971 and 1999 are 20% and 24% respectively, commercial and industrial land still made up a less than 2% of the total land area in Leicester in 1999.

The categories of open undeveloped, forest, and urban open land made up 74% of the total land area in Leicester in 1999. However, what is important for the future is the amount of protected open land. Protected lands include parcels permanently committed for conservation, park, or recreational use. Unprotected lands include Town-owned and private land that is not permanently committed for conservation, recreation, park, or other open space purposes (including some Town-owned parks and recreational land). Chapter 61 properties have temporary protection as agricultural, forest, or recreational land. In 2008, only 2,151 acres (13.6%) of Leicester's total land area were permanently protected (Source: MassGIS, June

2008). As discussed in the Open Space and Recreation Plan, public action is needed to protect the open space in Town and create new ways to increase the inventory of open space; particularly in light of development trends and projections.

See 1999 Land Use Map at end of this Chapter (Map 8-1).

**Table 8-1
Change in Leicester Land Use, 1971-1999**

	Area in Acres			% Change 1971-1999
	1971	1985	1999	
Agriculture	1,300	1,276	1,059	-19%
Forest	10,764	10,499	9,946	-8%
Non-Forested Wetlands	109	116	128	17%
Open Undeveloped Land ¹	402	410	555	38%
Recreation	181	201	194	7%
Higher Density Residential (Multi-family & smaller than 1/4 acre lots)	129	139	148	15%
Medium Density Residential (1/4 - 1/2 acre lots)	843	903	977	16%
Low Density Residential (Larger than 1/2 acre lots)	687	883	1,373	100%
Commercial	91	104	109	20%
Industrial & Transportation	150	183	186	24%
Urban Open ²	242	138	178	-27%
Water	870	916	916	5%
TOTAL LAND AREA	15,769	15,769	15,769	

¹ Abandoned agriculture; power lines; areas of no vegetation

² Parks; cemeteries; public & institutional greenspace; also vacant undeveloped land

Source: *MassGIS*

Development & Land Use 1999-2008

Since the last Master Plan was completed in 2000, the rate of both residential and commercial development has slowed. Most commercial development in Leicester over the last several years has been expansion or renovation of existing businesses. There have been, however, several new commercial projects that involved new construction, including national chains (most notably the new Wal-Mart Supercenter on Route 9). New construction has primarily been concentrated on Route 9 and Route 56. Recent commercial projects that involved new construction on previously open land or land used for non-commercial purposes are shown Table 8-2.

Table 8-2
New Commercial Development, Leicester¹
2000-2008

Year Completed²	Project Name	Location	Description of Use	Land Area (acres)
2002	Discovery School House	148 Main Street	Daycare Center/Nursery School	.56 ³
2003	Millette Dentistry	119 South Main Street	Dental Office	2.32
2003	Renaissance	335 Main Street	Salon & Day Spa	.38
2004	CT Enterprises	145 Clark Street	Self-Storage Facility	1.50
2006	Dunkin' Donuts	1081 Main Street	Fast Food	0.62
2006	Fort Knox	14 Huntoon Mem. Hwy.	Self-Storage Facility	3.99
2006	Benoit Lighting	16 Pleasant Street	Retail (lighting)	.13
2007	Wal-mart	20 Soojian Drive	Department Store	56.52
2007	Cumberland Farms	1530 Main Street	Convenience Store	2.04
2008	Stafford Street (1141)	1141 Stafford Street	Retail	0.64
2008	Breezy Gardens	6 McNeil Hwy. (Rt.e 9)	Retail (agricultural products)	4.12
TOTAL ACRES				72.82

¹ Includes only commercial projects that involved new use of land for commercial use, not renovations or expansions on existing commercial parcels of land.

² Date of occupancy permit or date of business opening

³ Area estimated (daycare is located on larger parcel that also contains a gymnastics center)

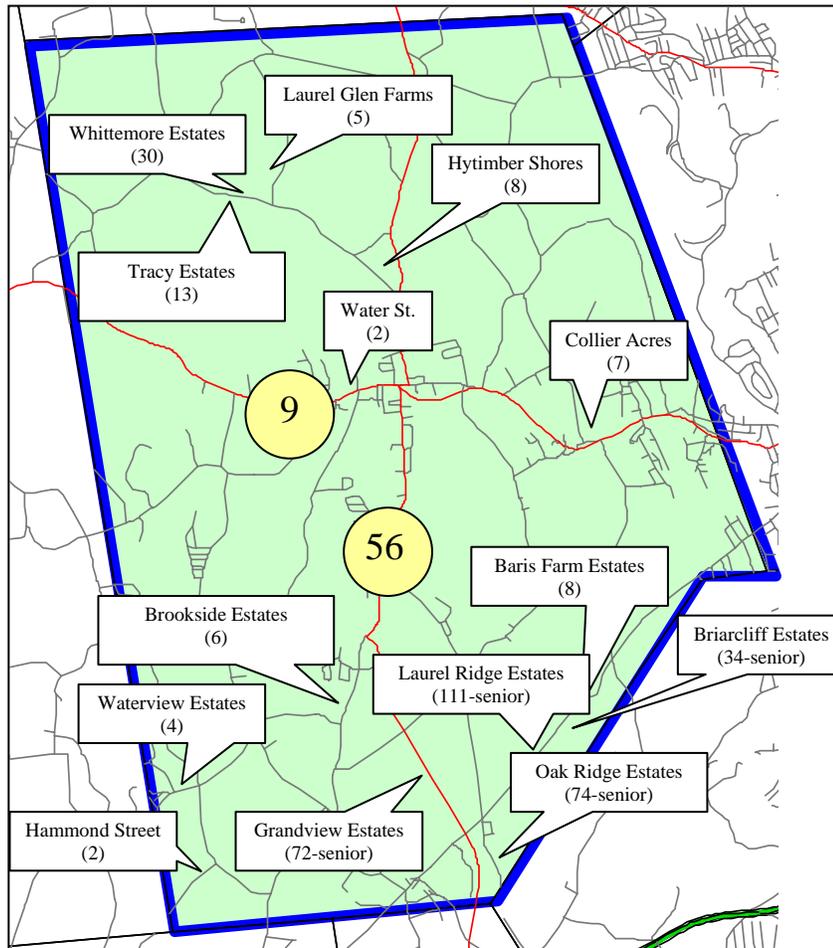
Source: Leicester Town Hall Records (occupancy permits & Planning Board Site Plan Review information)

Although several residential projects have been approved by the Planning Board since 2000, development of many has stalled due to the problems in the housing market. Building permits for 383 housing units have been issued between 2000 and 2007, with permit activity slowing dramatically after 2005. Fourteen percent (14%) of these permits were for senior housing.

Residential projects have been approved in all areas of Leicester, with senior housing more prominent in the Stafford Street area (See Figure 8-1 on following page). All recent standard subdivisions (non-senior) have been in the Suburban Agriculture District, which requires 80,000 square foot minimum lots, and have been served by private wells and septic systems. The larger senior housing projects are primarily served by “public” water and sewer from the applicable water and/or sewer districts. More detailed information about residential construction trends is included in Chapter 3, Housing.

Data from Leicester’s Assessors’ Office provides updated information related to land use categories, as shown in Table 8-3. This data is not directly comparable to the MassGIS data described earlier in this chapter since Assessors use different land use classifications. For example, a lot designated single-family residential could in fact be a very large lot containing significant open space or forested land. After Residential, Open Land comprises the largest percentage (at 31%). Agriculture remains at roughly 6% of total land area. Commercial and Industrial combined are only 3% of total land area.

