

# Littleton Master Plan

**cultivating the future**

April 20, 2017

Prepared for:  
Littleton Planning Board  
Master Plan Update Steering Committee



**RKG**

in association with:  
Dodson & Flinker  
Community Circle  
Community Opportunities Group, Inc.





May 1, 2017

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Littleton Residents

**FROM:** Littleton Master Plan Update Steering Committee

**SUBJECT:** Littleton Master Plan 2030

Two years ago, the Littleton Board of Selectmen and Planning Board undertook the task of updating Littleton's 2002 Master Plan. The accompanying Master Plan is the result of their foresight.

In April of 2015, both boards jointly created a 12-member Master Plan Update Steering Committee (MPUSC) comprised of Littleton residents representing various Littleton boards, committees and residents-at-large. The MPUSC's mission was simple: Update the 2002 plan; make it representative of Littleton's residents, make it relevant to Littleton's needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and make it implementable.

Having accepted its charge, the MPUSC during these past two years has worked closely with the Town's municipal planning contractor, RKG Associates, other towns experiencing various stages of their own master plan process, many state agencies, educational institutions, Town leaders and staff, and most significantly, innumerable Littleton residents to create the Plan.

Organized into 10 chapters, the Plan offers in Chapter 1, *Introduction* the process used to devise the Plan, strategies and recommendations. In the ensuing eight chapters, the main topic areas: *Land Use, Transportation, Economic Development, Housing, Historic Resource Areas, Natural Resources, Open Space & Recreation, and Town Government: Organization, Services, Facilities*, are discussed.

Finally, in Chapter 10, *Implementation*, the Plan brings together its various elements, prescribes a way forward, and offers 67 recommendations, to breathe life into the Plan.

You will see in the Plan a structured approach to presenting a historical perspective of Littleton's circumstances; current conditions in Littleton; residents' needs, wants and desires; and, a plausible methodology that if used, will enable Littleton to achieve its vision as a prospering community while simultaneously retaining its character and feel of a small bucolic New England village.

Integral to the Plan's structure are eight strategy areas that emerged during the process as essential enablers for Littleton's success during the Plan's lifetime.

The strategy areas are listed below, and are fully detailed, along with implementation recommendations, in the Plan itself.

- LITTLETON COMMON
- THRIVING TOWN
- EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT
- ACTIVE GOVERNMENT
- PLANNED GROWTH
- COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELL-BEING
- LEGACY
- BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY
- 

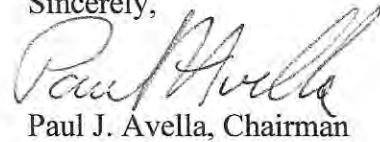
While so many have toiled so much over the past 24 months, it will all be in vain should this Plan not be used as intended: An overarching guide for Town leadership and residents. Specifically, to be successful, this Plan must be implemented. Significant portions throughout the plan emphasize 'implementation.' It cannot go unsaid, Town leaders and you, have an obligation to reference this Plan and to use it, even if only as a point of departure. In that way, as we move to improve our Town, we will at the very least know where we are moving from on our shared journey.

Deciding on priorities is one of the challenging but important steps in implementing a plan. To assist and encourage the Town to follow through with action, the MPUSC members have formulated by consensus what they see as the 'Top 3' priorities in reaching the overall goal: *Littleton as a prospering community while simultaneously retaining its character and feel of a small bucolic New England village*. The MPUSC's 'Top 3' priorities are:

- Complete a comprehensive zoning update
- Commit to a Common revitalization
- Improve intermodal transportation connectivity

In closing, MPUSC members feel honored and privileged to be able to present Littleton Master Plan 2030 to you for our, and our children's, sustained benefit.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Avella

Paul J. Avella, Chairman

#### Littleton Master Plan Update Steering Committee Members:

Paul Avella, Chair, Board of Selectmen	Peter Scott	Planning Board
Richard Crowley Vice Chair, Planning Board	Melissa Hebert	Board of Selectmen
Paul Glavey Board of Selectmen/FINCOM	Michael Fontanella	School Committee
Gary Lacroix Sustainability Committee	Renato Nakagomi	Resident-at-large
Bartlett Harvey Housing Authority	John Bielefeld	Resident-at-large
Michael Zeldin Resident-at-large	Joseph Ficociello	Resident-at-large,
Anna Hueston Resident-at-large, (From October 2016)	(Through May 2016)	

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(Paul J. Avella was a member of the Board of Selectmen at the beginning of the master plan process)

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# 1 Introduction



The Littleton Master Plan is the result of over two years of thoughtful, productive work by Littleton residents and town staff to update the 2002 Master Plan. Led by a twelve-member Master Plan Update Steering Committee (MPUSC), the planning process has culminated in eight overarching strategies to guide growth and change and to achieve the best possible future for Littleton. Together, these eight strategies provide a framework for the recommendations found in the following chapters. The purpose of this introduction is to help current and future readers understand what a master plan is, summarize the plan's key ideas, and document the amazing community participation process that Littleton carried out in order to have a plan the Town can implement.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

A master plan (or comprehensive plan) is mainly a plan for a town's physical evolution and a set of policies, programs, and actions to achieve what the plan envisions.

- It is a process for deciding what to do, and how, when, why, and where to do it;
- It includes a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of community development;
- It works to improve the welfare of people and their communities;
- Its purpose is to create a community that offers better choices for where and how people live;
- It is a plan for preservation and development; and
- It provides recommendations and an action plan, typically for a ten-year implementation period.

In Massachusetts, state law requires Planning Boards to prepare and periodically update a master plan for their communities. G.L. c. 41, § 81D calls for a master plan with text, tables, maps, and other illustrations to identify current and future needs, trends, problems, and opportunities in the following areas:

- Land use;
- Housing;
- Economic development;
- Natural and cultural resources;
- Open space and recreation;
- Services and facilities; and
- Circulation

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The statute goes on to call for goals and policies to convey the community's vision and an implementation program that covers all of these topic areas. Like many towns, Littleton decided to expand on the state's minimum list of master plan elements by adding a focus on governance.

Littleton has changed over time and it will continue to change. The issue for Littleton is how can the town manage change so that growth, development, and preservation will occur strategically – toward recognized, generally understood outcomes?

## VISION AND GOALS

The Littleton Master Plan embraces this Vision for the Town:

**In 2030, Littleton will be a place that values its history, preserves the characteristics that make it unique, plans for changes to the landscape, and supports the Town's sense of community. Littleton will continue to stand on a strong financial footing while making investments to improve upon the quality and sustainability of the facilities and services offered in town.**

**The Town will support its children, seniors, families, employees, and individuals by encouraging a variety of housing types and employment opportunities, and providing quality education, a well-connected and accessible transportation network, and services. Community leaders will consider the social, fiscal, and environmental impacts of proposed policies and regulations on future generations to come.**

**Littleton will be a place where residents continue to feel welcomed and invited to share the responsibility and fulfillment of helping make decisions to improve the Town's future.**



Toward these ends, the Plan's recommendations address the following eight goals:

- To maintain Littleton's small-town character as the town continues to develop through stewardship of its natural resources and open space, forests, working farms, and lakes.
- To establish and abide by land use policies that are effective at guiding sustainable development in a manner consistent with the goals of the Master Plan in terms of location, appearance, neighborhood and community impact, and efficiency of delivering town services.

- To encourage a variety of housing that meets the needs of different age groups and is affordable to people of different socio-economic backgrounds.
- To encourage a local economy that includes a variety of businesses, increases the tax base, provides local jobs, and results in more goods and services available to residents.
- To improve the safety and ease of getting around town and better connect the “pieces” of Littleton with safe and pleasant bike and walking paths, and public transportation.
- To continue to provide excellent town services, schools, and community facilities.
- To promote Littleton’s unique history and preserve its variety of historic resources.
- To provide local government with both the structure and the resources needed to manage growth and change.

## STRATEGIES & THEMES

The sixty-seven recommendations that comprise Littleton’s ten-year Implementation Program address both the Master Plan goals listed above and several strategies that connect the goals and integrate ideas from several master plan elements.

### Littleton Common

The future of Littleton Common is not without challenges. The first and possibly largest challenge is the issue of wastewater disposal. Many residents want to see the area around Littleton Common redeveloped into a more traditional New England village center. This is a difficult issue in Town, but one that needs to be resolved if the Common is to be reimagined. Creating the best possible future for Littleton Common will require actions that touch on every element of the Master Plan and a strategy that specifically integrates infrastructure, circulation, land use/zoning, and economic development policies. The recommendations associated with this theme include:

- Prepare a detailed master plan for the Littleton Common and Beaver Brook area to guide redevelopment.
- Change zoning for the Littleton Common and the Beaver Brook area to encourage redevelopment according to the area master plan.
- Invest in infrastructure to enhance walking, biking, signage, and parking in the Littleton Common area to make it easier and more convenient for customers and residents to visit local businesses.
- Make transportation improvements in and around Littleton Common.
- Use CPA funds to support redevelopment and reuse of historic properties around the Common.
- Determine an appropriate pathway forward for modifying transportation infrastructure on state-owned roadways around Littleton Common.



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- Underground overhead utility lines along portions of Great Road and King Street to increase the reliability of delivering power and improve aesthetics around the Common.
- Evaluate the recommendations from the upcoming Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan, and determine next steps.

## Planned Growth

Planning for growth and planning for preservation go hand in hand. Littleton has done a good job of planning for its preservation and natural resource protection needs and it should continue to do so. At the same time, the Town is going to grow. It's a great town, and people want to live here! The challenge for Littleton is how to grow strategically by encouraging development in logical areas – ideally by building on locations that already serve as or have the potential to be community and neighborhood activity centers. To succeed with planned growth, Littleton will need to do more planning following completion of this Master Plan – but planning on an area basis and connecting area plans with circulation plans for safe, efficient, ways of getting from place to place. Planned growth requires integrating land use, transportation, housing, and economic development policies in ways that support making Littleton a healthy, resilient community. The recommendations associated with this theme include:

- Conduct an audit of Littleton's Zoning Bylaw (zoning diagnostic) and recodify and update it, as necessary, before adopting new land use policy initiatives to implement the Master Plan.
- Conduct a corridor study for Great Road to plan for future land uses, open space and natural resource preservation, transportation improvements, and modify zoning to implement the plan.
- Prepare an area plan for parcels in the vicinity of the Taylor/Foster Street intersection and modify zoning to implement the plan.
- Plan for and promote commercial activity nodes, particularly in the area around Taylor and Foster Streets.
- Allow greater density in recognized activity areas, near the train station, around the Common, and in older industrial or commercial areas where redevelopment opportunities exist.



## Thriving Town

On one level, a thriving town has a healthy economy that provides jobs, goods and services, and a high quality of life. By this definition, Littleton has so much going for it, and with continued leadership the Town will continue to thrive. Building and diversifying Littleton's economy needs to be a key ingredient in helping the Town prosper in the future, yet the size and makeup of the employment base does not, on its own, define prosperity. A sense of community, a shared interest in culture and a shared interest in different cultures, and a place that values new and old are all key attributes of a thriving town.

# Littleton Common Revitalization

## Ideas for Improving Littleton's Town Center

**The revitalization of Littleton Common was consistently among the most popular topics of discussion throughout the Master Plan process. It is also a topic that will require actions that touch on every element of the Master Plan with strategies that specifically integrate infrastructure, circulation, land use/zoning, and economic development policies.**

The Town is currently embarking on an important study to determine possible solutions for bringing wastewater treatment to this area. This is an important step as it may be challenging to facilitate the type of mixed-use, town center development residents are looking for absent a way to deal with additional wastewater. Future use of land and buildings in this area should be considered in the context of the infrastructure needed to support it, and whether current zoning regulations allow for redevelopment and reuse consistent with the community's vision.

### COMMUNITY INPUT from the two-day charrettes

The Town held a two-day charrette to hear resident ideas for how to improve the Common in the future. Key ideas included:

- Find adaptive reuse options for the Conant Houghton mill complex.

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- Improve pedestrian safety and connectivity with more sidewalks and crosswalks. Introduce bike lanes and other bike infrastructure where appropriate.

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- Improve the intersection of Goldsmith Street, King Street, and Stevens Street.

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- Redevelop building at 476-482 King Street (Oriental Market, Vinyl Vault, Electronics Plus).



### Caught at the Crossroads

Littleton Common is bisected by two major state routes which generate a lot of through traffic during peak travel times. This creates challenges for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as patrons of local businesses. The Town should continue to work closely with MassDOT to implement transportation improvements consistent with the future vision for the area.

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS from the Master Plan

- Prepare a detailed plan for Littleton Common to guide redevelopment and infrastructure investments.

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- Change zoning for Littleton Common to encourage redevelopment consistent with the area master plan.

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- Invest in infrastructure to enhance walking, biking, parking, and signage to make it easier and more convenient for customers and residents to visit Littleton businesses.

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- Evaluate the recommendations of the upcoming Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan and determine next steps.

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- Determine appropriate pathway forward for modifications to state-owned roadways around Littleton Common.



Connectivity between business nodes, neighborhood activity areas, community services and facilities, and Littleton Common will play a key role in helping Littleton thrive in the future and make it a healthy, sustainable place. The recommendations associated with this theme include:

- Develop and institute business-friendly practices in Town Hall.
- Improve transportation connections between area businesses and Littleton's MBTA commuter rail station.
- Ensure new development, and redevelopment, is sited and designed in such a way that is consistent with the character of the zoning district and location within Littleton.
- Continue to support The Point and look for opportunities to encourage the expansion of uses at that site, which could include the integration of housing.
- Promote and increase support for local farms in order to maintain agriculture as a vital component of Littleton's economy.
- Reexamine the value of utilizing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to attract new businesses to Littleton.



## Community Health & Well-Being

The health and well-being of a community hinges on the success of policies for sustainability and resilience. Nowhere is a master plan more important today than in the attention it pays to sustainability: "... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>1</sup> Because sustainability is so misunderstood, sometimes people think it is about reducing energy use and others think it means stopping all new growth or pitting nature against industry. These ideas are actually unsustainable. For community planning, sustainability policy means "to create and maintain conditions, under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations."<sup>2</sup> It means being adaptable. It means having an economy that can adjust to changing market conditions and demographic trends. Can Littleton adapt to changing times? Can it accommodate difference and diversity?

The Master Plan contains many recommendations that relate, directly or indirectly, to Littleton's present and future health and well-being. From developing open space trails and constructing bicycle and pedestrian facilities to providing for adequately equipped and staffed public safety services, the Master Plan tries to stress the importance of protecting public health, encouraging land, water, and energy conservation, and preparing for economic and social change. Measures to promote community health and well-being include recommendations that cross over between governance and community services, land use, economic development, housing, and natural resources. The recommendations associated with this theme include:

- Update the Aquifer and Water Resource Protection District bylaw.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), A Framework for Sustainability Indicators (2012), citing the U.N. World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future (1987); Executive Order 13423 (2009).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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- Prepare a comprehensive trails plan to identify and prioritize opportunities to connect existing trails and open spaces to form a network of off-street trails for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Evaluate and institute policies to improve transportation connections to/from the schools.
- Develop specific criteria to describe the Town's priorities for acquiring open space.
- Undertake a Food Systems Plan to inform town efforts to support local food production, processing, distribution, and sales as a way to help sustain Littleton's remaining family farms.
- Partner with the school department to involve Littleton Public Schools in nature education, maintenance of trails and wildlife blinds, and educational programming in town conservation lands.
- Prepare, monitor, evaluate, and periodically update a community resilience plan, tailored to Littleton, to ensure that the town's infrastructure and social and economy systems can withstand the impact of climate change and other twenty-first century hazards; and incorporate the recommendations of the resilience plan into this Master Plan as needed.



**Prepare, monitor, evaluate, and periodically update a community resilience plan, tailored to Littleton, to ensure that the town's infrastructure and social and economy systems can withstand the impact of climate change and other twenty-first century hazards; and incorporate the recommendations of the resilience plan into this Master Plan as needed.**

- Establish a local funding source for walking and cycling improvements across Town.
- Ensure public safety officials have enough staff and equipment to handle today's needs, as well as the needs of a growing and changing resident population.
- Establish a coordinated effort to identify and remediate invasive species on public land. Work to educate private landowners on removal of invasives, with a focus on large commercial and industrial properties.
- Evaluate the impact of climate change on natural resources and water supplies and draw up appropriate mitigation policies and plans. Establish open space corridors and riparian buffers that anticipate future increases in temperature and precipitation.
- Establish a training and education program for site contractors, landscapers, facilities managers, and others

to learn about best practices for reducing stormwater runoff and pollution, dealing with invasive species, reducing the use of toxic pesticides and herbicides, and maintaining lands in a way that enhances protection of native species.