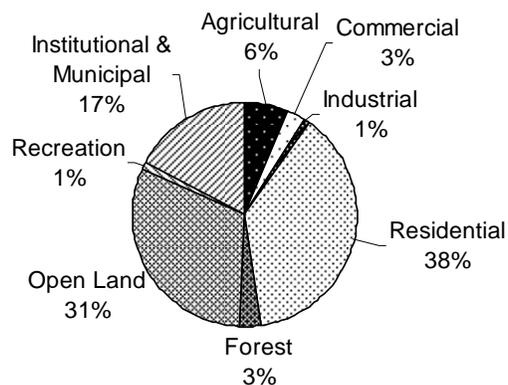
**Figure 8-1
Residential Projects Approved 2000-2008***



* Number in parenthesis indicates number of units. Does not include abandoned projects or expired approvals.
Source: Leicester Planning Office

**Table 8-3
Leicester Land Use by Assessors Classification, 2008**

Land Use Category	Area (acres)
Agricultural	910.04
Commercial	415.42
Industrial	142.57
Residential	5,639.08
Forest	477.01
Open Land	4,592.22
Recreation	152.31
Institutional & Municipal	2,574.16
Total	14,902.81



Source: Leicester Assessors Office (9/2008)

Although Leicester has a large amount of land dedicated for municipal and institutional uses (including the Worcester Airport and protected water supply land), as well as other tax-exempt properties (churches and education uses), Leicester does not have an unusual amount of tax exempt properties when compared to other communities, and is less than the statewide average (see Table 8-4).

Table 8-4
FY2008 Value of Tax Exempt Property as Percentage of Total Taxable Property Values
Leicester & Comparable Communities

	Charlton	Dudley	Leicester	Oxford	Spencer	Uxbridge	Webster
Tax Exempt as a % of Total	14.4%	6.9%	9.4%	6.2%	7.9%	5.4%	7.0%
Average of Comparable Communities: 8.2%							
Statewide Total: 11.4%							

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Despite the reduction in available tax revenues, tax exempt properties can be beneficial to communities. For example, land owned by water districts in Leicester (both Leicester & Worcester water districts) protects a significant amount of land from residential or other development.

ZONING & PLANNING LAWS & REGULATIONS

Leicester Zoning Bylaws & Subdivision Regulations

The Zoning Bylaws regulate the type of land uses and population density permitted in Leicester; most of the land area of the town is zoned for residential use. Leicester first adopted Zoning Bylaws in 1946 and has continuously amended these bylaws. Currently, Leicester's Zoning has twelve regular zoning districts (described in Table 8-5 on the following page), plus two overlay districts. See also Map 8-2, Zoning, at end of this Chapter. .

In addition to the twelve districts described in Table 8-5, Leicester has four zoning overlay districts: the Water Resource Protection District, the Flood Plain District, the Recreational Development District, and the Adaptive Reuse Overlay District.

The Water Resource Protection District was adopted after the Lycott Engineering study in 1987. The purpose of this district is to “prevent the contamination of those areas within Leicester that contribute ground or surface water to existing or planned public water supplies.” (Leicester Zoning Bylaw) This district encompasses much of the important water resource areas in Leicester: the zone of contribution for a drinking water well in Leicester Center, Henshaw Pond, a drinking water well near the Memorial School, the Kettle Brook Reservoirs, and the Moose Hill Reservoir. The boundaries of this district were expanded in 2002 to include the Conceptual Zone II of the Grindstone Well, a new drinking water source for the Cherry Valley and Rochdale Water District.

**Table 8-5
Leicester Zoning Districts**

Zoning District	Description
Suburban Agriculture (SA)	Low Density Residential & Agricultural District (80,000 s.f. minimum lot size)
Residential A (RA)	Medium Density Residential District (50,000 s.f minimum lot size)
Residential B (RB)	Higher Density Residential District (20,000 s.f minimum lot size)
Business (B)	Small lots (15,000 s.f. minimum), mixed use, allows range of retail & service businesses by-right. Single-family prohibited; two-family & multi-family allowed by Special Permit.
Central Business (CB)	Same as B, except discourages demolition of historic structures through Special Permit process. Also, pedestrian-accessible neighborhood businesses are encouraged.
Highway Business Industrial-1 (HB-1)	Large lots (60,000) – allows widest range of commercial & light industrial uses by-right. No residential uses allowed. Intended to encourage larger-scale retail, office parks, and light industrial.
Highway Business Industrial-2 (HB-2)	Same as HB-1 except smaller minimum lot size (45,000) requirement & reduced width of required landscaped buffers.
Residential Industrial Business (RIB)	Mixed use district that allows housing & commercial uses. Limited uses allowed by-right; many commercial uses require a Special Permit.
Greenville Village Neighborhood Business (NB)	Allows residential and a limited range of small retail and service uses up to 3,000 square feet; 6,000 s.f. with a Special Permit. (20,000 s.f. minimum lot size).
Business-Residential-1 (BR-1)	Allows single-family homes, a limited range of retail and service uses, and light industrial (20,000s.f. minimum lot size for commercial uses/50,000 for residential)
Business Industrial –A (BI-A)	Allows a wide range of commercial & light industrial uses. Single-family residential allowed. (20,000s.f. minimum lot size for commercial uses/30,000 for residential)
Industrial (I)	Allows light industrial a range of commercial uses on small lots. Single-family housing allowed. (15,000 s.f. minimum lot size for commercial/40,000 s.f. for residential).

Note: full description and listing of allowed uses is contained in the Leicester Zoning Bylaw

Unique to Leicester is the Recreational Development District. This district only encompasses land now maintained as the Hillcrest Country Club, along Route 56 south of Leicester Center. The intent of this district is “to provide recreational opportunities for the residents of Leicester,

to allow more effective and efficient use of large tracts of land in the rural areas of Leicester, and to minimize town service responsibilities” (Leicester Zoning bylaws). Although this District was intended to protect the Hillcrest Country Club, this zoning designation ultimately did not provide sufficient protection. After a large subdivision was proposed on the site of the Hillcrest Country Club, the Town purchased the property so that it could be permanently protected as recreational and water supply protection land.

The Town adopted a new overlay District, the Adaptive Reuse Overlay, in 2006. This district encompasses the entire Town of Leicester, and allows flexible dimensional and parking requirements by special permit for former municipal buildings, religious structures, and mills.

In addition to the town’s zoning bylaws, Leicester has Subdivision Rules & Regulations a (Subdivision Regulations) that affect residential development. These regulations specify construction standards for new subdivisions. Currently, the Subdivision Regulations require the following basic requirements for new roadway construction:

- 40 foot minimum right-of-way
- 28 foot minimum paved surface
- 5 foot sidewalk on both sides of proposed roadways
- 500 foot dead-end limit
- Underground utilities
- Streetlights at the end of cul-de-sacs and at intersections

Changes to the Subdivision Regulations, such as narrower roadway pavement requirements and updated stormwater management requirements could reduce the environmental impacts of new subdivisions.

Recent Zoning & Regulatory Amendments

Since the last Master Plan update in 2000, the Town has been very actively amending the Zoning Bylaw & Map, Planning Board Regulations, and Subdivision Regulations. There have been several dozen amendments, with the major focus on implementing the goals and objectives of the 2000 Leicester Master Plan. Notable changes include the following:

- Within the Suburban Agriculture (SA) district, the minimum lot size was increased to 80,000 (from 50,000) in 2002.
- The minimum lot size in RA was increased from 20,000 to 50,000 in 2002 (40,000-square-foot lots are allowed where both public water and sewer are available).
- A Senior Village Development bylaw allows higher density residential construction for housing for residents age fifty-five or older, in exchange for the permanent protection of 25% of the site as open space (5/2002)
- Accessory Apartment Bylaw (5/2003) allows small “in-law” apartments in existing homes by-right
- Compliance with Massachusetts Stormwater Policy is required in all zoning districts (5/2006)
- An Adaptive Reuse Bylaw allows easier reuse of former mills, religious buildings, and former municipal buildings (11/2006)
- Site development standards that regulate parking, landscaping, etc. were added to several commercial zoning districts

- The Special Permit-Granting Authority was changed from the Zoning Board of Appeals to the Planning Board for all *new* commercial districts to streamline permitting.
- Substantial increases in the amount of land zoned for commercial and industrial use, especially on Route 9 and Route 56. Much of the commercial re-zoning was done through creation of new zoning districts customized to the particular neighborhood area. New commercial districts include the Central Business District, Highway Business-Industrial 1 & 2 Districts, and the Greenville Village Neighborhood Business District. Commercial districts have also been amended to restrict residential construction.
- Submittal requirements for Site Plan Applications were removed from that Bylaw and adopted as Planning Board Regulations to allow greater flexibility (5/2007)
- Several Subdivision Regulation Amendments, including amendments to clarify permitting requirements, improve performance guarantee and road acceptance procedures and requirements, and require additional information regarding water and sewer (2003 & 2006)
- Landscaping Regulations were adopted. These regulations provide guidance on landscaping in parking areas and buffers, including recommended plantings and standards for plantings (2004)

These changes illustrate Leicester's attempt to direct growth in a way that provides appropriately for a growing population and commercial development while preserving the open space and recreational opportunities that make the town appealing. The residential lot size changes described above were based on recommendations from the 2000 Master Plan, as well as a buildout analysis prepared by CMRPC that showed a substantial reduction in future new lots and total population with larger lot sizes (See Table 8-6).

**Table 8-6
Residential Buildout Comparison of Minimum Lot Size Requirements*
Suburban Agriculture (SA) & Residential A (RA) Districts**

	SA	RA	Combined
Acres Available**	6,232	933	7,165
New Lots at Buildout			
Previous Lot Size	3,313	1,047	4,360
Current Lot Size (as of 11/2002)	2,069	432	2,501
Change	-1,244	-615	-1,859
New Population at Buildout			
Previous Lot Size	9,342	2,951	12,293
Current Lot Size (as of 11/2002)	5,835	1,218	7,053
Change	-3,507	-1,733	-5,240
* Minimum Lot Size Changes: SA changed from 50,000 square feet to 80,000 square feet RA changed from 20,000 square feet to 50,000 square feet **Acres available is based on the Zoning District boundaries in effect in 2000			

Source: Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (based on Leicester Buildout Analysis, June 2000)

Evaluation of Zoning Bylaws

Site Development Standards

Several Zoning districts (HB-1, HB-2, B, CB, RIB, and NB) contain “Site Development Standards” that regulate parking & loading requirements, landscaping, lighting, etc. However, other commercial zoning districts (BR-1, I, BI-A) do not contain these requirements. Consolidated, consistent Site Development Standards for all commercial & industrial zoning districts should be considered.

Special Permit Granting Authority

Currently, the Special Permit Granting Authority for the same use can be either the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Appeals, depending on the zoning district. A more consistent approach should be considered.

Large number of commercial districts

One of the goals of the 2000 Master Plan was to reduce the number of zoning districts. While one district (BI-A) was eliminated, 3 new commercial districts were created (HB-1, HB-2, and CB). Re-zoning of land zoned BR-1 and BI-A to one of the other zoning districts should be considered. In the alternative, more consistent site development standard and special permit granting authority (as describe above) would create more consistency in the development review process.

Definitions (Section 1.3) & Use Regulations (Section 3)

Definitions and use regulations have not had a comprehensive overhaul since the first adoption of Zoning in Leicester in 1946. Also, there are several zoning districts that are not in the Schedule of Use Table; they are included in lists following the table. All zoning districts should be included in the Schedule of Use Table to eliminate confusion.

Recreational Development District (Section 2.3.05)

Currently, this district only includes the Hillcrest Country Club property. This zoning district should be evaluated to see if it is appropriate for other areas of Leicester, and if not, should be eliminated.

Water Resources Protection Overlay District (Section 7)

This district will likely need modification to be consistent with the recently adopted Stormwater Bylaw. For example, it may be more appropriate to have the Planning Board be the Special Permit Granting Authority, rather than the Zoning Board of Appeals) since the Planning Board routinely reviews stormwater issues. Also, some of the language in this bylaw is contradictory or confusing.

Sign Bylaw (Section 3.2.07)

The sign bylaw is generally difficult to interpret and enforce, and results in many applications for Special Permits or Variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Two attempts at comprehensive revision were defeated since 2000, although modest amendments related to neon signs and awning signs were approved in 2008. Further improvements should be considered.

Outdoor Storage

The Bylaw is not sufficiently clear on outdoor storage of merchandise or equipment. While the

Planning Board often considers this issue during the Site Plan Review process, and includes restrictions in its approvals, there is no clear language in the bylaw on this issue in most zoning districts. Regulation of outdoor storage should be customized based on the applicable zoning district, and should address aesthetic and safety issues.

Parking of Commercial Vehicles (Section 3.2.01.9 & 10.)

Currently, the Zoning Bylaw requires a special permit for the “regular parking of vehicles over one ton” in most zoning districts. Parking of construction vehicles, such as tractors, backhoes, etc. is prohibited in all districts. This should be changed to allow more flexibility, particularly in commercial districts, while protecting residential districts and neighborhoods.

Driveway Bylaw (Section 6.2A)

This bylaw requires a driveway permit issued by the Highway Superintendent, and sets certain minimum standards. However, the bylaw does not limit the length or slope of driveways which has led to very steep and long driveways that are inaccessible to emergency vehicles. It also may be appropriate to address driveways through Driveway Regulations, rather than through Zoning Bylaws.

Subdivision Regulations

Recent amendments to Leicester’s Subdivision Regulations have been focused on procedural requirements, rather than road construction methods. There has not been a general re-evaluation of construction methods and requirements (e.g. road base depth, type of drainage pipe, type of streetlights, etc.) in several years. Changes to strengthen the ability to require better access to proposed roadways would also be helpful. In addition, as mentioned earlier in this Chapter, changes such as narrower roadway pavement requirements and updated stormwater management requirements could reduce the environmental impacts (and maintenance costs) of new subdivisions.

Massachusetts Zoning & Planning Law

Massachusetts Planning and Zoning Laws are comprised of three main components: “The Zoning Act” (MGL 40A), “Improved Methods of Municipal Planning (MGL 41 Ch. 81A-J) and the “Subdivision Control Law” (MGL 41 Ch. 81L – 81GG). The Zoning Act addresses the following: adoption, amendment, and enforcement of Zoning Bylaws; guidelines and procedural requirements for special permits, variances and other zoning actions, and powers and duties of Zoning Boards of Appeals and Zoning Administrators. “Improved Methods of Municipal Planning” primarily addresses the powers and duties of Planning Boards, including the preparation of Master Plans. The “Subdivision Control Law” regulates subdivision of land and construction of new roadways.