- Prepare individual management plans for town conservation areas and recreational facilities.
- Provide public education on agriculture, including potential farm education programs such as Mass Audubon's Drumlin Farm in Lincoln.
- Improve transportation options for Littleton's seniors and residents with disabilities.

- Evaluate the feasibility of constructing a multi-purpose, intergenerational community center that meets the needs of all residents in Littleton.
- Examine the recommendations of the Comprehensive Analysis of Recreation Facilities and Fields, and determine next steps.
- Continue to update the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and align the recommendations with the Town's Capital Improvement Plan and this Master Plan.
- Continue to improve a comprehensive strategy to protect surface waters and aquifers and the watersheds that feed them.

## Equitable Development

Equitable development involves ensuring that Littleton has opportunities for residents of all ages, backgrounds, and incomes to have suitable, good quality housing and to participate in and benefit from decisions that shape their neighborhoods. It will be important for Littleton to provide and maintain a diverse mix of housing options so that existing residents are not "priced out" as the Town continues to grow and its housing increases in value. Having a range of housing for senior citizens, families, and young people entering the workforce will help to keep Littleton a thriving town and also promote the health and well-being of the community as a whole. Land use and zoning policies to encourage a variety of housing and developments of different scales and density will help to meet residents' needs and creates a healthy environment for everyone. The recommendations associated with this theme include:

- Overhaul and update the over-55 housing bylaw to make it more effective for creating senior housing options.
- Encourage small accessory apartments on owner-occupied residential lots.
- Adopt an inclusionary housing bylaw to require affordable housing in new residential or mixed-use developments.
- Revise the Town's Open Space Development (OSD) bylaw to remove Special Permit requirements and provide incentives to landowners and developers. Allow greater density while protecting woodlands and farms, and loosen restrictions placed on open space so as to protect against reducing the value of farmland.



## Legacy

Littleton residents care about the town's heritage, but local historical groups still struggle to increase public awareness that historic resources are fragile and need to be protected. For Littleton, "legacy" means not only protecting historic buildings but also heritage landscapes, historic structures and objects, and archaeological resources. It is as much about grand nineteenth century homes as the small houses that Littleton residents built and lived in between the wars, and it is as much about helping to keep farms as farms as it is about protecting the Beaver Brook and marsh. Successful preservation will require collaboration by Littleton's historic, environmental, planning, and economic development advocates. Beyond traditional preservation-based regulatory tools, identifying planning tools to guide new

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development in a manner that respects the town's historic character and the architectural integrity of its historic villages and neighborhoods will be important. Accordingly, the success of legacy strategies for Littleton will be tied to the cultural resources, natural resources, housing, economic development, and land use recommendations of this Master Plan. The recommendations associated with this theme include:

- Reconsider the current allocation of the annual CPA funds dedicated to historic preservation.
- Update the Demolition Delay bylaw by extending the demolition period beyond one year.
- Expand availability of community garden plots through town-supported programming and provision of land within existing conservation areas and/or using private lands secured through temporary agreements with the town.
- Consider leveraging CPA funds and other budget sources through an open space acquisition bond.
- Complete an inventory of historic structures and heritage landscapes in Littleton, including photo documentation of present-day conditions, and update the Town's historic resources inventory and forms.
- Undertake an effort to determine whether the current list of scenic roads should be added to or subtracted from based on changes that have occurred since the adoption of the bylaw in 1974. Develop a photographic inventory of the most critical scenic roads.
- Work with the LHC, PB, and other groups to establish a Heritage Landscape conservation program.
- Pursue one or more local historic districts to include properties in areas such as Foster Street/Unitarian Church/Fire Station/Historical Society, as well as the area around Littleton Common.
- Adopt a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) bylaw and consider designating areas such as Littleton's mid-twentieth century neighborhoods, e.g., those located around the Town's waterbodies.
- Encourage committees engaged in historical preservation, environmental protection, open space, planning, and economic development to meet periodically to explore opportunities to collaborate on historic and cultural preservation priorities.



## Active Government

Littleton is obviously a well-run town. It did not earn a triple-A bond rating by accident. Although bond ratings do not tell the whole story about a community's form and style of government, they are an important indicator of professionalism, stability, and stewardship of the community's resources. Moody's Investors Service sparingly assigns an AAA bond rating to communities with financial management policies and a debt history that make them extremely low risk. Most of the Massachusetts towns that fall into this category are also the state's wealthiest communities, such as Wellesley, Concord, Dover, Brookline, Lexington, or Weston. Littleton is neither very wealthy nor economically struggling. It is a really nice, small town with lots of thinking people in government leadership roles and a complement of municipal department heads that are bar none. It also has an excellent school system, which attests

both to the school department's leadership and the expectations that Littleton residents have for the quality of their children's education.

Littleton is poised to grow well because it has such a good foundation of government policies and practices for moving forward. However, growth will also bring (and already has brought) change in the composition of Littleton's households, and it may be challenging to harmonize the desires of long-term residents and newcomers – people who will define the Town's social fabric. "Active government" will mean a form and structure of government that is nimble enough to seize the

day and yet deliberate and patient enough to withstand factionalism. The Town will have to face balancing the needs of seniors and students, resolving potential conflicts between farmers and open space advocates, and make a commitment to carrying out this Master Plan even when the demands of a moment in time insist otherwise. Thus, having an "active government" means ensuring that Littleton will have the knowledge, resources, and political culture to implement and be accountable for this Master Plan. The recommendations associated with this theme include:

- Establish mechanisms and policies that link the implementation of the Master Plan to annual work plans, budgets, and capital projects.
- Evaluate the recommendations of the upcoming Town Hall Space Needs Study and determine next steps.
- Provide for the 21st century needs of a library facility in Littleton.
- Invest in technology upgrades that will help the Town accommodate the growing demand for information, secure lines of communication, and redundancy across systems.
- Pursue a targeted program of outreach and information to enhance public use of conservation lands and recreational facilities.
- Upgrade and modernize the Shaker Lane School.
- Provide the Elder and Human Services department with increased resources to serve seniors, residents with disabilities, and those in need of assistance.
- Periodically evaluate the need for existing volunteer boards and committees. Where possible, consolidate committees with overlapping jurisdiction and eliminate committees whose services are no longer needed.
- Continue to evaluate enrollment trends, school capacity, and space needs in the Littleton Public Schools.



## Building Local Capacity

Capacity building is an investment in the effectiveness and future sustainability of town government. Measures to build capacity range from having effective strategies for communicating internally (within government) and with residents and businesses, improving volunteer recruitment in order to strengthen town boards and committees, developing ways to ensure thoughtful leadership succession, updating technology, and looking at ways to measure outcomes of local government programs and services. These actions can help a community manage its resources and build confidence in government. When capacity building succeeds, it enhances government's ability to have a positive impact on the community as a whole. For Littleton, there will be an immediate capacity building need for Master Plan Implementation – providing the volunteers and staff to make sure implementation stays on target and that people work together to accomplish what needs to be done. There will be ongoing needs for Master Plan information and public education as well. There are also near-term needs for Littleton to address staffing in facilities and asset management, transportation planning, and planning and zoning. All of the recommendations in the Implementation Program – across Master Plan elements – will depend on preserving existing capacity and building better capacity in areas that will face increasingly complex demands. The recommendations associated with this theme include:

- Make town funds available to support LHC members wishing to attend statewide preservation conferences.
- Create a Transportation Advisory Team to coordinate on transportation issues across departments and across modes of transportation.
- Hire a full-time facilities manager who would be responsible for the maintenance of town and school buildings, as well as the development of long-term maintenance and replacement plans.
- Establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee to promote and implementation of this plan, to evaluate the Town's implementation progress, and to recommend plan amendments as needed to the Littleton Planning Board.
- Evaluate the current functions of the Planning Department to determine whether the Town would benefit from having an economic development coordinator or director.
- Establish a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust in order to build local capacity for housing advocacy, housing finance, and housing development.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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Citizen participation is critical to the development of any town plan. In addition to the local knowledge that residents bring to the plan, providing multiple venues for participation is the only way to ensure that both majority and minority perspectives will be heard, evaluated, and accounted for as the plan evolves. Providing a variety of venues where residents can talk to one another also provide an opportunity to express a range of points of view, hear a variety of priorities, and even the potential to convince one another, in an effort to come to relative consensus. While the plan can to a large degree be developed based on an analysis of existing data and best practice, involving residents, business owners and town officials in a dialogue results in critical elements necessary to build a strong foundation of the plan. These include:

- Identification of shared values and a common vision for the future;
- Developing a shared understanding of concerns and desires as well as the fact that there may be competing interests and priorities;

- Improved working relationships between the various constituents;
- Community building as a result of working towards common goals;
- Momentum for action, and;
- Support, enthusiasm, and a stake in the implementation of the plan.

The Littleton Master Plan Steering Committee as well as Town Staff leading the Plan set the goal of making a concerted effort to attract attention to the planning process so that all who wished to participate would know when and how they could do so. An outreach plan outlined the ways in which the community would be informed of opportunities to participate, and listed the specific forums. The Consultant Team, Steering Committee and Staff dedicated time and effort to advertise and host these venues.

A logo and tagline were developed to help to create an identity for the planning process and to help to distinguish it from other processes going on in Town at the same time.



## Opportunities to Participate

Throughout the Master Plan process, the Town provided multiple opportunities (in a variety of formats) for the public to participate and help shape inputs and outcomes.<sup>3</sup> These included:

- Master Plan Update Steering Committee (MPUSC) Meetings – The twelve-member Committee was created to help steer the process and held monthly meetings with the RKG Team that were open to the public.
- Core Assessment Meetings - Local "experts," or individuals with specific knowledge regarding the subject matter covered by Master Plan elements, were invited to participate in eight topic area "core assessment meetings" to discuss existing conditions, as well as future trends and possibilities.
- Town-Wide Meeting #1: Visioning and Goal Setting - The purpose of the meeting was to identify shared values regarding the future development of Littleton; these were then used to develop a vision and set of goals.
- Town-Wide Meeting #2: Determining and Measuring Success - The purpose of this meeting, held on December 7, 2016, was to review and confirm the Vision and set of goals developed with the public's input, and to define and identify ways that we can use to measure and determine that we have successfully achieved these goals.
- Town-Wide Meeting #3: Presenting the Plan - The third Town-wide meeting was held to present the Plan's key recommendations to the public. A series of stations were set up to both present the recommendations and to ask the public for their input. For each recommendations participants were asked to indicate whether or not they agree, somewhat agree, need more information, are willing to have the Town spend more money to get more information or disagree. They were also asked to explain if they agreed with a specific recommendation, the reason for their agreement.



<sup>3</sup> Detailed documentation of the public process and results of the public meetings can be found in the Appendix.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

- Charrette #1: Littleton Common – Residents were invited to participate in a two-day planning and design exercise to develop a vision for the future of Littleton Common. The charrette began on Friday afternoon with a walking tour of the area.
- Charrette #2 – Residents were invited to participate in a two-day planning and design exercise to think more deeply about four key areas which included transportation, economic development, agriculture and food systems, and open space and recreation.

## Additional Outreach and Input

In addition to the larger format public input meetings, the Town and Consultant Team also held smaller inform gathering sessions that were targeted toward specific topics or groups of people in town. These included:

- Informational Interviews – The RKG Team conducted nearly fifty informational interviews with town staff, boards, committees, property owners, business owners, and others who had a deep knowledge of existing conditions in one or more Master Plan topic areas.
- Department Heads Meeting – The RKG Team met with town department heads and the Town Administrator to review and discuss the draft set of recommendations for the Master Plan to ensure their input was taken into account and implementation of the recommendations would be feasible.
- Agricultural Commission – In order to better understand the viewpoints of farmers and large landowners in Littleton, the RKG Team attended a meeting of the Agricultural Commission and discussed potential issues and strategies.
- Town-Wide Events and Online Presence – MPUSC members attended several town-wide events throughout the Master Plan to promote the process and upcoming public meetings. These included Third Thursday, the Littleton Country Fair, and a Littleton High School football game. The MPUSC also created Public Service Announcements with information about the process and upcoming events that ran on LCTV. The Town also developed a website for the project and maintained a Facebook page.



## Presence at Town-wide Events

Members of the MPUSC staffed a booth at the Town's Third Thursday event increasing awareness and providing information regarding the Plan, giving out handouts with the website address for those who wanted more information. MPUSC members also staffed a booth at the Littleton Country Fair, and attended a Littleton High School football game to promote the Master Plan and hand out t-shirts. LCTV staff worked closely with MPUSC members to create a series of public service announcements at critical points in the process to inform the public about the Master Plan and upcoming participatory events.

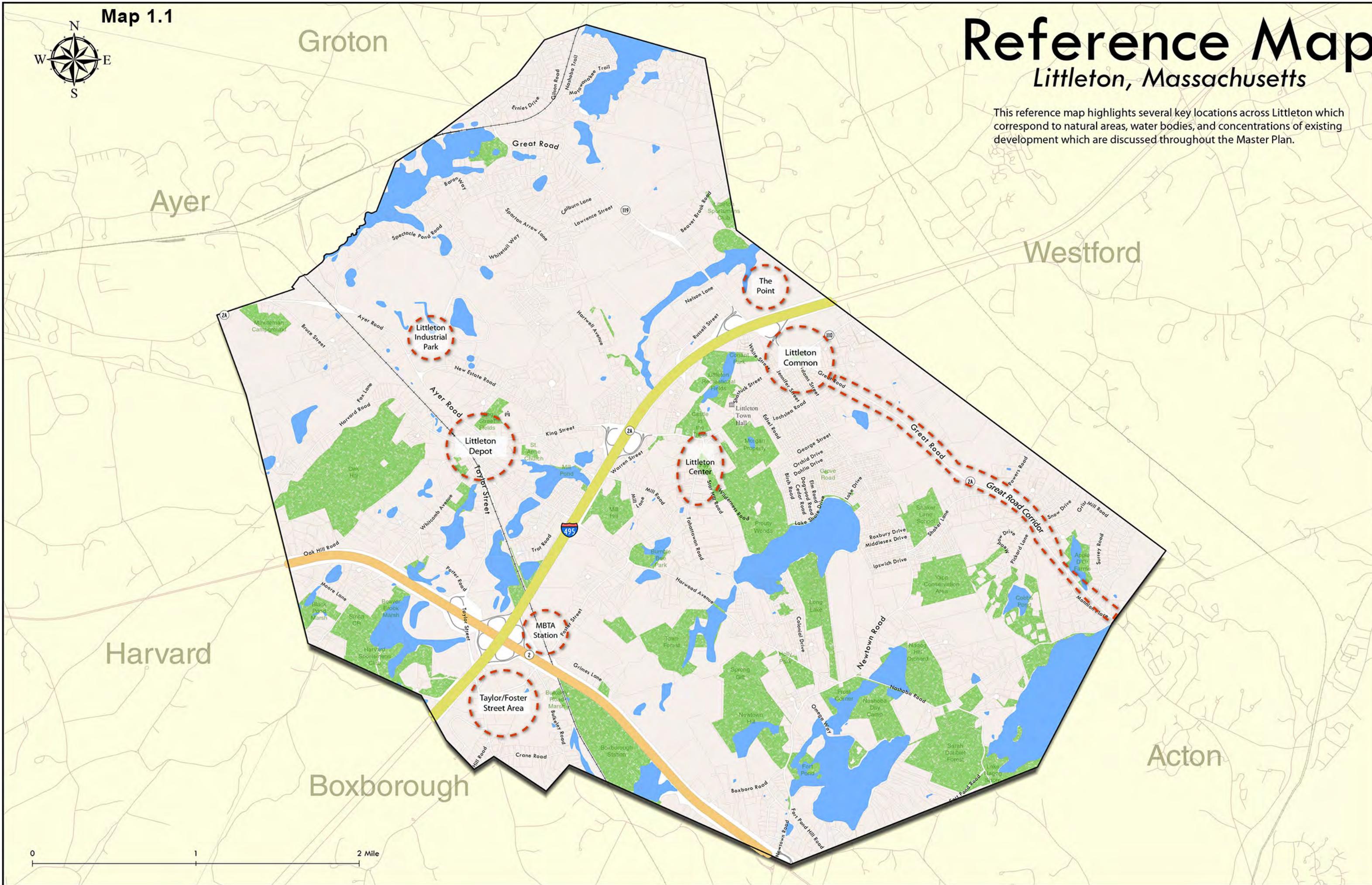
## Map 1.1



# Reference Map

## Littleton, Massachusetts

This reference map highlights several key locations across Littleton which correspond to natural areas, water bodies, and concentrations of existing development which are discussed throughout the Master Plan.