Certain aspects of Massachusetts zoning and planning legislation are relatively unique when compared to other states and are under consideration for revision. This includes generous “grandfathering” requirements, no mandatory requirement for consistency between Master Plans and zoning, and “approval not required” plans that allow new lots on existing roads with very limited review.

There are currently two separate efforts underway to reform Massachusetts zoning and planning law. The Patrick Administration has commissioned a Zoning Reform Task Force to examine the current zoning and planning system. The objective of the Task Force is to file zoning reform

legislation in 2009, called the Land Use Partnership Act (LUPA). The current framework for this legislation provides incentives for communities that adopt a Comprehensive Land Use Plan (a Master Plan) that complies with detailed state guidelines and adopts zoning amendments consistent with the plan. The guidelines include requirements for relatively high-density residential housing (4 units/acre) and minimum housing construction goals. In addition, the Zoning Reform Working Group, an advisory group to the legislature, has been working on zoning issues for several years and filed the Community Planning Act 2 (CPA2) in January 2009. The Community Planning Act encourages communities to make zoning consistent with their master plans, changes grandfathering and approval not required plan requirements, and allows communities to require development impact fees. Further information regarding these proposals is contained in the Appendix (see Resources).

LAND USE ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Smart Growth/Smart Energy Opportunities

Massachusetts is actively promoting sustainable development, energy efficiency, growing the clean energy sector, and reducing environmental impacts. This effort includes ten Sustainable Development Principles to guide land use policies throughout the state (see box on next page, “Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles”) In addition, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) has issued a Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit. This Toolkit provides easy access to information on planning, zoning, subdivision, site design, and building construction techniques that can help make smart growth and smart energy a reality.

On July 2, 2008, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick signed into law the Green Communities Act. The Green Communities Act creates three new divisions within the Department of Energy Resources (DOER): Division of Energy Efficiency, Division of Renewable and Alternative Energy Development and the Division of Green Communities. The Green Communities Division will, among other things, disperse grants and loans and provide technical assistance to municipalities. (See Appendix – Resources, for more information.)

Commonwealth Capital

The Commonwealth Capital Policy coordinates state capital spending programs in order to invest in projects that are consistent with the Commonwealth’s Sustainable Development Principles and to partner with municipalities seeking to advance the Commonwealth’s shared conservation and development interests. Commonwealth Capital explicitly endorses planning and zoning measures that are consistent with Administration policy and encourages local implementation by linking state spending programs to municipal land use practices. Municipal smart growth/smart energy consistency is assessed through a Commonwealth Capital application that examines municipal implementation of 33 land use planning and regulatory practices. Resulting scores are part of the proposal evaluation process for each grant or loan program.

Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund to raise money through a surcharge of up to 3% of the real estate tax levy on real property for open space protection, historic preservation and the provision of affordable housing.

Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall care for the built and natural environment by promoting sustainable development through integrated energy and environment, housing and economic development, transportation and other policies, programs, investments, and regulations. The Commonwealth will encourage the coordination and cooperation of all agencies, invest public funds wisely in smart growth and equitable development, give priority to investments that will deliver good jobs and good wages, transit access, housing, and open space, in accordance with the following sustainable development principles. Furthermore, the Commonwealth shall seek to advance these principles in partnership with regional and municipal governments, non-profit organizations, business, and other stakeholders.

1. Concentrate Development and Mix Uses

Support the revitalization of city and town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that is compact, conserves land, protects historic resources, and integrates uses. Encourage remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures, and infrastructure rather than new construction in undeveloped areas. Create pedestrian friendly districts and neighborhoods that mix commercial, civic, cultural, educational, and recreational activities with open spaces and homes.

2. Advance Equity

Promote equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning and decision making to ensure social, economic, and environmental justice. Ensure that the interests of future generations are not compromised by today's decisions.

3. Make Efficient Decisions

Make regulatory and permitting processes for development clear, predictable, coordinated, and timely in accordance with smart growth and environmental stewardship.

4. Protect Land and Ecosystems

Protect and restore environmentally sensitive lands, natural resources, agricultural lands, critical habitats, wetlands and water resources, and cultural and historic landscapes. Increase the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces and recreational opportunities.

5. Use Natural Resources Wisely

Construct and promote developments, buildings, and infrastructure that conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, and materials.

6. Expand Housing Opportunities

Support the construction and rehabilitation of homes to meet the needs of people of all abilities, income levels, and household types. Build homes near jobs, transit, and where services are available. Foster the development of housing, particularly multifamily and smaller single-family homes, in a way that is compatible with a community's character and vision and with providing new housing choices for people of all means.

7. Provide Transportation Choice

Maintain and expand transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel and improve air quality. Prioritize rail, bus, boat, rapid and surface transit, shared-vehicle and shared-ride services, bicycling, and walking. Invest strategically in existing and new passenger and freight transportation infrastructure that supports sound economic development consistent with smart growth objectives.

8. Increase Job and Business Opportunities

Attract businesses and jobs to locations near housing, infrastructure, and transportation options. Promote economic development in industry clusters. Expand access to education, training, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Support the growth of local businesses, including sustainable natural resource-based businesses, such as agriculture, forestry, clean energy technology, and fisheries.

9. Promote Clean Energy

Maximize energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities. Support energy conservation strategies, local clean power generation, distributed generation technologies, and innovative industries. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and consumption of fossil fuels.

10. Plan Regionally

Support the development and implementation of local and regional, state and interstate plans that have broad public support and are consistent with these principles. Foster development projects, land and water conservation, transportation and housing that have a regional or multi-community benefit. Consider the long-term costs and benefits to the Commonwealth.

CPA also creates a significant state matching fund, which serves as an incentive to communities to pass the CPA. Municipalities must adopt the Act by ballot referendum. As of November 2008, one hundred and forty (140) cities and towns have adopted the Community Preservation Act. CPA is an innovative tool for communities to address important community needs and finance specific community preservation acquisitions and initiatives. Once adopted locally, the Act requires the legislative body to annually appropriate, or reserve for future appropriation, at least 10% of the estimated annual fund revenues for acquisitions or initiatives in each of the following three categories of allowable community preservation purposes: open space (excluding recreational uses), historic resources, and community housing. This allows the community flexibility in distributing the majority of the money for any of the three categories as determined by the community

Worcester Regional Airport

Although Worcester Regional Airport is described in the Transportation Chapter, the airport may impact general land use issues in Leicester as well. Future plans for the airport, particularly potential commercial development on airport property in the Town of Leicester, should be closely monitored by the Town of Leicester. Private commercial development would require changes to Leicester's Zoning Bylaws and/or Map. (See the Transportation Chapter for more information about the Worcester Airport and potential reuse options).

Becker Expansion

Students from McGill University prepared a conceptual Master Plan for the Leicester campus of Becker College in 2005. This Master Plan proposed major expansion of the Becker College campus in Leicester (Master Plan Proposal Becker College's Leicester Campus Expansion, 2005). Although the current economic climate has hindered efforts to move forward with expansion plans, it is anticipated that in the long-term the Becker College Leicester campus will continue to grow. The expansion has the potential to benefit the Town, as students spend money on Leicester goods and services, particularly in Leicester Center.