# 2 Land Use



## OVERVIEW

### Relationship to Master Plan Goals

The way land is used, divided up, or developed upon is one of the few topics that impacts (and is affected by) all the other elements of the Master Plan. Land use decisions determine the type of transportation system needed to serve development, the natural environment that is affected by development decisions, the efficiency and delivery of public services, the mix of housing available to residents, and the protection or destruction of historic resources. Land use is the heart of any city or town master plan.

### Key Findings

- Littleton comprises some 11,200 acres, or 17.5 square miles. This includes open space, water bodies, wetlands, developed land, and ultimately useable land as well.
- Today, only 30 percent of Littleton's land is developed while 70 percent remains undeveloped.
- While the area of forest land has grown about 5 percent since the 1970s, the area of cropland and orchard has declined by two-thirds.
- Before World War II, Littleton was a quiet, rural town with 1,651 residents. After upgrades to Route 2 in the 1950s and completion of Interstate 495 in the 1960s, Littleton became part of the network of suburbs around Boston.

#### Key Policy Recommendations: Land Use

- While the Master Plan provides general guidance for land use planning in certain nodes and corridors throughout Littleton, the Town should focus on some key locations and undertake a more in-depth area planning effort. These locations include Littleton Common, the Great Road Corridor from the Littleton-Acton town line to the Common, and the area around the intersection of Taylor and Foster Streets.
- The Town should conduct an audit of the Zoning Bylaw to reorganize and update it to today's standards. Once the Bylaw is updated, the Town should look at whether

the current zoning policies and regulations support the development or protection of land in key places noted in the Master Plan.

- Some degree of development will continue to occur on the large tracts of land that are currently unprotected in Littleton. One safeguard for preserving open space as part of new development proposals is Article XIX, the Open Space Development bylaw. There is a sense in Town that Article xix has not been as successful as it could be. The Town should consider updates to more easily allow for greater density, while protecting scenic woodland or agricultural lands in a manner that still conserves working farms in an economically sustainable way.

## INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

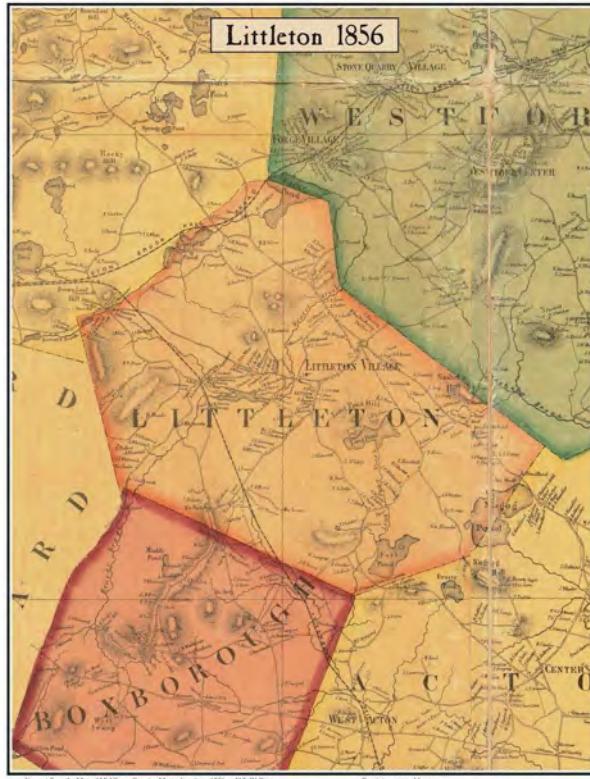
Land use refers to the arrangement of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and other human activities on the land, as well as the natural landscape of ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands, forests and grasslands that supports them. Of Littleton's total area of 11,245 acres, about 30 percent has been developed for roads, homes, stores, office buildings, quarries, warehouses, and their associated driveways and parking lots. About 70 percent remains in a natural state (undeveloped) or is used for agriculture.

The patterns of these varied land uses, as well as their interrelationships, are the record of centuries of human social and economic activity, laid over the continued workings of the natural ecosystem. Managed by the Native Americans for thousands of years, the landscape the English settlers found was no wilderness, but a managed natural ecosystem where game was encouraged through annual burning, streams and ponds provided regular harvests of fish, and agriculture was becoming increasingly important. The new settlers extended the English style of farming across the landscape, though the hilly terrain and varied soils led to a complex matrix of orchard, crop land, and pasturage. In the twentieth century, this agricultural landscape was overlaid with the new patterns of suburbia, with improved roads and highways linking Littleton to the region, bringing a new crop of office parks and subdivisions.

Despite these changes, Littleton retains much of its rural character and quality of life. About 15 percent of its landscape has been permanently protected and another 15 percent includes wetlands and waterbodies that are protected by state and federal law. On these areas, as well as for the 30 percent already developed, future land use change will be relatively modest. For the remaining 40 percent, the ultimate pattern of land use can be predicted by the town's zoning – though the actual outcome will depend on the decisions and choices of hundreds of individuals and families that own the land. By understanding both current conditions and likely trends for the future, the town can prepare for future land use change and work to shape it in order to preserve what's special about the town while enhancing opportunities for residents and business owners.

### In this Chapter

- Assess how Littleton has grown and how land use patterns have changed over time, identify areas where land use conflicts have arisen, and determine likely areas that can support future growth.
- Review Littleton's existing Zoning Bylaw and describe elements that are working well, and those that should be updated to support the future land use vision of the Town.
- Recommend locations in Town where additional planning is required, and suggest land use and zoning policy changes that support the vision and goals of the Master Plan.
- Identify geographic areas in Littleton where land should be protected, as well as areas where future growth should be concentrated.



The purpose of this chapter is to provide an inventory of existing land use patterns, together with an analysis of zoning, development suitability, and projections of future buildout. It describes alternative future land use scenarios and, drawing on other elements of the plan, identifies opportunities for future growth and conservation. It concludes with recommendations for zoning changes, conservation efforts, management tools and other implementation techniques designed to bring about the town's vision for future land use.

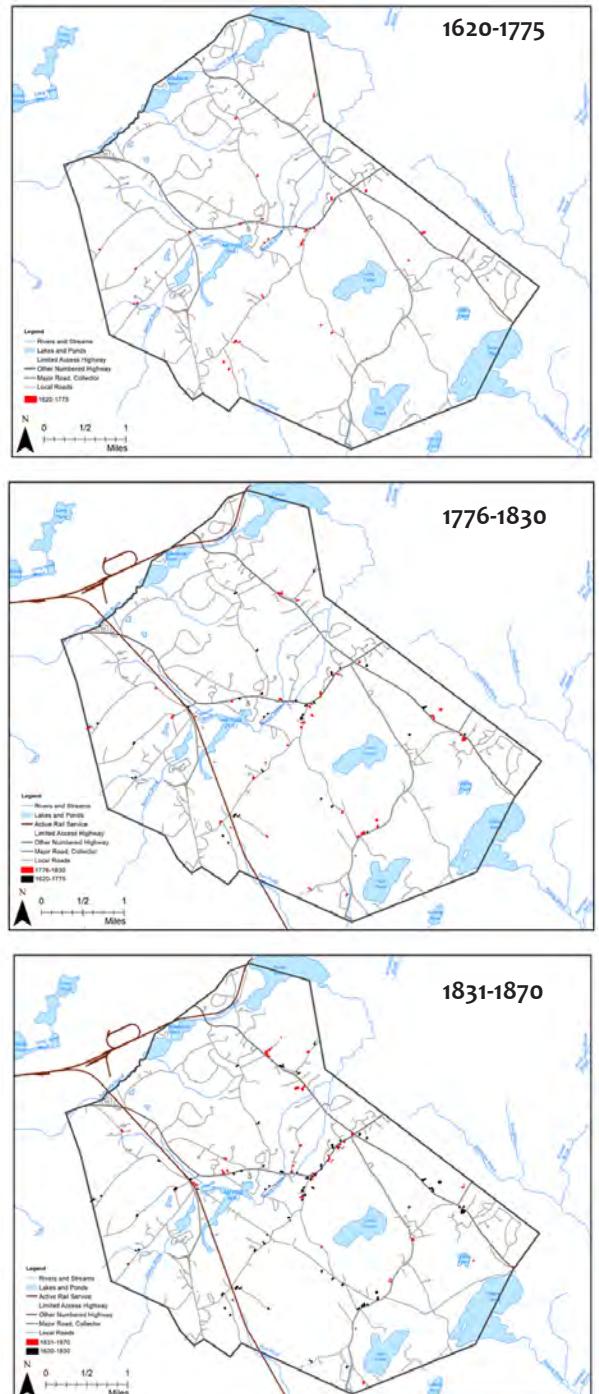
## Land Use and Settlement Patterns

Littleton is located at the intersection of Route 2 and Interstate 495, two key corridors that link it firmly to the region and, like the colonial-era Great Road from Boston to New Hampshire, they continue to be the major influence on economic growth and land use change. From an ecological perspective, Littleton lies at the border of the Middlesex Plain and Middlesex North subregions of the Worcester Transition zone, one of ten ecological regions in Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> Hydrologically, the West side of the town flows north as part of the Merrimack watershed, while the East side flows south into the SuAsCo (Sudbury-Assabet-Concord) watershed. These various geographic typologies thus describe a town that is located within a transitional landscape, and therefore one of great variety, ecological diversity and visual interest.

Archaeological sites dating back to the Late Archaic Period (6,000-3,000 years ago) confirm that this rich landscape was home to Native American peoples, and the Nipmuc tribe controlled the area when English settlers arrived in the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Lying beyond the inner ring of towns settled as part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the town was lightly settled by the English at first, and an area near Nagog pond was selected for the Native American "praying village" of Nashoba in 1654. The disastrous King Philip's War of the 1670s lay the groundwork for removal of most of the remaining native people and made way for English settlers, who established the town of Littleton in 1714.

At the beginning of the American Revolution, Littleton had 918 residents. They were settled across the hilly topography of the town, connected by rough roads. Orchards and cattle raising proved the most successful form of agriculture on the stony soils. Several small saw and grist mills met the needs of local farmers. A village center was established along the main post road. By the early 1800s, the village extended along King Street from what is now known as Littleton Center<sup>3</sup> to Littleton Common, which access to the Great Road had made an increasingly import-

Map 2.1 - Littleton's Land Use Evolution



<sup>1</sup> Richard W. Wilkie, Historical Atlas of Massachusetts (1991).

<sup>2</sup> This and subsequent history from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program, Littleton Reconnaissance Report (June 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Located west of the Common, Littleton Center developed in the eighteenth century along Foster Street from King Street to Tahattawan

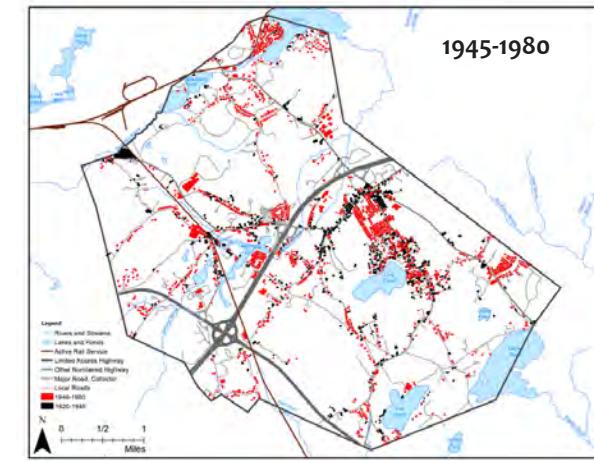
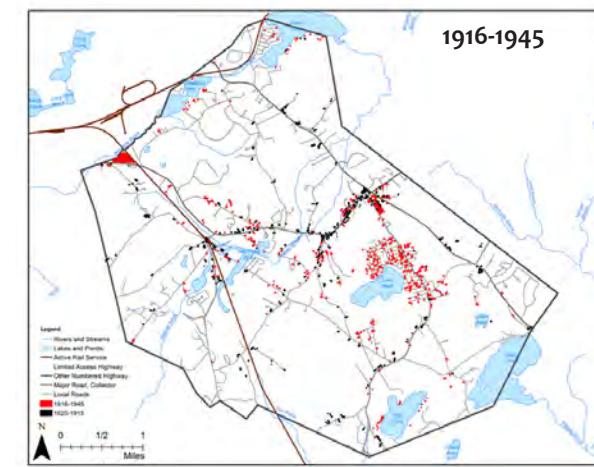
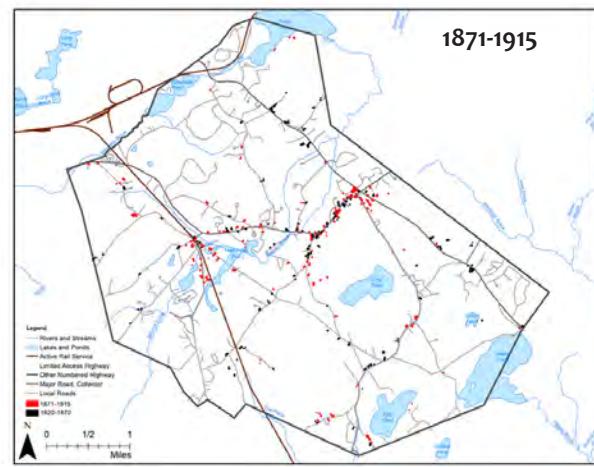
## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

ant location for shipping, storage, lodging, and other needs. Settlement continued along the outlying road system, with single homesteads or clusters of families gathered where soil conditions and topography were favorable.

By 1845 the Fitchburg railroad had been laid out across Littleton, creating another economic center at Littleton Depot. Rail access brought increased opportunities for shipping manufactured goods and agricultural products, as well as new immigrants, mostly Irish. In addition to continued grain and saw milling, other industries developed in the nineteenth century, most notably the Conant-Houghton factory at Littleton Common, which manufactured elastic webbing for suspenders and other uses. Yet through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Littleton remained largely an agricultural town. New England Apple Products was established in 1865 at Littleton Depot and eventually grew into Veryfine, continuing at the 29-acre site until corporate consolidations led to its closing in 2015. Access to nearby urban markets supported diversification of agriculture, including dairying, poultry, orchards and vegetables. While the farm landscape remained stable, new homes and businesses grew up along the King Street spine from Littleton Depot past the old Center to Littleton Common.

Between the first and second world wars Littleton's land use patterns began to reflect a change from a primarily agricultural landscape to a bedroom community and summer resort. Spurred by the growth of Fort Devens, and later Hanscom Air Force Base, summer homes and cottages sprang up around Long Lake and the other ponds. The Knights and Ladies of Kaleva, a Finnish civic group from Maynard, established a cottage community on Fort Pond after 1915.

Between 1950 and 1953, improvements to Route 2 opened up Littleton to the suburban land rush that was already defining the post-war era. For the next thirty years the town grew relatively quickly, with numerous new subdivisions, frontage development on existing roads, and conversion of many lakeside cottages to year-round use. Construction of Interstate 495 in the early 1960s completed the current regional highway system. In turn, this paved the way for development of corporate offices, most notably Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), which built offices just north of the Common as well as on Porter Road, Foster Street and Taylor Street. From a population of 1,651 in 1940, by 1980 the town had more than quadrupled to 6,970 people, and another 2,000 people arrived by 2010. While DEC closed its local offices after acquisition by Compaq and that company's merger with Hewlett Packard, the importance of the town's location at the crossroads of two regional highways was reinforced in 2007 when IBM selected DEC's former offices at Littleton Common as its consolidated New England software campus



with 2400 jobs. The same locational advantages that attracted IBM to the town have led to the recent opening of The Point, a 540,000 square foot, mixed-use "lifestyle center" development with shops, restaurants, supermarket, hotel and entertainment offerings.

As a result of these suburban growth trends, Littleton has undergone fundamental social, economic and environmental changes. No longer a small rural town where most people work locally, many residents commute to work elsewhere. Churches, town committees, service organizations, and other social groups continue to play a major role in community life, yet many families focus more on school events and youth sports and are somewhat detached from the older community institutions. Despite more than two-thirds of the land remaining in forest, agriculture or other undeveloped land uses, the visual character of the town has changed as many roadsides have been lined with suburban house lots and old fields grow up to woods. A car dealer and other automobile-oriented strip development extends along the Great Road east of Littleton Common. Even though large areas of undeveloped land remain intact, they are increasingly hidden behind a wall of homes and businesses.

## Measuring Land Use Trends

The Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS) has compiled digital statewide land use data back to 1971. Developed from aerial photographs, the maps identify the area covered by an evident use, and they can be used to calculate the total acres for each land use type. (Strictly speaking, they are known as land use/land cover maps, since the actual use of a particular land cover, such as forest, could include a variety of uses.) By comparing land use/land cover data for 1971 with subsequent inventories completed over the intervening years, we can understand both the rate and patterns of recent development.

**Table 2.1. Land Use Change Since 1971**

Land use	1971 (acres)	2005 (acres)	Present (acres)	% Change Since 1971
Forest	5401	5700.5	5668.1	4.95
Non-Forested Wetland	564.4	520.7	520.66	-7.75
Open Land	271.9	172.3	165.03	-39.31
Transitional	78.9	142.9	132.63	68.13
Brushland/Successional	0	50.7	50.73	N/A
Water	581.7	587.4	587.37	0.98
Cropland	1532.7	566.9	516.97	-66.27
Pasture	197.1	179.7	144.39	-26.73
Orchard	257.2	92.6	92.59	-64
Nursery	0	38.9	38.9	N/A
Multi-Family Residential	0	13.3	29.77	N/A
High Density Residential	11.1	21.7	21.75	96.78
Medium Density Residential	671.2	644.2	656.73	-2.16
Low Density Residential	886.9	1430.6	1465.1	65.19
Participation Recreation	32.4	83.7	116.12	258.57
Commercial	114.8	239	273.51	138.33
Transportation	342.1	262.8	262.79	-23.18
Industrial	227.9	256.3	256.31	12.45
Mining	50.5	195.7	195.73	287.33
Waste Disposal	0	6.4	6.41	N/A

Source: Mass GIS through 2005; 2016 update estimated by Dodson & Flinker, Inc.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

Comparing the land use maps from 1971 with a map of current land use, it is clear that land use change has included both a shift in overall acreage, but more importantly a change in distribution. In 1971, for example, the landscape of the town was dominated by 5,400 acres of forest; about 1,500 acres of wetlands, waterbodies and open land; and almost 2,000 acres in agricultural cropland, pastures, and orchard. About 1900 acres were developed for homes, businesses, and industrial use; about 400 acres were given over to roads, bridges, mines and other infrastructure. Most significantly, the bulk of the developed areas were clustered close to the traditional centers, and what subdivisions existed along outlying roads were surrounded by many acres of undeveloped land. While suburbanization was well under way, the essential rural patterns – of relatively compact development centers embedded in open space – remained.

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### By 2005, more than half of the agricultural land was gone, and in 2016 almost two thirds of the cropland and orchard have been replaced by development or grown up to woods.

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By 2005, more than half of the agricultural land was gone, and in 2016 almost two thirds of the cropland and orchard have been replaced by development or grown up to woods. While the extent of forest has actually expanded by 5 percent since 1971, the remaining natural areas are increasingly fragmented by new subdivision roads and development of single family homes on “approval-not-required”<sup>4</sup> (ANR) lots along existing roadsides. The ancient rural pattern of developed areas surrounded by open space is gradually transitioning to a suburban pattern where the remaining open space is surrounded by development.

Since the late 1990s, construction of new homes has paralleled the ups and downs of the general economy: 137 lots subdivided between 1997 and 2000; another 70 lots created from 2001 to the low point of the Great Recession in 2009; and 62 lots subdivided from 2013-2014. The total of 203 new house lots represents a relatively modest average of about 10 lots per year. However, the relatively large size of the lots and the continued development of agricultural land creates an impact larger than indicated by the percentage change.

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### Current Land Use Inventory

The inventory of current land use has been prepared by updating 2005 data from Mass GIS according to a visual inspection of 2015 orthophotography. The twenty land use categories fall into three major categories, described below.<sup>5</sup>

- **Undeveloped Land and Waterbodies: 64 percent**

- Forested lands comprise the largest single land use in Littleton, with 5,668 acres amounting to 50.6 percent of the total land area. Forest is defined as the land where tree canopy covers at least 50 percent of the land area, and includes both coniferous and deciduous species. For the purpose of this inventory, forest includes both wetland and upland areas.
- Non-forested wetland (521 acres) has been mapped by the state Department of Environmental Protection using aerial photographs. It tends to focus on wetlands associates with stream

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<sup>4</sup> Development where lots meet the dimensional requirements of the current zoning as it applies to frontage requirements and approval is not required under the Subdivision Control Law.

<sup>5</sup> Note: Land use definitions are from on-line descriptions of Mass GIS land use/land cover datalayers.

Table 2.2. Subdivisions Approved 1997-2014

Name	New Lots	Total Acreage	# of Lots Built as of Jan. 2016	Year	Open Space Area (Acres)
Grimes Lane/Durkee Farm Estates	30	44.6	0	2016	16.54
Farmers Row Estates/Fletcher	9	72.7	0	2014	56.4
Bennett Orchard	32	45.2	0	2014	22.6
Sanderson					
The Orchards	21	32.5	9	2013	14
McIntosh Lane					
Chestnut Farm	12	60	6	2009	N/A
Lexington Place	1	1	1	2008	0.1
Village at Newtown Hill	4	18.26	0	2008	8.98
Reed Meadow	9+2	7.5	11	2007	3.8
Over-55 Housing				2012	
Hobby Horse Sleigh Ride Lane	9	10.8	9	2006	N/A
Shelburne Village	9	9.1	9	2006	5.3
Over-55 Housing					
Meadow View Bumblebee Lane	6	21.6	6	2002	9.4
Cobb Development*	17	118.6	4*	2001	98
West View	5	7	5	2001	N/A
Jillian Lane					
Mary Shepherd Estates	17	36.5	17	2000	20.3
Wilson Estates	5	7.7	5	2000	N/A
Nancy's Way					
Richard Way	7	8.9	7	2000	3.3
Delaney Drive	14	31.4	14	1999	21.6
Laury Lane	4	7	4	1999	N/A
Highland Farms	5	8.6	5	1999	N/A
Center Village	3	5	3	1999	N/A
Jane's Drive	5	8.64	5	1998	N/A
Partridge Lane	5	7.83	5	1998	N/A
Russell Court	2	10	2	1997	7
Apple D'Or	70	N/A	N/A	1997/8	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>570.4</b>	<b>1123</b>		<b>286.54</b>

Source: 2016 Littleton Open Space and Recreation Plan; Littleton Planning Department

corridors and waterbodies, and often does not include smaller areas of wetland or vernal pools that may be present on isolated sites.

- Open land (165 acres) represents vacant areas, idle agriculture, rock outcrops and barren areas not maintained for any evident purpose and devoid of significant plant growth. A similar category, Transitional Land (133 acres) represents areas that seem to be in the process of being developed from one land use into another.
- Brushland/successional areas (51 acres) are those dominated by more than 25 percent shrub cover and immature trees not large or dense enough to be considered forest. It can include areas that are more or less permanent, such as heaths, blueberry barrens or patches of mountain laurel.

**● Agricultural Lands: 7 percent**

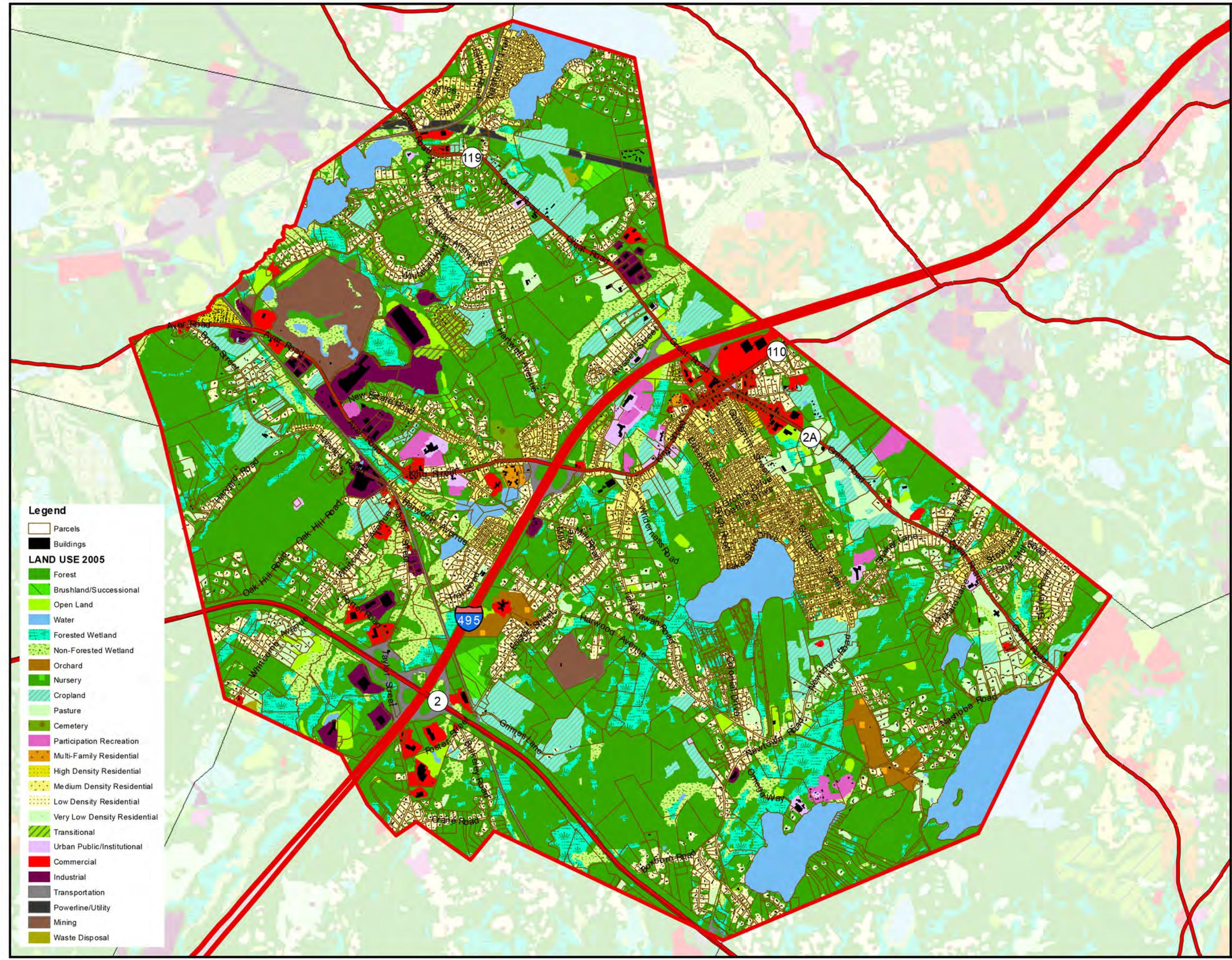
- Cropland (517 acres) represents land that is tilled to grow vegetables and other row crops. The boundaries follow the shape of fields and include barns and other associated buildings.
- Pasture (144 acres) includes fields and associated barns and outbuildings used for animal grazing and the growing of hay for harvest.
- Orchard (93 acres) include fruit farms and associated facilities.
- Nursery (39 acres) include growing areas as well as greenhouses and other associated buildings. Christmas tree farms are also classified as nurseries.

**● Developed lands: 29 percent**

- Multi-family Residential (30 acres) includes duplexes, apartment buildings, and condominium complexes, and comprises both buildings and associated lawns and parking areas.
- High Density Residential (22 acres) represents housing on less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre lots.
- Medium Density Residential (657 acres) includes housing on lots between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre.
- Low Density Residential (1465 acres) comprises housing on  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 acre lots.
- Commercial (274 acres) includes malls, shopping centers and larger strip commercial areas, as well as neighborhood stores and medical offices. It includes the office buildings owned by IBM and others, together with their associated driveways, parking lots and landscaped areas.
- Industrial (256 acres) light and heavy industry, including buildings, equipment and parking areas.
- Mining (196 acres) includes sand and gravel pits, mines and quarries, with boundaries extending to the edge of the site's activities, including access roads, parking lots and buildings. By far the largest facility in Littleton is owned by Aggregate Industries, and has over 100 million tons of reserves. In 1971, 50 acres were in mining.
- Transportation (263 acres) includes divided highways and interchanges and their associated maintenance areas, rest areas, etc., as well as rail corridors and stations. Smaller roads are included in the adjoining land use category.
- Waste Disposal (6 acres) includes landfills, dumps, water supply and wastewater treatment facilities and their associated buildings and parking lots. Capped landfills are categorized according to their current land use.
- Participation Recreation (116 acres) comprises ball fields, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, ski areas and bike paths, along with their associated parking lots. It includes school fields and recreation areas as well as some private facilities that are generally open to the public.

**Zoning in Littleton**

One of the key components to a Master Plan is assessing the Town's local zoning regulations and requirements. Zoning is an expression of the development type and pattern in a community. It describes the location, set of land uses, and the relationship between the land use and the surrounding context. The Master Plan sets forth a vision and direction describing, in part, how the use of the land will evolve over time. Zoning should be consistent with that land use vision, and serve as the implementation arm of the Master Plan. In an ideal setting, a resident, property owner, town official, or developer should be able to review Littleton's zoning bylaw and understand what the community wants in the different zoning districts across the town.



# Map 2.2

# Land Use

# 2005

## *Littleton, Massachusetts*

# DODSON & FLINKER

Landscape Architecture and Planning

Date: 7/21/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, Mass  
EOQEA, USGS

This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations or delineating natural resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the



A number line from 0 to 1 with tick marks every  $\frac{1}{4}$ . The tick marks are labeled 0,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and 1. Below the line, the word "Miles" is written.