Agricultural Land

As described in Chapter 7 (Natural & Historic Resources) active agriculture contributes to Leicester's rural character and provides a continued source of fresh, locally grown produce and dairy products. Although agricultural uses have been in decline in recent decades, there is renewed interest in locally grown and produced agricultural products. The Town should consider policies and regulation to protect and encourage agricultural uses and to preserve prime agricultural land for the future (e.g., adopt a "Right-to-Farm" bylaw, establish a local Agricultural Commission, encourage participation in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program, etc.). See Appendix – Resources for more information.

Hillcrest Country Club & Burncoat Park

Both Hillcrest Country Club and Burncoat Park have been identified as priority areas in the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan and Master Plan discussions. There is a great deal of public interest in better use of these properties, as evidenced by responses to both the Open Space Plan and Master Plan public surveys. Burncoat Park has the potential to provide space for additional recreational fields, and (long-term) re-establishment of a Town beach. Although presenting many challenges (e.g. need for major renovation of the clubhouse building), Hillcrest Country Club has the potential to provide additional recreational use and/or general municipal use. The

long-term use of Hillcrest should be fully evaluated to ensure both long-term financial viability as well as protecting the watershed and recreational opportunities.

Tax-Title Properties

Over the last several years, the Town has taken a more proactive approach in addressing tax title properties. The Town has held auctions of such properties to help raise revenues for capital projects. This has been very successful in bringing in needed revenues. However, the Town has not undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of tax title properties prior to auction. Although the Town is free to sell these properties “as is,” providing as much information as possible could lead to higher sale prices and will foster a greater level of public good will. In addition, it may be the best long-term interest of the Town to retain some of these properties. For example, properties abutting existing conservation or recreational land may help to further the goals of this plan and/or the Town’s Open Space Plan. Other properties might be useful for other general municipal uses (e.g. municipal parking, cemetery expansion, pump stations, wells, etc.). Lists of tax title properties under consideration for sale should be distributed to all Department Heads, Town Boards/Committees, and Water and Sewer District representatives/superintendents for review and comment. Reuse of obsolete Town buildings, vacant land, and/or tax title properties for the following uses were supported by a majority of Master Plan survey respondents: parks & recreation (87%), open space (79%), Town offices or other town use (73%), community center (71%), elderly housing (67%), Town Historical Museum (62%), and commercial development (61%).

Land Use Priorities/Community Preferences

Most community preferences identified through the Master Plan survey are described throughout the Master Plan (with details in the Appendix). However, one question directly relevant to the Land use Chapter was “How should Leicester prioritize planning efforts over the next 5-10 years?” Survey respondents were presented with five broad categories, and asked to indicate if each should be high priority, moderate priority, or low priority. Based on the responses to this question, the five categories were ranked as shown below.

Planning Priorities for the Next 5-10 years (ranked in order):

1. Protect Natural Resources
2. Improve Transportation Systems
3. Expand/Improve Recreational Facilities
4. Protect Cultural & Historical resources
5. Promote increased Commercial development

FUTURE LAND USE

The 2000 Master Plan included a Future Land Use Map (see Map 8-3 at end of Chapter) that defined the future the Town was seeking in future land use and development. This Future Land Use Map was based on a comprehensive Development Suitability Analysis prepared as part of 2000 Master Plan process. As described earlier in this Chapter, the Town has made significant changes (particularly to the Zoning Bylaws & Zoning Map) to make the Town’s regulatory framework and Zoning consistent with the 2000 Future Land Use map. The Town’s overall land use goals for future land use have not changed significantly since the last Master Plan. To a

significant extent, the current town Zoning Map (Map 8-2) is an accurate portrayal of the Town's future land use goals as determined through the Master Plan Process.

Therefore, the 2009 Future land Use Priorities Map included at the end of this Chapter (Map 8-4), shows only changes or renewed emphasis for future action and priorities that will not necessarily be accomplished with Zoning Map changes. Both Burncoat Park and Hillcrest Country Club are identified as priority recreation areas. As described above, this is because both parks are under consideration for possible significant investments and changes in use. Three areas are identified for renewed focus for historic preservation efforts: Leicester Center, Greenville Village, and Rochdale. The Cherry Valley Area is identified as a priority area for reuse/redevelopment. Also, the Worcester Airport area (owned by the City of Worcester) is identified as an area for careful review of potential reuse options.

LAND USE GOAL & OBJECTIVES

Land Use Goal:

Leicester's land use goal is to use planning and regulatory techniques to preserve the quality of life for Leicester residents and provide for a balance of commercial and residential growth that uses resources and energy wisely, encourages redevelopment of already developed land over development of new land, and protects the natural resources of the Town of Leicester.

Land Use Objectives:

- Promote orderly growth through the synchronization of development with the availability of public facilities such as roads, sewers, water service to support it.
- Use the Town's infrastructure, particularly water and sewer, to direct growth to the most suitable locations and discourage infrastructure expansions into rural areas of Leicester.
- Encourage neighborhood-serving businesses and services in areas where such centers are an integral part of the neighborhood.
- Encourage light industrial, manufacturing office and research and development activities that will provide both employment opportunities and increase the tax base.
- Discourage airport related warehousing and distribution facilities and other commercial and industrial land uses on Worcester Airport property in Leicester.
- Promote the retention and expansion of existing college facilities within the guidelines of the historic preservation policies.
- Maintain and enhance the rural character of the Town of Leicester.
- Promote the implementation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Encourage the redevelopment of older commercial areas in Cherry Valley and Rochdale.
- Encourage increased setbacks, landscaping or other measures to provide physical and visual relief or buffers between land uses to minimize potential land use conflicts between dissimilar uses.

- Encourage the preservation of significant architectural, historical, and cultural landmarks whenever possible.
- Promote the development of special development and design standards within future designated historical districts that maintain the existing setback standards façade treatments and external items such as street lights and mailboxes consist with the historical description of the District.
- Ensure that quality of life issues (such as noise levels, clean air, etc) are incorporated into planning efforts.
- Incorporate the Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles into Leicester’s land use policies, regulations, and bylaws wherever possible.

Land Use Recommendations

Note: The Planning Board is the Responsible Lead Entity for Land Use Recommendations, except where noted.

Zoning Bylaw Proposals

- L1. Re-evaluate the Recreation Development District to determine if it is appropriate for properties other than the Hillcrest Country Club site. Amend or delete this section of the bylaw as appropriate.
- L2. Revise Parking and Loading Requirements. Set minimum number of off-street parking spaces required for new industrial uses, commercial uses and apartment or condominium uses, including off-street spaces for visitors. Require loading spaces for commercial and industrial areas with adequate ingress and egress. Also, add standards for parking lot construction and paving, allowing for “green” paving techniques where practical.
- L3. Update the Sign Bylaw to increase the clarity and usefulness of the bylaw. Consider establishment of an amortization period for old non-conforming signs to be removed.
- L4. Discourage apartment or condominium uses unless public water and sewer are available.
- L5. Add a Historic District Overlay Zone or Architectural Conservation District for historic districts identified in the Master Plan. Sample standards could include smaller lots, smaller building setbacks and narrower frontage requirements in accordance with the historic building/neighborhood pattern than currently exists. (See Natural Resources Chapter for related recommendation and more detailed information.)
(Other entities involved: Historical Commission)
- L6. Add an Airport Noise Compatibility Overlay for all lands within the mapped 55 Ldn noise contour as put forth in the Part 150 Airport Noise/Land Use Compatibility Study and shown on the 2000 Master Plan Future Land Use recommendations map (Map 8-3). The purpose of the overlay is to encourage low intensity, noise compatible new uses in the overlay area (such as amusement uses, restaurants, etc.) and to require noise insulation in structures built in the zone.