Map 2.3

# Zoning

Littleton, Massachusetts

## Base Zoning October 2013

- Residential District (R)
- Business District (B)
- Village Common District (VC)
- Industrial A District (I-A)
- Industrial B District (I-B)

- Aquifer
- Water Resource
- Beaver Brook Overlay District

**RKG**  
ASSOCIATES INC

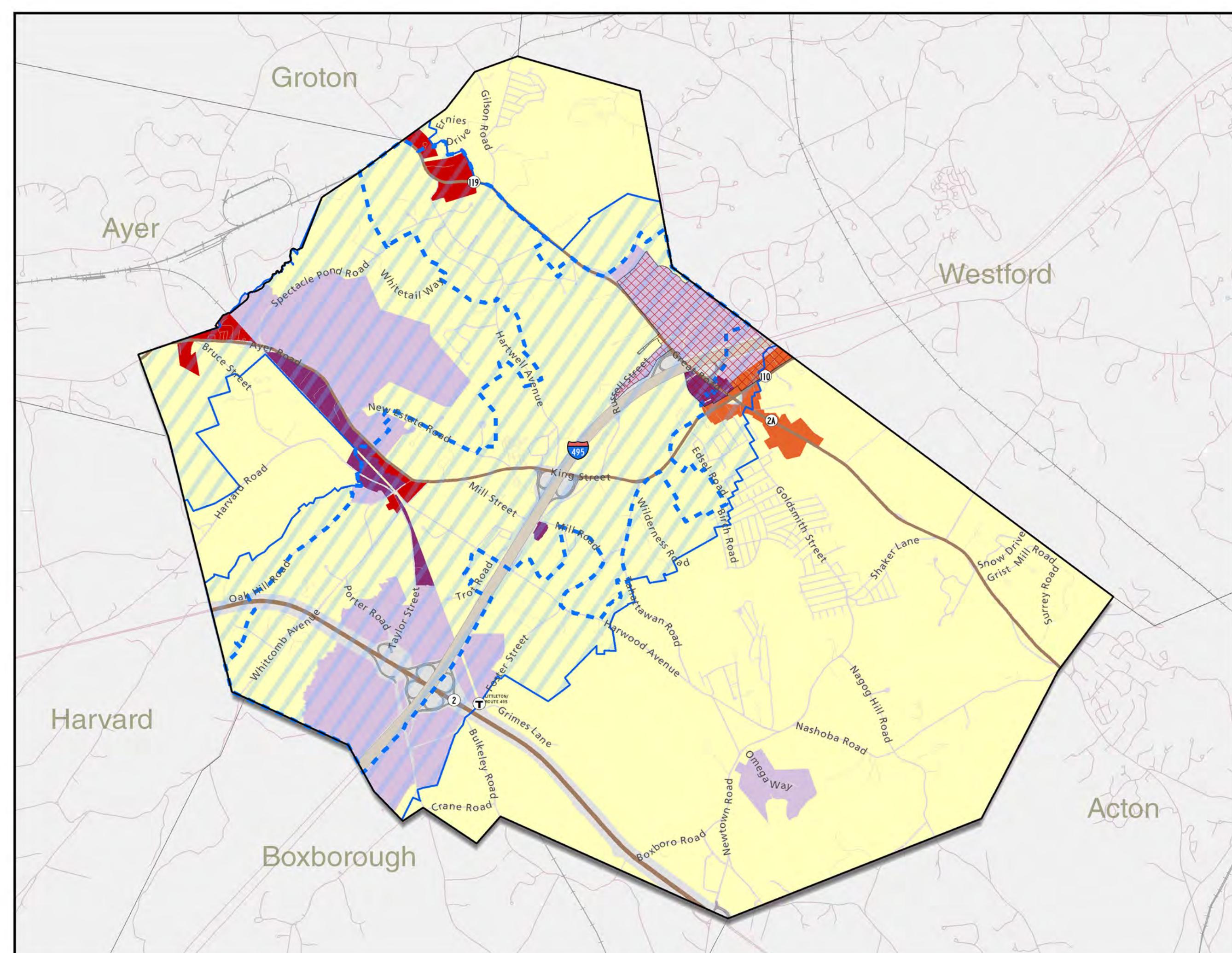


Date: 9/15/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton

This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations or delineating natural resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.



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Mile





## Districts

Littleton's current Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) was adopted in 1988 and has been amended several times since then. The current ZBL sets up five base zoning districts that allow specific uses within them. Littleton has one residential district, two business districts, and two industrial districts. Overall, 85 percent of the land in Littleton is zoned Residential (R), which allows primarily single-family dwellings. The R district is spread widely across town, particularly east of I-495. The Industrial A (I-A) district is the second largest, covering about 11.5 percent of the land in Littleton. The remaining land in town falls within the Industrial B (I-B) district, 1.2 percent, the Business (B) district (1 percent), and the Village Common (VC) district (0.9 percent). Table 2.4 shows each zoning district in Littleton and the acreage covered.

### RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

Littleton has only one residential district for the entire town: Residential (R). This district principally provides for as-of-right development of detached single-family homes. Over-55 housing developments are allowed by special permit from the Planning Board. There is also a provision in the table of uses for nursing homes by special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), but the location and dimension restrictions placed on the use would make it very challenging for a developer to construct.<sup>6</sup> Two-family and multi-family housing are not allowed in any district as-of-right. Littleton provides for only a limited range of options to create attached housing, all requiring a special permit: conversion of older single-family homes (existing before March 1951) to two-family homes, new two-family homes in age-restricted developments, and units in mixed-use developments. Finally, Littleton's R district also allows for some agricultural and civic uses such as farms, farm stands, schools, and religious uses – uses which, in many cases, are categorically exempt from zoning as a matter of law.

The R district has a minimum lot area of 40,000 square feet for all new development. This requirement works well in keeping with the character of newer single-family subdivisions in Littleton, as the average lot size of single-family homes is just over 47,000 sq. ft. In some of the older residential areas like the Long Lake neighborhood, parcel sizes run smaller and remodeling of single-family homes is creating larger homes on small lots. In addition to lot area restrictions, the R district regulates height and lot coverage. Structures cannot exceed thirty-two feet in height or lot coverage of 60 percent, including all impervious areas (buildings and paving).

**Over 55 Housing.** In 2005, the Town adopted the "Over 55 Housing Developments" Bylaw (ZBL Article XXIII), which is intended to create mixed-income housing for people fifty-five years and older.<sup>7</sup> Littleton requires at least 25 percent of the units in an over-55 development to be affordable to low- or moderate-income seniors, and there is a modest density bonus for developments to include some units specifically for low-income seniors.<sup>8</sup> Under Littleton's bylaw, age-restricted units are limited to single-family and two-family dwellings, and duplexes are capped at a maximum of 50 percent. The town requires at least five acres for this type of development and encourages open space preservation by not setting minimum lot sizes or lot size per dwelling unit. To date, two developments have utilized this bylaw: Shelburne Village off White Street and Reed Lane off Harvard Road. In addition to the over-55 developments and nursing homes, Littleton allows assisted living facilities in the Littleton Village Overlay District West – Beaver Brook Area.

**Table 2.4. Littleton Zoning Districts**

Zoning District	Acres	Percent of Total
Residential	8,811	85.40%
Business	100	1.00%
Village Common	91	0.90%
Industrial A	1,191	11.50%
Industrial B	120	1.20%
<b>Total, All Districts</b>	<b>10,313</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Town of Littleton, RKG Associates

<sup>6</sup> Footnote 2 of the Use Regulations Schedule restricts development of nursing homes by placing large setback requirements, lot area per dwelling unit requirements, roadway requirements, and design restrictions on this use.

<sup>7</sup> Littleton ZBL Article XXIII

<sup>8</sup> In the Bylaw, the term "affordable" is the same as moderate income or 80 percent of the area median income.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

**Open Space Development.** In 1990, Littleton adopted an Open Space Development (OSD) Bylaw to promote saving open space and agricultural lands by encouraging residential cluster design. Under Article XIX, OSD is required for any subdivision of ten acres or more. The Planning Board can grant an OSD special permit or waive OSD requirements and allow the applicant to proceed with a conventional residential subdivision. The uses allowed through this Special Permit are limited and include detached single-family homes and recreation facilities/offices/buildings associated with the development itself. Except within the Aquifer and Water Protection Districts,<sup>9</sup> OSD density is determined by the number of lots a developer could create in a traditional subdivision. However, the bylaw also allows the Planning Board to grant additional density, up to twice the number of units under a traditional subdivision plan, in exchange for "significant areas of scenic woodland or agricultural lands along a public road frontage."<sup>10</sup>

## BUSINESS DISTRICTS

In most towns, the business districts tend to include the most flexible provisions for as-of-right<sup>11</sup> development and special permits. The same can be said for Littleton's two business districts, Village Common (VC) and Business (B). Residential uses such as single-family, two-family conversions, nursing homes, and lodging homes are allowed in both districts. Commercial uses include establishments such as offices, banks, retail sales and services, eat-in restaurants, indoor recreation facilities, and institutional uses. The uses permitted in the VC and B districts are almost identical, with the exceptions being mixed use and vehicular retail sales both of which are not allowed in the B district.

The minimum lot area is 15,000 sq. ft. in both the B and VC districts, which helps to match new development to older development patterns, especially in Littleton Common where the parcels are smaller. Both districts also have a minimum setback of twenty-five feet from the street and fifteen-feet from the rear and side lot lines. However, the Planning Board can approve a reduced front setback in the VC district depending on the setbacks on adjacent properties. Building height in the two districts is limited to thirty-two feet, similar to the R district.

**Major Commercial and Industrial Uses.** Littleton has adopted a separate set of regulations for "Major Commercial and Industrial Uses." Industrial or commercial activities are classified as major if the aggregate of all activity on the parcel meets or exceeds one or more of the following thresholds:

- More than 30,000 square feet of gross floor area for retail, or more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area of any other non-residential use.
- Sewage disposal of more than 10,000 gallons per day.
- More than 1,000 vehicle trip ends for an average business day.

Major commercial or industrial uses require special permit approval from the Planning Board. This requires additional submittals such as a site plan, architectural plans, and traffic and groundwater impact analyses.<sup>12</sup>

## MIXED-USE

In 2010, Littleton adopted a Mixed-Use Bylaw that allows for a combination of residential and commercial uses that can either be constructed vertically in a multi-story building, or horizontally with uses adjacent to one another in one or more buildings on a lot. The Town currently allows mixed-use buildings to be constructed in the VC district and in the Beaver Brook Overlay District by Special Permit through

<sup>9</sup> Properties within the Aquifer and Water Protection Districts are limited to a maximum of one dwelling unit per 40,000 sq. ft. of land area (about one unit per acre) for the portion of the OSD that lies within the district boundaries.

<sup>10</sup> Littleton ZBL Article XIX Section 173-104.

<sup>11</sup> Refers to development that complies with applicable zoning regulations and does not require any discretionary action (Special Permit or variances).

<sup>12</sup> Traffic and groundwater impact analyses are only required if thresholds set forward in the bylaw are met or exceeded.

the Planning Board. However, residential uses are not permitted as a component of mixed-use development in the Beaver Brook Overlay.

The Bylaw recommends that ground floor uses in a mixed-use building be reserved for commercial uses except in cases where:

- A building with residential on the first floor is set behind another commercial building.
- The residential component is set behind commercial space on the first floor.
- Where the Planning Board determines that first-floor residential use will not have an adverse impact on the street frontage.

The residential component is limited to studios and one- and two-bedroom units.

### **LITTLETON VILLAGE OVERLAY DISTRICT WEST – BEAVER BROOK AREA**

In addition to the Mixed-Use provision, in 2010 the Town created the Littleton Village Overlay District West – Beaver Brook Area.<sup>13</sup> An overlay district is a means to incorporate a new set of development regulations that are different or perhaps regulate the land in a different way than the base zoning district. The Beaver Brook Overlay is intended to promote:

- A variety of commercial and retail uses, coordinated through a master plan process.
- Economic development that is sensitive to environmental issues and residential impacts.
- Reuse of existing buildings and infill development.
- Innovative site design, and physical design.
- Existing industrial uses and the preservation of historic resources.
- A pedestrian-friendly environment.

Projects that are more than three acres in size are encouraged to follow the Master Planned Overlay Development Special Permit process which provides the Planning Board with additional oversight and information regarding larger projects in town. In the Overlay, the uses have been expanded beyond what would be available to a property owner under the Industrial A or Industrial B base zoning districts.<sup>14</sup> New use categories include assembly uses, business uses, retail/merchandise uses, hotels, and assisted living. Single-family and multi-family residential is not allowed in the Overlay. The Town also adopted design standards as part of the bylaw to promote a higher quality design and architecture for the new development. Almost the entire Overlay District falls within the Aquifer and Water Resource Districts, which limits impervious surface lot coverage to 30 percent. Development on smaller parcels looking to take advantage of the Beaver Brook Overlay, it may be challenging to accommodate a building and parking and remain under the 30 percent threshold.

### **INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS**

Littleton has two industrial zoning districts: Industrial A (I-A) and Industrial B (I-B). The main purpose of these districts is to promote and support industrial development, but other uses are allowed, too, such as offices, retail, restaurants, and institutional uses. Most of the industrially-zoned land is the I-A district with large areas along Ayer Road west of I-495, a large area around the Route 2/I-495 interchange, along the north side of Route 119, and a smaller area off Newtown Road along Omega Way. There are two small areas of I-B zoning; one along the south side of Ayer Road west of I-495 and the other in the immediate area of Littleton Common.

<sup>13</sup> Littleton ZBL Article XXV

<sup>14</sup> The full list of uses can be seen in the Littleton ZBL Section 173-170.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

There is no minimum lot area or lot frontage requirement in the industrial districts unless a residential use is proposed, in which case projects have to comply with the requirements of the R district. Setbacks in the I-A district are substantial: a minimum of eighty feet in front and fifty feet in the side and rear yards. By contrast, the minimum front setback in the I-B district is thirty feet, with a minimum of twenty feet for the side and rear. Buildings in both districts cannot exceed a height limit of forty feet. The maximum lot coverage is 80 percent.

## AQUIFER AND WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT

In 1988, Littleton was one of the first towns in Massachusetts to adopt a bylaw to protect both surface and groundwater resources. The Aquifer and Water District is an overlay district which provides for additional protections and restrictions on the land that is encompassed by it. Within the Districts, the underlying zoning continues to apply, but allowable uses are limited to what is listed in the Use Table associated with the Districts.<sup>15</sup> Uses in the table are broken down between the more restrictive Aquifer District and the slightly less restrictive Water Resource District. Uses are either not allowed at all (indicated with an N), or require a Special Permit (P) through the Planning Board.

It is important to note that land encompassed by these two zoning districts have additional regulatory restrictions, namely the application of design and operations guidelines.<sup>16</sup> Under the Aquifer District, impervious surface coverage cannot exceed 30 percent of the total land area. Any development in this district with an impervious surface coverage between 15 and 30 percent must provide for on-site water recharge in order to qualify for a special permit. A similar restriction applies in the Water Resource District, but the percentages have been increased to a range of 20 to 50 percent impervious coverage.

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS: OFF-STREET PARKING

Littleton requires all land uses to provide off-street parking. Parking requirements for some uses in the ZBL are regulated by the number of spaces per square foot of building area, while others are regulated by the number of seats, beds, or employees a business may have on the property. Overall, some of the parking requirements are in line with industry standards with the exception of residential, retail, and to a lesser degree office uses. For new residential development, the ZBL requires two spaces per dwelling unit be provided regardless of the size of the residential unit.<sup>17</sup> This works well for off-street parking associated with single-family homes where it may be more typical to have multiple cars, but may be requiring too much parking where smaller studio and one-bedroom units are constructed as part of a multi-family development.

Littleton's zoning requires retail uses to provide one parking space for every 150 square feet of leasable floor area, or five spaces per 1,000 square feet of leasable floor area. Typical parking standards from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), which most zoning bylaws and ordinances are based on, recommends a ratio between three to three and a half parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet of floor area.<sup>18</sup> The current requirements in the Littleton ZBL are twice as high as the nationally accepted standard. The parking requirements for office uses are about 10 percent higher than national standards. The ZBL requires four parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet of floor area, where national standards are between three and 3.6 spaces for every 1,000 square feet of floor area.<sup>19</sup> The higher parking requirements may be a challenge for development on small parcels, particularly those in and around the Common. There are publicly available on-street parking spaces in this area, but they are limited to the sections of King Street and Stevens Street adjacent to the Common. During the public engagement process, many residents and business owners noted that the lack of parking in the Common is an issue that needs to be addressed if redevelopment occurs.

<sup>15</sup> Use Table can be found in Article XIV, Section 173-61.

<sup>16</sup> Littleton ZBL Section 173-63.

<sup>17</sup> Littleton ZBL Section 173-32.

<sup>18</sup> American Planning Association. "Planning and Urban Design Standards", 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

The ZBL does have provisions and recommendations for applicants to consider how parking could be shared among uses on the same property, or sharing parking with other developments nearby. The ZBL does require any shared parking to be within three hundred feet of the primary use that is being permitted.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### □ Balancing Growth and Preservation

From the start of the Master Plan Update process, residents have expressed concern about the Town's growth with particular emphasis on the subsequent loss of open space and farmland. To date, residents have also expressed and acknowledged that some new development is likely to occur and in some cases may be necessary to provide the housing, jobs, and services that will help Littleton prepare for the future. In some specific locations such as the Town Common, growth was seen as desirable by many residents. The intention of this plan is to help Littleton preserve and enhance the rural features and small-town qualities that attract people to the town and provide a high quality of life. This requires an approach that identifies and prioritizes opportunities to support future growth where appropriate, and looks for opportunities to preserve open space. Finding this balance will also require the town to be more proactive in planning for growth and conservation at a finer grained scale by completing area plans for key nodes and corridors, and implementing the necessary policies and regulations to make those plans a reality.