- L7. Develop an Open Space Residential Design Bylaw (“Cluster” Bylaw”) to encourage the preservation of open space and reduce Town infrastructure maintenance costs. Consider including incentives such as a requirement for “green” building in exchange for smaller lot sizes. (Note: this recommendation is also included in the Housing Chapter. See Housing Chapter for more detailed information.)
- L8. Undertake a comprehensive review and revision of the definitions and allowed uses in the Zoning Bylaw
- L9. Develop consolidated site development standards for all commercial districts (i.e. require the same site development standards as HB-1 in BR-1 and BI-A) and/or rezone BR-1 and BI-A areas to HB-1 or HB-2 (to reduce complexity of bylaw)
- L10. Change the name the Residential A (RA) and Residential B (RB) Districts to Residential 1 (R1) and Residential 2 (R2) to avoid the common misperception that the “B” in Residential B represents the word “Business”
- L11. Evaluate and consider changes to multi-family zoning requirements in light of expansion of land zoned for multi-family housing, particularly the Business (B) district in the Cherry Valley area. (Note: this recommendation is also included in the Housing Chapter)
- L12. Revise the current requirements and restrictions on the parking of commercial vehicles to allow more flexibility (particularly in commercial zoning districts) while providing adequate protection for residential neighborhoods
- L13. Revise the current Driveway Bylaw to ensure driveways provide safe access to structures. Consider removing from Zoning Bylaw and adopting separate Driveway Regulations.
(Other entities involved: Highway Department)

Amendments to Subdivision Regulations

- L14. Require building footprint area and driveway location drawings on definitive plans.
- L15. Require subdivisions with ANR Lots in the vicinity owned by the same applicant to provide an overall plan to the Board
- L16. Reduce pavement width and sidewalk requirements to reduce impervious surface and reduce Town maintenance costs
- L17. Undertake a comprehensive review of subdivision construction standards to ensure they are consistent with modern construction methods; prepare amendments as necessary.
- L18. Modify Subdivision Regulations as necessary to ensure consistency with the Stormwater Bylaw adopted May, 2008 and Massachusetts Stormwater Regulations
- L19. Amend the Subdivision Regulations to require installation of cable and/or fiber optics or conduit(s) for future installation at the time of subdivision construction.
- L20. Amend the Subdivision Regulations to require improvements to roadways providing access to new proposed roads.

Note: See Transportation Chapter for related recommendations (see T4, T8, and T13).

Other

- L21. Amend the General Bylaw to address outdoor storage of construction materials, trash, and inoperable vehicles.
- L22. Actively work to adopt the Community Preservation Act to have a dedicated funding source for historic preservation, open space protection, and affordable housing. (Note: see related information in the Natural & Historic Resources Chapter)
(Other entities involved: Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission)
- L23. Require an annual Phased Growth Bylaw compliance report to be issued by the Code Enforcement Officer.
Responsible Lead Entity: Code Enforcement Officer
- L24. Monitor state-level planning legislation (Land Use Partnership Act and Community Planning Act)
- L25. Adopt Town procedures and policies to fully evaluate tax title properties, including referral to Town Departments and Boards for comment, prior to sale of such properties.
Responsible Lead Entity: Town Administrator (other entities involved: Treasurer and Planning Board/Town Planner)
- L26. Consider regulatory or policy changes to encourage and protect agricultural lands (e.g. adopt a “Right-to-Farm “bylaw, establish a local Agricultural Commission, encourage participation in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program, etc.)
See Appendix – Resources for further information
(Other entities involved: Conservation Commission)
- L27. Place high priority on planning for viable long term use of Burncoat Park and Hillcrest Country Club. Seek funding for consultant assistance to fully evaluate costs and impacts of alternatives considered at these sites.
Responsible Lead Entity: Board of Selectmen (other entities involved: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission)

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IMPLEMENTATION

Leicester has implemented many of the recommendations of the 2000 Master Plan (see Appendix). The majority of implementation actions completed relate to amendments to the Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations. Also, the focus in recent years has been on action items related to commercial and residential development. It is recommended that going forward, renewed emphasis be placed on other issues important to the Town's future: natural resource protection, transportation, historic preservation, and Town services.

The Master Plan was put together with extensive citizen outreach. In order for the plan to be a "living document" and maintain its relevance, the tradition of citizen participation in Leicester should be maintained for all implementation steps and for any future revisions made to the plan itself.

The Planning Board will take primary responsibility for Master Plan Implementation, and will hold annual or bi-annual meetings to discuss priorities for each year. Representatives from all Town Boards and Departments, as well as the general public, will be invited to attend and participate in discussions.

FUTURE ACTION PLAN

This chapter is the starting point of the implementation process. Each Master Plan chapter contains a goal, objectives, and recommendations. This chapter consolidates the recommendations from each chapter and provides suggested priorities in the Future Action Plan Table starting on the following page.

Initial priorities were identified by asking Master Plan Committee members, Town Department Heads, and members of several Town Boards and Committees to prioritize each recommendation. These priorities were further refined through Master Plan Committee discussion, and during the public review and comment period. Priorities identified should not be viewed as fixed priorities, and are intended primarily as a starting point for implementation of the 2009 Master Plan. Priorities will be re-evaluated over time as circumstances and resources change.

Please note that detailed Open Space & Recreation recommendations are not included in the Future Action Plan Table, but are contained in the Appendix since they were developed as part of the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Also, the Future Action Plan Table only identifies the Responsible Lead Entity (for other entities involved, and more details on recommendations, please refer to the applicable Chapter).

Future Action Plan Table

#	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Entity	Priority		
			High	Med	Low
HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS					
H1	Develop an Open Space Residential Design Bylaw (“Cluster” Bylaw”) to encourage the preservation of open space. Consider including incentives such as a requirement for “green” building in exchange for smaller lot sizes.	Planning Board		✓	
H2	Consider a more proactive Town 40B policy, whereby the Town would plan for and solicit development proposals to meet the 10% requirement, rather than having to react to privately-proposed projects. Give priority to development of affordable senior housing units, particularly housing with services for elderly residents, (assisted living, nursing care, etc.) and housing for the disabled (including disabled veterans).	Board of Selectmen	✓		
H3	Apply for Community Block Grant Funds and/or other available state funds to establish a housing rehabilitation program that helps low and moderate income residents (including the elderly and disabled) to correct outstanding code violations and make necessary repairs. In addition to or as an alternative, work with banking institutions to establish and implement a low-interest loan program for the same purposes.	Board of Selectmen	✓		
H4	Work cooperatively with Becker College to ensure that expansion of student housing for Becker College Students is consistent with the Town’s historic preservation goals	Historical Commission	✓		
H5	Monitor the housing market and consider more aggressive action to use performance guarantees to complete roadway construction in partially-completed subdivisions (instead of granting extensions), to protect residents living in these projects.	Planning Board	✓		
H6	Consider changes to Zoning Bylaws to expand housing choices and affordability (such as Inclusionary Zoning). One option is to allow two-family “by-right” rather than by special permit in the Residential A (RA) district if the additional units meet Chapter 40B affordability requirements.	Planning Board			✓
H7	Evaluate and consider changes to multi-family zoning requirements in light of expansion of land zoned for multi-family housing, particularly the Business (B) district in the Cherry Valley area.	Planning Board		✓	
H8	Amend zoning district requirements as necessary to allow rental housing on upper floors of commercial buildings in Business (B) and Central Business (CB) districts.	Planning Board		✓	