**With limited financial resources, the Town must be strategic about which parcels provide the most benefit as protected open space. Additionally, if the town is serious about its desire to protect its rural character, then it must be more proactive about supporting the economic viability of farming.**

One of the major concerns expressed by the public early on is the threat of new development replacing large tracts of farmland. In 2011, voters enacted a farmland protection zoning amendment that allows a number of agriculturally-related accessory uses on active farms larger than five acres, including equipment sales and repair, processing and sale of food and feed products, and event facilities. However, large landowners are still limited by what they can do with their land if agriculture and related uses are no longer viable. The most lucrative option remains selling the land for residential development, or selling to the Town for conservation. With limited financial resources, however, the Town must be strategic about which parcels provide the most benefit as protected open space. Additionally, if the town is serious about its desire to protect its rural character, then it must be more proactive about supporting the economic viability of farming.

### □ Encouraging Redevelopment

Redevelopment of Littleton Common and other logical centers of activity is not without challenges. The first, and possibly largest challenge is the issue of sewers. Many residents would like to see the area around the Common redeveloped into a more traditional New England village center. This is a difficult issue in Town, but one that needs to be resolved if the Common is to be reimagined.

Another barrier to redevelopment is zoning that unnecessarily restricts uses within the various districts, making it difficult to adjust to changing market demand. This was recognized through adoption of a bylaw allowing mixed-use development in the Village Common district and the Beaver Brook Overlay district. As the bylaw and use table are currently written, however, mixed-use development that includes residential as a component is only allowed in the Village Common district and not in the Beaver Brook

## **LITTLETON MASTER PLAN**

Overlay. The Town may want to consider expanding the location and type of mixed use development in the future, particularly in the Beaver Brook Overlay where a housing component could help support future commercial and retail uses.

### **□ Preserving Rural Features**

The word "Rural," from an economic perspective, refers to places where people make their living from the land as farmers, or from other land-based resources such as timber or minerals. These resources are grown (or extracted), processed, stored, and shipped to places where people need them. Littleton's historic pattern of roads, farms, orchards, and village centers can all be explained based on these original rural needs and functions. These were overlaid upon the underlying natural pattern of hill and valley, meadow and forest, and the streams and ponds that bring them to life. The result was (and remains) a landscape of great beauty and visual order, celebrated by the likes of Thoreau and Emerson and enshrined by Currier and Ives and others. It wasn't "designed" by anyone, but rather reflects the visual harmony of people living in close collaboration with natural systems.

Littleton has moved on from being a rural farming community to what now serves as a pleasant suburb where people live and work within a complex regional economy. Yet the town retains the visual character, and to a large extent the social character, of an old Middlesex country town, where everyone knows each other and both the land and the society were well-ordered, predictable, and even beautiful.

To some extent we can maintain the remnants of Littleton's past by preserving the winding roads, stone walls, overarching trees, meadow views, barns and other artifacts of that earlier age. More significant perhaps is the opportunity to revitalize the type of rural economic activities that produce a more genuine rural character:

- Preserving and supporting the expansion of the remaining working farms and orchards, including on public land, where appropriate;
- Taking care of road side trees, and planting new ones to replace those that have died;
- Surrounding centers of activity with working greenbelts of gardens, farms and forest; and
- Encouraging other land-based economic activities, including recreation.

Because the demands and functional requirements of this new rural economy may be very different than in the past, the landscape will continue to change and evolve, but with care it can attain a similar sense of beauty and order.

### **□ Restrictions on Redevelopment**

Aquifer and Water Protection Districts. In addition to thinking about the balance between development and preservation, there are some challenges presented by Littleton's Zoning Bylaw which limit the redevelopment potential of certain locations in town. The Aquifer and Water Resource Protection Districts serve a vital function of protecting the Town's drinking water supply, but severely limit the amount and type of development that can take place on parcels of land within the district boundaries. For example, nearly all of the industrially-zoned parcels in Littleton fall within the boundaries of one or both of these districts including the areas along Taylor and Foster Streets which has been identified as potential redevelopment areas. The same is true for portions of Littleton Common, which is widely viewed as a future redevelopment area. The impervious surface restrictions within these two districts make it very challenging to incorporate buildings and parking, particularly on small parcels of land.

In reviewing the areas that have been designated as the Aquifer and Water Protection Districts, it appears there is an opportunity to revisit the size and scope of the overlays and potentially remove some of the land from the districts. The Zone II wellhead protection areas and the high and medium yield aquifer areas do not encompass as large an area as the two overlay districts. Therefore, it may be bene-

ficial for the Town to revisit these boundaries, as well as revisit the impervious surface restrictions so as to accomplish the objective of water protection.

Use Restrictions. Redevelopment of Littleton Common is not without challenges. The first, and possibly largest challenge is the issue of sewers. Many residents would like to see the area around the Common redeveloped into a more traditional New England village center, but some uses such as restaurants, residences, and even offices cannot be supported without additional wastewater capacity. This is a difficult issue in Town, but one that needs to be resolved if the Common is to be reimagined.

The mixed-use bylaw only allows mixed-use development in the Village Common district and the Beaver Brook Overlay district. As the bylaw and use table are currently written, mixed-use development that includes residential as a component is only allowed in the Village Common district and not in the Beaver Brook Overlay. The Town may want to consider expanding the location and type of mixed use development in the future, particularly in the Beaver Brook Overlay where a housing component could help support future commercial and retail uses.

In addition, Littleton should be aware that recent fair housing case law ruled in favor on the disparate impacts of housing regulations for protected classes, which includes families with children<sup>20</sup> This is one reason that three-bedroom units are required in Chapter 40B developments as a matter of state policy.

## □ Providing for Affordable Housing

Littleton has a provision in the ZBL to support additional affordable housing in town by way of the 55 and Older Bylaw. As was described above, new housing constructed under this zoning provision limits who can reside in these units. While it is good that the Town has an option for affordable housing for those over the age of fifty-five, the new affordable housing units are limited to this age group. Many inclusionary and affordable housing bylaws today do not place age restrictions on the units, and allow anyone who matches the income limits to enter the housing lottery. As Littleton's housing values continue to rise, the need for affordable housing will grow at all income levels and for individuals and families of all ages. If the Town is not able to produce enough affordable housing units to keep pace with market rate development, the Town may risk falling below the State's 10 percent subsidized housing threshold and be subject to development regulated under the State's Chapter 40B laws.

## □ Community Resilience

The resilience of Littleton requires a deliberate and proactive approach to protecting the Town's resources and directing development and redevelopment to areas where existing infrastructure is in place to support future uses. The recommendations of the land use element meet these objectives in a number of ways including:

- Promoting transit-oriented development in the area of Taylor and Foster Streets so housing and businesses that locate there are within close proximity to the MBTA station, and new development is designed to promote walking, biking, and transit use, thereby reducing vehicle emissions.
- Promoting the redevelopment of Littleton Common promotes walkability, the efficient use of existing buildings and infrastructure, and the reduction of vehicle emissions. It also facilitates community building by providing a civic space and opportunities for community gathering in what can become a more robust and connected town center.
- Providing affordable housing opportunities helps improve the fiscal health of residents, provides housing for those who want to stay in Littleton, and offers opportunities for new residents to move in who can add to the social fabric of the community.

<sup>20</sup> Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, Inc. June 2015.

- Preserving the Town's character will help protect some of the natural resources and open spaces, which is a benefit to the existing ecosystem. Additionally, supporting the town's farmers to engage in their work also results in a stronger and more diverse economy, as well as providing a source for local food production and consumption.

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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**Land Use Goal: To establish and abide by land use policies that are effective at guiding sustainable development in a manner consistent with the goals of the Master Plan in terms of location, appearance, neighborhood and community impact, and efficiency of delivering town services.**

- 1. Manage growth by allowing greater density in places where it makes sense to intensify land use, e.g., in recognized activity areas, near the train station, around the Common, and in older industrial or commercial areas where redevelopment opportunities exist.**

Per the recommendations below, develop a series of area or neighborhood plans to put each location in its proper context. The plans should incorporate an analysis of:

- land use and zoning changes;
- scale, dimensions, and designs for future development;
- public infrastructure and services needed to support future development; and,
- a review of natural resources and environmental concerns.
- Adopt effective redevelopment/reuse policies, including "streamlined" or efficient permitting procedures such as joint public hearings, performance zoning (as an alternative to special permits).

- 2. Prepare a detailed master plan for the Littleton Common and Beaver Brook area to guide redevelopment.**

Littleton Common will continue to play its historic role as a key center for social and economic activity. If wastewater issues can be satisfactorily addressed it has the potential for significant redevelopment that can boost economic opportunities, provide more diverse housing and meet other community needs. As demonstrated by the results of the Littleton Common Charrette in September, 2016, there is broad support for redevelopment that follows historic precedents and creates a more attractive and walkable center. A detailed master planning process for the area would continue the conversation among residents, property owners, and business owners to build a consensus on desired land uses, building heights, setbacks, parking areas, architectural styles, needed streetscape improvements and other elements. The planning process should also address transportation and traffic management around the Common. Engaging property owners early and often during this process will be critical to achieving successful outcomes for Littleton Common.

- 3. Undertake a detailed audit of Littleton's Zoning Bylaw and develop recommendations for updates and changes.**

Littleton's current Zoning Bylaw was adopted in 1988 and has been changed and added to many times since. The successful implementation of many Master Plan recommendations will require zoning updates and changes. The Town should consider undertaking a thorough audit of the cur-

rent Bylaw to determine deficiencies and address those immediately. The Town should improve the Bylaw by making it clearer and easier to use and by making adjustments where needed to support the implementation of this Master Plan's goals and recommendations

#### **4. Change zoning for the Littleton Common and the Beaver Brook area to encourage redevelopment according to the area master plan.**

Assuming a consensus is achieved on the desired density and mix of land uses, there are many zoning techniques that can guide and encourage redevelopment. Options could include:

- Allowing multi-family housing in the Village Common and Beaver Brook overlay districts.
- Allowing mixed-use buildings in the Beaver Brook district, as currently allowed in VC.
- Encouraging parcel consolidation by allowing higher density for developers who assemble parcels and create a cohesive plan.
- Adopting a form-based code with a detailed regulating plan that would establish more precise locations and design standards for buildings, roads, parking areas, streetscape elements, etc.

#### **5. Prepare an area plan for parcels in the vicinity of the Taylor/Foster Street Intersection and modify zoning to implement the plan.**

The Route 2/495 interchange and adjacent MBTA rail station create special opportunities along the South end of Foster street. By applying the principles of Transit-Oriented Development to the area, the town could encourage development of homes and businesses within a walkable neighborhood, catering to people using transit rather than cars. With underutilized office buildings and ongoing residential development, the area continues to evolve without a unifying plan. Establishing clear guidelines for the design and density of future use could help the town take advantage of the location while limiting impacts on residents and preserving the rural setting.

#### **6. Update the Town's Aquifer and Water Resource Protection District bylaw in order to clarify its purposes and requirements and bring it in line with the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) standards for groundwater protection zoning.**

The Aquifer and Water Resource Protection Districts serve the vital function of protecting the Town's drinking water supply, but severely limit the amount and type of development that can take place on parcels of land within the district boundaries. Nearly all of the industrially-zoned parcels in Littleton, as well as portions of Littleton Common, fall within the boundaries of one or both of these districts. The impervious surface restrictions within these two districts make it very challenging to incorporate buildings and parking, particularly on small parcels of land.

While protecting water supply remains a top priority for residents, it appears likely that the current boundaries for the Aquifer and Water Protection Districts should be reexamined, and that restrictions on impervious surface cover and other elements should be revised to reflect more up-to-date science and best management practices for groundwater protection.

#### **7. Undertake a corridor study for Great Road to plan for future land uses, open space and natural resource preservation, transportation improvements, and modify zoning to implement the plan.**

The traditional pattern of farms, forest, wetlands and scattered homes and businesses along the Great Road corridor has been identified by many participants in the planning process as a key part of the town's identity. The corridor serves as a gateway into Littleton from the east, and has seen its fair share of incremental development and other land use changes over recent decades. Residents

## **LITTLETON MASTER PLAN**

have expressed concern that these changes have gradually eroded the identity of the corridor, and would like to engage in a proactive planning study that sets a vision for Great Road.

A detailed study of the entire corridor would identify those elements that are the most important to supporting the viability of agriculture and preserving the visual character of the area. That would support possible town investment in preservation of key properties, or a change in zoning that could give landowners the ability to modify lot size, setback or other requirements so that it's easier to fit new development into the landscape without destroying the view from the road. Recognizing there are other important corridors in Littleton, the process for Great Road could provide a framework the Town could use as other priority corridors emerge over time.

**8. Review and revise the Open Space Development bylaw (Article XIX) to more easily allow for greater density, while protecting scenic woodland or agricultural lands in a manner that still conserves working farms in an economically sustainable way. Consider loosening the restrictions placed on the protected open space, so as to not reduce the value of the farmland.**

Consider forming a Task Force to assist in the amendment of this bylaw. The Task Force should include members of the local farming community, development community, conservation commission, and other relevant boards, committees, and individuals.



## Groton

## Ayer

### Industrial Park

- Continue to build out the remaining available parcels in the Industrial Park.

### Littleton Depot

- Continue to support the redevelopment of commercial and industrial buildings in Littleton Depot in a manner that is consistent with the character and scale of the area.

### Taylor/Foster Street Area & MBTA Station

- Prepare a detailed area master plan to guide future redevelopment and/or reuse of existing buildings in the Taylor/Foster Street area.
- Change zoning to encourage redevelopment and reuse consistent with the area plan.
- Find ways to better connect the MBTA station to key activity points and employment nodes in Littleton.
- Allow a greater density of development around the train station to take advantage of its location and its role as an amenity for the community.

### The Point

- Continue to support the intensification of development, and consider a range of uses that could complement the current retail mix.

### Littleton Common

- Prepare a detailed area master plan to guide future redevelopment.
- Change zoning to encourage redevelopment consistent with the area plan.
- Invest in infrastructure that supports current and future development in the Common.
- Evaluate the recommendations from the upcoming Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan, and determine next steps.

## ford

### Great Road Corridor

- Conduct a corridor study for Great Road to plan for future land uses, open space and natural resource preservation, transportation improvements, and modify zoning to implement the plan.

## Harva

## Boxborough

0

1

2 Mile

### Map 2.4

### Future Land Use Recommendations by Geographic Location

This map highlights several important nodes and corridors in Littleton that have the potential to serve as activity centers, areas of concentrated growth, or locations that need further study to determine what is appropriate in a particular location. Recommendations for each area are listed.



# 3 Transportation



## OVERVIEW

### Relationship to Master Plan Goals

The transportation system is the point of connection for every person in Littleton, regardless of age, income, or ability. Everyone's day starts and ends with a trip on Littleton's transportation system. Transportation provides access to: housing, jobs, schools, pathways to recreation and natural resources, and a safe and efficient delivery system of public services and public safety. Littleton residents and business owners desire a future transportation system that will "connect the pieces" in Town to ensure people have choices for how they travel between destination points. Community members also want to make sure the transportation system is safe and accessible to all users regardless of age, ability, or how one chooses to move around town.

### Key Policy Recommendations for Transportation

- Residents and businesses alike recognize the importance of being able to get around Town, particularly without having to rely on a personal vehicle. Across all of the public outreach meetings, this theme was consistently near the top of residents' priorities. The Town should look for ways to improve sidewalks and crosswalks, on- and off-street bicycle accommodations, and bolster public transportation options.
- Littleton reaps the benefits, and experiences the challenges, of being located along several major state routes and Interstate 495. These roadways provide access for residents, but also bring a substantial amount of cut-through traffic. As growth continues to push west from Boston, traffic volumes will continue to grow. Littleton should continue to work with MassDOT to monitor traffic volumes and crash occurrences, and advocate for geometric and signalization improvements at key intersections and corridors to stay ahead of potential safety and congestion issues.
- Littleton is a regional and national leader when it comes to transportation policy and action. The Town adopted a Complete Streets policy that was awarded national accolades by Smart Growth America, and was an early investor in the regional transportation demand management association known as CrossTown Connect. These decisions have charted a course for transportation in Littleton, and the Town should continue to pursue funding, either locally or from other sources, to support these important efforts.