#	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Entity	Priority		
			High	Med	Low
H9	Consider further amendments to the Senior Village Development bylaw and/or regulatory or policy changes to allow for successful completion of approved projects and to encourage a wider range of types of senior housing (e.g. assisted living).	Planning Board		✓	
H10	Undertake a more comprehensive housing affordability needs analysis when the housing market has stabilized and more current income data is available based on the 2010 US Census.	Planning Board		✓	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS*					
E1	Review town policies and regulations and develop an economic development strategy for Leicester.	Economic Dev. Committee	✓		
E2	Incorporate appropriate changes to site plan design standards and zoning bylaws to maintain the pedestrian-friendliness of the Business District and Central Business District.	Planning Board		✓	
E3	Pursue technical services of the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Massachusetts Downtown Initiative National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center to help maintain and improve Leicester Center (See Appendix - Resources)	Planning Board		✓	
E4	Apply for 43D/Expedited Permitting for larger commercial/industrial sites	Board of Selectmen			✓
E5	Work to Provide Adequate Fire Suppression Capacity in the Route 9 West Area (HB-1)	Board of Selectmen		✓	
E6	Work in partnership with owners of industrially-zoned land to encourage development	Economic Development Committee	✓		
E7	Develop a Computerized Database of Available Commercial Properties	Economic Dev. Committee	✓		
E8	Pursue grant funding and technical assistance to redevelop underused or abandoned properties (Brownfields)	Economic Dev. Committee	✓		
E9	Promote preservation of historic buildings and tourism-related economic development in coordination with the John H. Chaffee Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission	Economic Dev. Committee		✓	
E10	Hire a consultant to conduct a study of constraints to development (wetlands, topography, infrastructure, etc.) and market analysis for the Route 9 West Corridor (HB-1 Zoning District).	Economic Dev. Committee		✓	
E11	Re-evaluate Industrial Zoning in Rochdale to allow development consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, such as adding buffer requirements and other site development standards consistent with other commercial districts in Leicester.	Planning Board		✓	
* Many of the Economic Development recommendations prepared by CMRPC include more lengthy descriptions and information that was left out of this table. Please refer to the Economic Development Chapter for more details.					

#	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Entity	Priority		
			High	Med	Low
TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS					
T1	Prohibit left turns onto Warren Avenue from Route 9 eastbound during the morning peak period (6-9AM). This measure is aimed at discouraging the use of Warren Avenue, a local street, as a route to avoid the Route 9/Route 56 signal in order to gain access to Route 56 northbound.	Highway Department			✓
T2	Work to upgrade the temporary one lane bridge on Rawson Street	Highway Department		✓	
T3	Inventory all locations where sidewalks end abruptly, develop a plan for future sidewalk installation and incorporate the Plan into the Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP)	Highway Department			✓
T4	Amend the Subdivision Regulations to specifically require bus stop areas and shelters in subdivisions over ten lots.	Planning Board		✓	
T5	Prioritize and Implement the Recommendations of the Route 9 Corridor Study	Highway Department		✓	
T6	Pursue development of an access management plan for major roadways, and/or develop zoning bylaws or other methods such as reciprocal easement driveway arrangements for curb cut limitations along arterials for all land uses	Planning Board		✓	
T7	Undertake a comprehensive study of the impacts of a potential Turnpike exit connecting to Route 56 (i.e., impact on traffic patterns, residential & commercial growth projections, etc.)	Board of Selectmen			✓
T8	Amend the Subdivision Regulations to strengthen requirements for developer upgrades to existing public ways where necessary to provide adequate access to proposed subdivisions.	Planning Board	✓		
T9	Work with and closely monitor the City of Worcester, Massport and the Massachusetts Highway Department if, through the regional transportation planning process, an access road is proposed to maximize time travel efficiencies to and from the Worcester Regional Airport and I-290, I-90 and I-395.	Board of Selectmen	✓		
T10	Develop a scenic roads bylaw that incorporates the preservation of existing stone walls and trees in roadway rights-of-way	Planning Board			✓
T11	Actively follow Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process and request inclusion of Leicester transportation projects on the annual TIP listing	Town Administrator		✓	
T12	Continue participation in the Worcester Mobility Study and consider implementation of recommendations when available	Town Administrator		✓	
T13	Implement several policies for proposed subdivision roadways to ensure improved development (see Chapter 5, Transportation for more detail)	Planning Board	✓		

#	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Entity	Priority		
FACILITIES & SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS					
F1	Re-activate long-range planning committee for Hillcrest Country Club and plan for best long-term use of this facility	Board of Selectmen	✓		
F2	Prepare a comprehensive Energy Action Plan for the Town which includes evaluation of energy use and costs for all Town facilities and services, as well as review of Town maintenance, construction and renovation policies and regulations.	Board of Selectmen	✓		
F3	Seek funding, including grants and loans, to fund Town energy efficiency improvements (See Appendix – Resources)	Board of Selectmen	✓		
F4	Hire a consultant to evaluate organization and staffing of Town Departments to plan for best meeting public needs with limited funding constraints	Board of Selectmen	✓		
F5	Plan for and support the future Moose Hill Reservoir proposed by the Moose Hill Water Commission Plan support and promote the Town as a wholesale purveyor of water from the Moose Hill Reservoir once economic viability has been established	Board of Selectmen	✓		
F6	Plan for eventual consolidation of existing water and sewer districts	Board of Selectmen	✓		
F7	Amend Subdivision Rules & Regulations to address streetlight requirements	Planning Board		✓	
F8	Implement the recommendations contained in the NPDES Phase II Annual Report for Leicester, including seeking funding through grants and Town Meeting. (See Appendix - Resources)	Highway Department		✓	
F9	Adopt Stormwater Regulations to Implement the Stormwater Bylaw adopted in May, 2008.	Planning Board		✓	
F10	Implement the recommendations of the WPI Energy Study	Board of Selectmen		✓	
F11	Seek a suitable productive use for the Copeland Library	Historical Commission			✓
F12	Seek funding for land purchase, design, and construction for a new Fire Station	Board of Selectmen	✓		
NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS					
N1	Re-activate the Open Space & Recreation Committee or establish another mechanism to implement the goals and objectives of the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan	Planning Board		✓	
N2	Prioritize the tasks identified Five-Year Action Plan contained in the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan	Open Space & Recreation Committee or Master Plan Implementation Committee		✓	