## Key Findings

- Traffic on regional interstates and arterials has been increasing since 2010.
- Commuter rail ridership, and parking utilization at the Commuter Rail station, have been increasing steadily.
- Littleton lacks a comprehensive network of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Only seven percent of Littleton's roadways have sidewalks.
- Recently, Littleton has been proactive in seeking out solutions and funding for alternative modes of transportation.

### In this Chapter

- Assessment of the Town's current transportation infrastructure including roadways, sidewalks, crosswalks, trails, and public transportation options.
- Place Littleton in the context of an ever-changing region where residential and commercial growth patterns are shaping the landscape not only in town, but in most of the towns surrounding Littleton as well.
- Identify locations in Littleton where pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure investments can catalyze economic development and improve safety.
- Assess current public transportation options and recommend options for increasing service.

## INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

The transportation system in Littleton is the connection between people and place. Regardless of where someone lives, works, recreates, shops, or goes to school, their day begins and ends with a trip on some portion of Littleton's transportation system. From the beginning, land use and transportation systems have been developed side by side to serve each other. When a transportation system is functioning properly and effectively, it can afford a community opportunities to connect people and place and attract new investment. This has been, and continues to be, the case in Littleton. As development pressures and the availability of land pushed further west out of Boston, access to roads and rail became an important factor in locating housing and employment centers. Littleton is fortunate to be located along several major roadways and have a rail line serving the community. These transportation amenities, along with other attractive qualities of the town, led several large companies like IBM, Potpourri, and FIBA Technologies to locate off Route 2A with nearby access to Interstate 495 (I-495). The transportation amenities are also attracting residents and developers to Littleton. The proximity to I-495, Route 2, and Route 2A, as well as having an MBTA Commuter Rail station in Town provides commuters with options to access employment outside of Littleton. The transportation network has been central to the growth and development of the Town over time, and will continue to play an important role going forward.

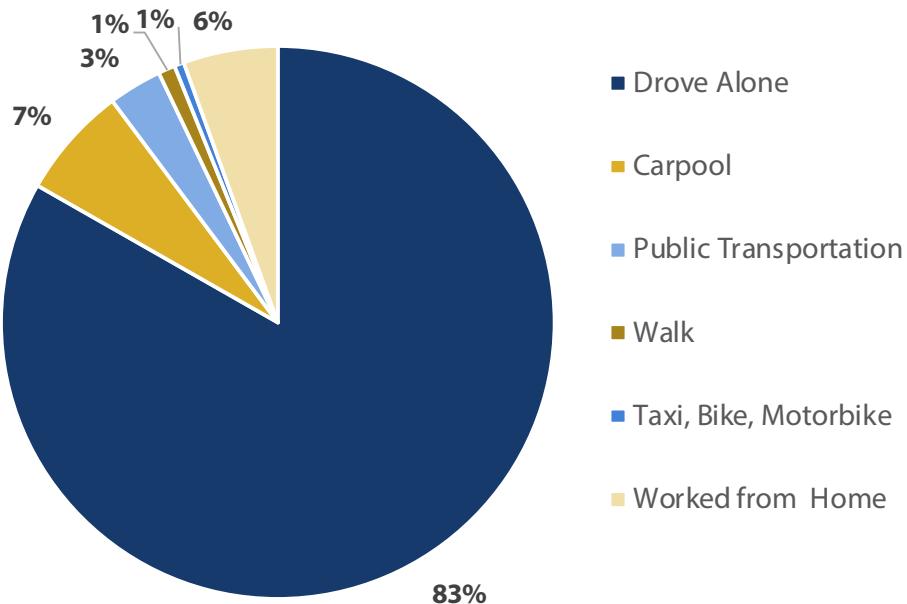
## Vehicular Circulation and Safety

### Traffic Patterns

Historically, transportation routes in and out of Littleton served to connect the town to the neighboring communities of Boxborough (to the south), Ayer (to the southwest), Groton (to the west), Acton (to the east), and Westford (to the north). The intersection of these roads began and ended at Littleton Common, which was the residential and agricultural center for the town. As Littleton built out, additional centers were developed at Littleton Depot and Littleton Center and all three were connected by King Street. As the Town expanded its development footprint over the next two centuries, new roads and expansions to existing roads followed to keep pace with increasing demand from vehicular traffic. According to estimates from the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, nearly 90 percent of Littleton residents utilize a personal vehicle to get to work (drive alone or carpool).<sup>1</sup> Only 3 percent utilize public transportation, and 2 percent walk or bike.

<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, "Means of Transportation to Work by Age," B08101.

## Mode of Transportation: Littleton's Employed Labor Force



**Figure 3.1 -Mode of Transportation to Work**

*Source: ACS 2010-2014 5-year estimates, Means of Transportation to Work by Age, Table B08101*

Littleton is a well-connected town due to the crisscrossing of several major roadways carrying traffic across the region. Bisecting the town is Interstate 495, which serves as a circumferential travel route to points north, south, and west of Boston. Routes 2 and 2A run east and west through Littleton, with Route 2A connecting up with Route 2 east at the Concord Rotary. At Littleton Common, Route 2A becomes Route 119 connecting west into Groton. The primary route heading north from Littleton is Route 110/King Street, which parallels I-495 before heading north to Lowell.

The more heavily traveled local streets in Littleton, such as Goldsmith Street/Newtown Road, Foster Street, Taylor Street, and Harwood Avenue provide connections between locations in town and access to residential developments. Once off the main streets in Littleton, the residential areas tend to follow longer, winding roads that often terminate at a dead end or a cul-de-sac. There are two residential neighborhoods in town that have a gridded roadway pattern, Lake Matawanakee and Long Lake, built in the early- to mid-1900's. The outward growth that occurred in Littleton over time has left a legacy of roadways without sidewalks, creating conditions where getting around town is challenging without the use of a personal vehicle.

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) classifies roadways across the Commonwealth into three categories, described below.<sup>2</sup>

### ARTERIALS

Arterials are roadways that provide the highest level of mobility at the greatest vehicular speed for the longest uninterrupted distances and are not intended to provide access to specific locations (this definition does include interstates, but interstates are broken out in Table 5.1). Littleton has three arterial roadways that make up a portion of the transportation network. Route 2 is classified by MassDOT as a principal arterial, and Route 2A and the section of Route 119 west of I-495 are classified as minor arterials.

- Route 2 follows the southern side of Littleton providing east/west access from the Boston area all the way to Western Massachusetts. The roadway serves as a principal travel corridor to Boston from the

<sup>2</sup> MassDOT, "Road Inventory Year End Report," 2014.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

northwest suburbs and Central Massachusetts. The segment of Route 2 through Littleton is a divided arterial with two travel lanes in each direction.

- Route 2A also provides an east/west corridor for travel connections to Acton and west to Ayer. Traveling eastbound through Littleton and Acton, Route 2A intersects with the Concord Rotary and Route 2. At Littleton Common, Route 2A turns south and connects to I-495 at interchange 30. The segment of Route 2A in Littleton is a two-lane roadway.
- Route 119 becomes a minor arterial west of King Street where Route 2A turns south at Littleton Common. Route 119 heads west into Groton as a two-lane roadway.

## COLLECTOR ROADS

Collectors provide some level of both mobility and access. They collect traffic from local roads and funnel it to arterials. Collector roads provide an additional layer of access to abutting properties compared to arterials, which usually have limited points of access. In Littleton, the collector roadways include, but are not limited to, Newtown Road/Goldsmit Street, Foster Street, Harwood Avenue, Nashoba Road, and the section of King Street north of Great Road.

## LOCAL ROADS

Local roads provide access to abutting lands with little or no emphasis on mobility. Nearly 60 percent of the road miles in Littleton are classified as local roads. These local roadways provide direct access to properties along them, have slower posted travel speeds, and feed local traffic onto collector roads. Of the nearly eighty-six miles of roadway in Littleton, only a little less than 7 percent are privately owned and maintained. These roads tend to be part of residential developments where property owners or homeowner's associations pay for the maintenance of the road(s). Table 5.1 shows the breakdown of roadway miles and lane miles for each roadway type in Littleton.

## Traffic Volumes

The Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) maintains a log of traffic counts for each of the 101 cities and towns in the region, including Littleton. Counts are available for locations in Littleton beginning in 1981 and ending in 2010. While the count logs do not provide a wide range of updated traffic count information, there are a few locations which have been counted periodically over the thirty-year time horizon. It is clear from historical traffic data that average daily traffic (ADT) volumes along major roads like I-495 and Route 2 have increased substantially since 1981. The segment of I-495 just north of Exit 31 saw volumes increase by 145 percent (42,000 cars per day to nearly 105,000). The segment of Route 2 at the Littleton/Harvard town line saw ADT increase by 118 percent (21,600 to 47,000). As more development has taken place in towns along the I-495 and Route 2 corridors, traffic volumes have steadily increased as well.

Locally, the intersection of Great Road and King Street at Littleton Common appears to be the most heavily traveled area in town. Carrying traffic on and off I-495, this intersection handles traffic coming from the north, south, east, and west through one of the few signalized intersections in Littleton. Traffic counts completed in 2007 and 2008 indicated that between 12,000 and 17,000 vehicles per day traveled through the various legs of this intersection. All four roadways leading into the intersection are under the jurisdiction of MassDOT, which made several improvements at this location including the installation of new traffic signals to help with traffic flow and safety. Unfortunately, the traffic volume has necessitated a widening of the roads in this area which is counter to making the Common a more inviting place for pedestrians and cyclists.

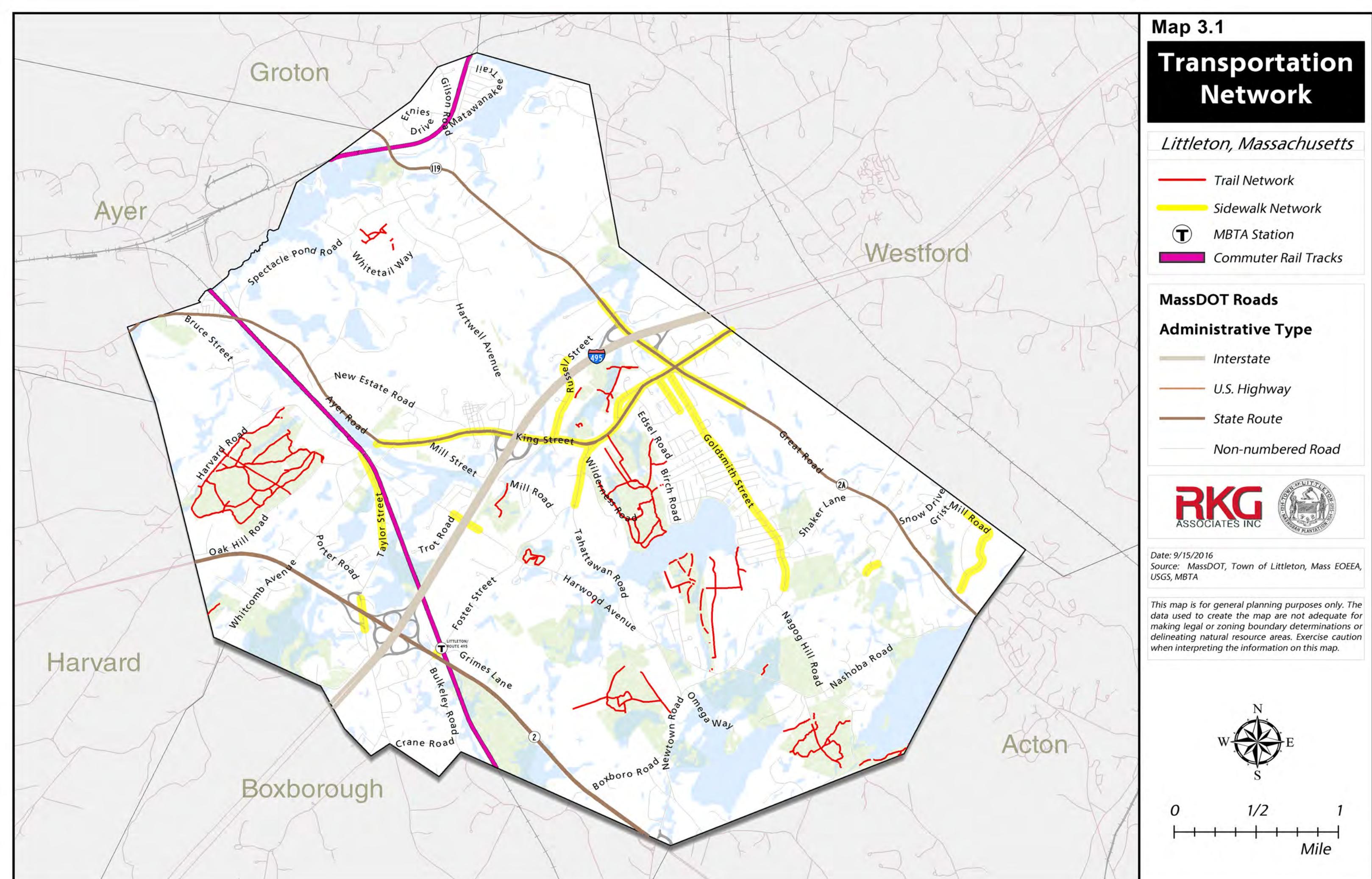
**Table 3.1. Classification of Roads in Littleton**

Roadway Class	Road Miles	Lane Miles
Interstate	3.8	22.8
Arterial	18.14	42.28
Collector	12.8	24.12
Local	51.16	96.49
Total	85.91	185.68

Source: MassDOT, 2014 Road Inventory

# Map 3.1

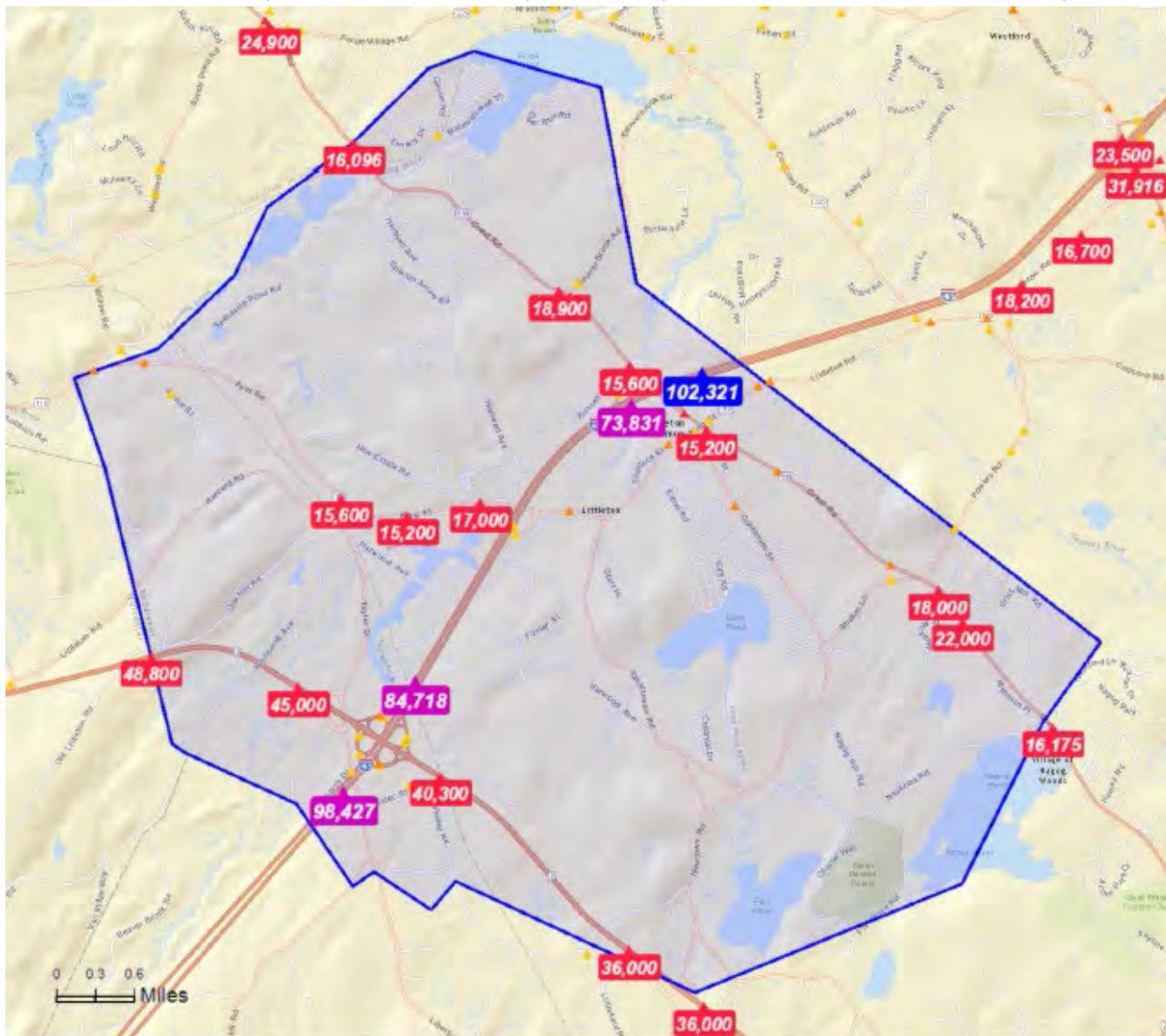
## Transportation Network





Due to the sporadic nature of traffic counting patterns, very few roadways in Littleton have available data on traffic volume history. The only other roadway with a recent ADT count in the MPO's database is the segment of Taylor Street over I-495. In 2009, that segment carried 3,600 vehicles per day.<sup>3</sup> Supplemental traffic data was pulled from ESRI Business Analyst software that generally verifies the ADT data from MassDOT. That data is shown in the map below.