#	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Entity	Priority		
N3	Create a “top ten” list of threatened open space or conservation parcels that the Town should work to protect	Conservation Commission	✓		
N4	Adopt Stormwater Regulations and related amendments to the Zoning Bylaw to administer the Stormwater Bylaw adopted at the 2008 Annual Town Meeting	Planning Board		✓	
N5	Identify priority scenic roads and develop a Scenic Roads zoning bylaw that incorporates the preservation of existing stone walls and trees in the public right-of-way.	Historical Commission			✓
N6	Develop a “top ten” list of threatened historic resources in Town and search for adoptive individuals, organizations and companies to assist in their preservation. Consider seeking the assistance of a college intern to assist with this effort.	Historical Commission		✓	
N7	Publish a booklet, in cooperation with the Historic Commission, to assist property owners on alterations and construction additions to identified historic structures. Grant funding may be available for this type of project (See Appendix - Resources)	Historical Commission		✓	
N8	Continue to support and provide recognition for Becker College’s contribution towards historic preservation through efforts such as assistance with grant applications, public recognition of historically-appropriate new construction, etc.	Historical Commission		✓	
N9	Actively seek National Register District, Local Historic District or Architectural Conservation District designation as appropriate for areas with clusters of significant well preserved buildings and landscapes, as recommended by the Historical Commission.	Historical Commission		✓	
N10	Update and computerize the list of historic resources; achieve consensus in the community as to the properties listed; distribute the list to all interested parties and to property owners. Consider having this done as an Eagle Scout Project.	Historical Commission		✓	
N11	Establish protection guidelines for historic sites, buildings and possible archeological sites in conjunction with the Worcester Regional Airport Commission, the Worcester Water Department and private property owners for resources located on their land in Leicester	Historical Commission		✓	
N12	Integrate historic sites with recreational and open space areas whenever possible	Historical Commission		✓	
N13	Prioritize and implement the recommendations contained in the Leicester Reconnaissance Report (Heritage Landscapes Inventory)	Historical Commission		✓	

#	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Entity	Priority		
N14	Institute an annual Leicester Preservation Award program and/or other methods to recognize local property owners that have made significant preservation efforts through press releases and other methods	Historical Commission		✓	
N15	Seek matching funds and pursue grant funding for historic preservation projects in Leicester (See Appendix - Resources)	Historical Commission		✓	
LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS					
L1	Re-evaluate the Recreation Development District to determine if it is appropriate for properties other than the Hillcrest Country Club site. Amend or delete this section of the bylaw as appropriate.	Planning Board			✓
L2	Revise Parking and Loading Requirements. Set minimum number of off-street parking spaces required for new industrial uses, commercial uses and apartment or condominium uses, including off-street spaces for visitors. Require loading spaces for commercial and industrial areas with adequate ingress and egress. Also, add standards for parking lot construction and paving, allowing for “green” paving techniques where practical	Planning Board		✓	
L3	Update the Sign Bylaw to increase the clarity and usefulness of the bylaw. Consider establishment of an amortization period for old non-conforming signs to be removed.	Planning Board		✓	
L4	Discourage apartment or condominium uses unless public water and sewer are available.	Planning Board		✓	
L5	Add a Historic District Overlay Zone or Architectural Conservation District for historic districts identified in the Master Plan. Sample standards could include smaller lots, smaller building setbacks and narrower frontage requirements in accordance with the historic building/neighborhood pattern than currently exists. (See Natural Resources Chapter for closely related recommendation and more detailed information.)	Planning Board		✓	
L6	Add an Airport Noise Compatibility Overlay for all lands within the mapped 55 Ldn noise contour as put forth in the Part 150 Airport Noise/Land Use Compatibility Study and shown on the 2000 Master Plan Future Land Use recommendations map (Map 8-3). The purpose of the overlay is to encourage low intensity, noise compatible new uses in the overlay area (such as amusement uses, restaurants, etc.) and to require noise insulation in structures built in the zone.	Planning Board			✓

#	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Entity	Priority		
L7	Develop an Open Space Residential Design Bylaw (“Cluster” Bylaw”) to encourage the preservation of open space and reduce Town infrastructure maintenance costs Consider including incentives such as a requirement for “green” building in exchange for smaller lot sizes. (Note: this recommendation is also included in the Housing Chapter. See Housing Chapter for more detailed information.)	Planning Board		✓	
L8	Undertake a comprehensive review and revision of the definitions and allowed uses in the Zoning Bylaw	Planning Board		✓	
L9	Develop consolidated site development standards for all commercial districts (i.e. require the same site development standards as HB-1 in BR-1 and BI-A) and/or rezone BR-1 and BI-A areas to HB-1 or HB-2 (to reduce complexity of bylaw)	Planning Board		✓	
L10	Change the name the Residential A (RA) and Residential B (RB) Districts to Residential 1 (R1) and Residential 2 (R2) to avoid the common misperception that the “B” in Residential B represents the word “Business”	Planning Board	✓		
L11	Evaluate and consider changes to multi-family zoning requirements in light of expansion of land zoned for multi-family housing, particularly the Business (B) district in the Cherry Valley area. (Note: this recommendation is also included in the Housing Chapter.)	Planning Board		✓	
L12	Revise the current requirements and restrictions on the parking of commercial vehicles to allow more flexibility (particularly in commercial zoning districts) while providing adequate protection for residential neighborhoods	Planning Board		✓	
L13	Revise the current Driveway Bylaw to ensure driveways provide safe access to structures. Consider removing from Zoning Bylaw and adopting separate Driveway Regulations.	Planning Board		✓	
L14	Require building footprint area and driveway location drawings on definitive plans.	Planning Board	✓		
L15	Require subdivisions with ANR Lots in the vicinity owned by the same applicant to provide an overall plan to the Board	Planning Board		✓	
L16	Reduce pavement width and sidewalk requirements to reduce impervious surface and reduce Town maintenance costs	Planning Board	✓		
L17	Undertake a comprehensive review of subdivision construction standards to ensure they are consistent with modern construction methods; prepare amendments as necessary.	Planning Board		✓	
L18	Modify Subdivision Regulations as necessary to ensure consistency with the Stormwater Bylaw adopted May, 2008 and Massachusetts Stormwater Regulations	Planning Board		✓	
L19	Amend the Subdivision Regulations to require installation of cable and/or fiber optics or conduit(s) for future installation at the time of subdivision construction.	Planning Board		✓	

#	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Entity	Priority		
L20	Amend the Subdivision Regulations to require improvements to roadways providing access to new proposed roads.	Planning Board		✓	
L21	Amend the General Bylaw to address outdoor storage of construction materials, trash, and inoperable vehicles.	Planning Board	✓		
L22	Actively work to adopt the Community Preservation Act to have a dedicated funding source for historic preservation, open space protection, and affordable housing. (Note: see related information in the Natural & Historic Resources Chapter)	Planning Board		✓	
L23	Require an annual Phased Growth Bylaw compliance report to be issued by the Code Enforcement Officer	Code Enforcement Officer			✓
L24	Monitor state-level planning legislation (Land Use Partnership Act and Community Planning Act)	Planning Board		✓	
L25	Adopt Town procedures and policies to fully evaluate tax title properties, including referral to Town Departments and Boards for comment, prior to sale of such properties.	Town Administrator		✓	
L26	Consider regulatory or policy changes to encourage and protect agricultural lands (e.g. adopt a “Right-to-Farm” bylaw, establish a local Agricultural Commission, encourage participation in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program, etc.) See Appendix – Resources for further information	Planning Board			✓
L27	Place high priority on planning for viable long term use of Burncoat Park and Hillcrest Country Club. Seek funding for consultant assistance to fully evaluate costs and impacts of alternatives considered at these sites	Board of Selectmen	✓		

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

The Planning Board adopted the Master Plan, including the Future Action Plan recommendations, at their meeting of July 7, 2009. The Planning Board will invite various Boards and Committees to appoint a liaison to the Planning Board to work on Master Plan Implementation. The first implementation meeting is planned for Fall 2009, to discuss priority projects and begin implementation of the Master Plan.

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