**Map 3.2 - Average Daily Traffic Counts for Major Roadways in Littleton (ESRI Business Analyst, 2017)**



### Traffic Safety

According to data from MassDOT's Crash Data Files, between 2012 and 2014 Littleton had 843 crashes occur within its borders.<sup>4</sup> Since 2000, crashes had declined to a low of 181 in 2010 but have increased again in recent years. In 2014, there were 365 reported crashes in Littleton which was the highest total since 2000. This increase follows a similar trend to that of the State as a whole. This is likely the result of more vehicles on the road coming out of the Great Recession with more people back to work and more expendable income for travel and other leisure activities.

Of the 843 crashes reported by MassDOT between 2012 and 2014, 17 percent (145) resulted in one or more persons sustaining a non-fatal injury. More than 80 percent of the crashes resulted in property

<sup>3</sup> Boston MPO (CTPS), Average Daily Traffic on Massachusetts Road, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> MassDOT Crash Data Files, 2002-2014.

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damage, with no injuries. During this three-year time period, crashes in Littleton did result in two fatal injuries. In addition to collecting data on individual crashes, MassDOT also compiles a list of high crash location clusters that feed into the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding stream to improve the safety of roadways and intersections. MassDOT also produces a top 200 crash listing across the Commonwealth to identify locations with critical safety needs. Fortunately, Littleton does not have any locations that fall within MassDOT's top 200 HSIP locations. However, there are several HSIP crash clusters located along I-495 and Route 2 that fall within Littleton. While these two roadways are not under the jurisdiction of the town, it is important to note that Littleton Police and Fire are often the first to respond to crashes and emergencies that occur on these roads.

MassDOT also reports crashes that involve pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized users of the transportation network. Between 2012 and 2014, 0.4 percent of all crashes in Littleton involved cyclists, 0.1 involved pedestrians, and 0.4 involved a traveler using another form of non-motorized transportation. These reported numbers are very low, and could indicate that the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is very safe in Littleton, or more likely that there are not many people walking, biking, or using other forms of non-motorized transportation to get around town. Littleton is one of several towns in Massachusetts to adopt a Complete Streets policy, and is currently engaged in a process to prioritize Complete Streets improvements to help make walking and cycling safer and easier.

## Public Transportation

### Commuter Rail

Littleton is fortunate to be one of the towns in Massachusetts to have an MBTA Commuter Rail station within its borders. Located along the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line, the Littleton/Route 495 MBTA station is easily accessible off Route 2 and Foster Street. Trains into Boston leave Littleton station beginning at 5:25AM with the last train out at 11:10PM during the weekday. Outbound from Boston, trains begin arriving in Littleton at 7:05AM, with the last one arriving at 1:05AM. The MBTA's new schedule for the Fitchburg Line has trains arriving in Littleton from Boston much earlier than before. The improvements made to extend double tracking from Acton out as far as Littleton now provides the MBTA with the ability to send trains in earlier to support reverse commuting out from Boston. This has been a goal of the Town and of the Fitchburg Working Group who have advocated on behalf of the communities along the Fitchburg Line for improved rail service.



According to the MBTA's website, the Littleton station has 224 parking spaces with six reserved as handicap accessible. Since the change in schedule and the double tracking improvements, parking at the Littleton station is routinely overcapacity. Commuters who were driving to Acton now come to the Littleton station to take advantage of the improved train schedule that was previously only available at the South Acton station. The general lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in and around the Littleton station creates a situation where most riders either drive and park at the station, or are dropped off by another driver. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) conducted a survey in May 2014 that showed 96 percent of Littleton station users arrived by car (parked or dropped off).<sup>5</sup> The Town is in discussions with MassDOT and the MBTA to determine if and where additional vehicular parking can be constructed to accommodate the demand for commuter rail. The Town is also part of a regional Transportation Management Association (TMA) known as CrossTown Connect. The goal of the program is to

<sup>5</sup> Metropolitan Area Planning Council, "Littleton Commuter Rail Parking Study", September 2014.

share transportation services across towns and entities to help connect people and places. One of those places in Littleton is the commuter rail station. This is discussed further in the next section.

### Buses, Vans, and Crosstown Connect

Currently, the only dedicated fixed-route bus line that serves any portion of Littleton is the Route 15 bus originating in Lowell and ending at the IBM Campus just over the Littleton/Westford town line. The Route 15 has 1.5 hour headways Monday through Friday, beginning with the first bus leaving the IBM Campus at 6:00AM. The service continues with the final bus headed for Lowell at 8:00PM. While this does provide a direct bus connection to the IBM Campus, the rest of Littleton is not served at all by fixed-route public transit. Littleton is a member of the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) which provides support for Littleton's Council on Aging (COA) transportation services. Discussions with MART about providing a fixed-route or variable route service in Littleton have not yet progressed to the point where the Town and MART have reached an agreement.

### COUNCIL ON AGING

Littleton's Council on Aging (COA) office provides transportation services in town using two shuttle vans which operate Monday through Friday between the hours of 9:00AM and 3:00PM. Rides are available for senior citizens and disabled individuals who are residents of Littleton. Riders must schedule their trip with Elder and Human Services at least forty-eight hours in advance. The price for a trip on the COA van depends on the type of trip (medical, shopping, etc.) and the distance traveled. A one-way trip may cost as little as a \$1.50, to as much as \$7.00 for trips greater than fifteen miles. Rides to the Senior Diner and to the COA building are always free.



Recently, the demand for transportation has outpaced the COA's ability to accommodate all of the requested trips. As of May 2016, the Town was providing over 500 rides per month and serving about eighty individuals.<sup>6</sup> Without additional vans, staff, and funding, this transportation service has reached its capacity. Over time, the projected increase in the elderly population in Littleton will continue to place more demand on services offered by the Elder and Human Services department, including transportation. Fortunately, Littleton has joined with several other nearby towns in an attempt to solve this issue regionally by forming a transportation organization known as CrossTown Connect.

### CROSSTOWN CONNECT

In 2009, a group of transportation advocates got together to participate in a state transportation coordination workshop that was focused on providing transit services for the elderly, disabled, youth, and commuters in their communities. A partnership of several towns in the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) formed with staff assistance from MAPC which led to the formation of a transportation management association (TMA) now known as CrossTown Connect. In 2012, the towns of Acton, Boxborough, Littleton, Maynard, and Stow were awarded a state grant to begin pulling together a regional network of vehicles, staff, and infrastructure to provide shared transportation services with the goal of serving more people in need.

Today, CrossTown Connect (CTC) is comprised of five towns (Acton, Boxborough, Littleton, Maynard, and Westford) and eight private businesses (Mill and Main, Guiterrez Company, IBM, Juniper, Red Hat,

<sup>6</sup> Pamela Campbell, Director of Elder and Human Services, 2016.

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West Acton Villageworks, Potpourri, and Associate Environmental Systems). CTC is focused on increasing mobility and providing more transportation options for residents and employees of these partner organizations. CTC is a unique model of public and private entities that are working together to try to bolster transportation options to make the region more attractive for businesses, attract employees, and provide options for those who do not have access to a private vehicle. CTC provides the following services to its members:

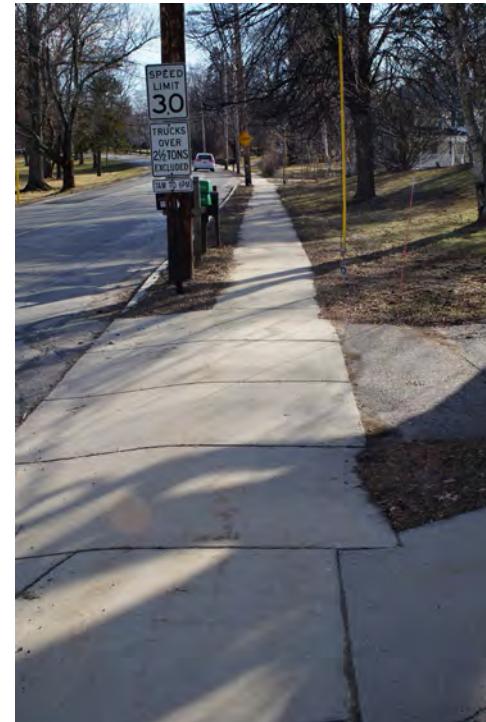
- Carpool database
- Emergency/Guaranteed Ride Home
- Workout to Work
- Commuter Promotional/Educational Events

As CTC continues to evolve, the hope is to combine dispatch services that are currently handled by each town's Council on Aging office, as well as a network of shared vans that can be used to ease the rising demand of local transportation needs. For Littleton, this could be one way of providing more rides to seniors and individuals with disabilities as demand continues to grow.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Network

### Sidewalks and Paths

The lack of sidewalk infrastructure in Littleton is a challenge for individuals who do not have access to a personal vehicle and are not eligible for in-town transportation services. As the Town built out over time, sidewalks were added sporadically and lacked a clear vision to create a connected network for pedestrians. Today, the town has sidewalks on just over 7 percent of the roads.<sup>7</sup> Depending on the road and location, there may be sidewalks on either one side of the road or both sides. The sidewalk network tends to radiate out from the intersection of Great Road and King Street at the Town Common, and covers a large segment of King Street, Goldsmith Street, and segments of Great Road east and west of the Common. There are smaller segments of sidewalks on Russell Street, Grist Mill Road, Taylor Street, and Foster Street extending past Fay Park. The remainder of the roads in Town are largely disconnected from the existing sidewalk network, making it a challenge for people who need or want to walk in town.



In addition to on-street sidewalks, there is a network of off-street trails that connect open spaces to different sections of town. There are several formal pathway networks that provide access for walking and running, and are primarily confined to several large tracts of open space. There are also a series of informal trails that traverse private property, and have not been formally sanctioned as part of Littleton's off-street trail network.<sup>8</sup> The Town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) is charged with helping to coordinate activities that impact walking, biking, and other forms of non-motorized transportation. This includes recommendations for improvements to roadways and off-street trail networks.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Sidewalk coverage based on recent sidewalk inventory completed by Green International in 2016.

<sup>8</sup> While these informal pathways are not mapped, interviews with the Transportation Core Assessment Group noted residents do use these pathways for recreation and transportation purposes.

<sup>9</sup> Trail network provided by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2016 data set.

There is a strong desire in town to connect places like The Point, Littleton Common, the schools, playgrounds and fields, and the Commuter Rail station through a comprehensive sidewalk and trail network. While there are challenges such as funding, right-of-way width, historic walls, trees, and private property encroachment, the Town is taking proactive steps to ensure roadway improvement projects take into account the needs of all users of the transportation system. In December 2013, the Littleton Board of Selectmen adopted a Complete Streets policy which calls for streets to be designed and operated to provide safety and accessibility for all users of the roadways, trails, and transit system in town. Littleton committed itself to incorporating roadway designs that accommodate all users to the maximum extent practical. In 2014, the National Complete Street Coalition recognized Littleton as having the highest rated Complete Streets policy in the country. Following the adoption of the policy, Littleton secured grant funding from MassDOT to complete a prioritization plan for Complete Streets improvements which was subsequently completed and adopted by the State. The Town followed the completion of the plan with a Phase 3 grant application to MassDOT for Complete Streets improvements. In November 2016, the Town was awarded a \$394,970 grant from MassDOT to implement Complete Streets improvements on Russell Street and Shattuck Street, bicycle storage across town, and flashing school zone signs along Shaker Lane.

### **Bicycle Facilities**

Currently, Littleton has one small stretch of on-street striped bike lanes which was put in as part of the roadway improvements along Route 119 when The Point was under construction. In Littleton, many cyclists choose to use the network of off-street paths to connect to different parts of town. The relatively narrow roadways create a sense of insecurity for novice cyclists. As was mentioned above, the Complete Streets policy and the prioritization plan will help the Town identify locations where pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements can be made to help connect key destinations. Locations such as Littleton Common and the Commuter Rail station are popular today with cyclists, and create a strong desire to create safer connections. Just to the east of Littleton lies the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, which is planned to connect from Chelmsford down to Framingham. The Town has noted its desire to find a way to connect to this rail trail to enhance recreation, tourism, and commuting opportunities.

## **ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES**

### **□ Planning Issues**

As Littleton has grown, the demands on the transportation network have also increased. Vehicular traffic is heavier and peak travel periods have increased in the morning and evening. As the communities along the I-495 and Route 2 corridors grow and change, traffic and congestion follow. Littleton, having direct connections to Route 2, Route 2A, and I-495, has become a cut-through for regional traffic heading east and west. The added traffic volume creates challenges for Littleton, particularly in areas like Littleton Common where there is a desire to slow traffic down to facilitate a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

On the other hand, the transportation amenities and assets in Littleton have brought in new businesses and economic development opportunities for companies looking to have direct access to the regional transportation network. While the Town is dealing with an increase in car and truck traffic, there are also financial and employment benefits that come to the residents of Littleton. There is still an untapped opportunity in Town, which is figuring out a way to capitalize on the Commuter Rail station by providing easy and cost-effective connections for those coming in and out of Littleton. This will provide a benefit to residents who could use the commuter rail as a way to get to work, and for businesses who could bring employees into Littleton.

## □ Public Transit and the Last Mile

A key issue that has come up many times throughout the Master Plan process from both residents and businesses is how to create better public transit connections between destinations in Littleton. This is particularly true for connections to and from the commuter rail station. Businesses such as IBM and Potpourri have noted the difficulty in getting employees out to Littleton who live east or west of town and could take the commuter rail. Currently, if an employee gets off train there is no way to get them to their place of employment. Some businesses have resorted to paying for their own shuttles and vans as a way to make the "last mile" connections.

Residents and businesses in Littleton have expressed a desire for public transit connections that would serve numerous destinations across town. This service could come in the form of a fixed-route transit system, or a variable route system. This discussion comes at a time when the current Council on Aging van service for seniors is at capacity, and unable to absorb the overwhelming demand for rides. As the senior population is expected to continue to rise over time, it is likely that the demand for transportation services will also continue to increase. Having some form of in-town public transportation in addition to, or supplementing, the Council on Aging services would help relieve that demand. The new service could also help employers, employees, and students get around town as well.

## □ Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity

In addition to having a robust public transportation network, residents of Littleton have also expressed a desire to have a more well-connected and far-reaching network of sidewalks and bike facilities. Currently, the sidewalk network is patchy and disconnected. Walking around the Common is challenging with wide roadways, missing sidewalks, and dangerous crossings. The addition of sidewalks and on-street bike facilities is not without controversy. The narrow roadways and rights-of-way around Town can make adding sidewalks a challenge. In some cases, trees may need to be removed, natural habitats encroached upon, or even small easements on private property to obtain enough space to add pedestrian accommodations. Fortunately, the Town has completed a Complete Streets prioritization plan, which helped identify transportation projects that will increase bike and pedestrian connectivity. The Town was also successful in securing grant funding to implement one of the priority projects along Russell Street.

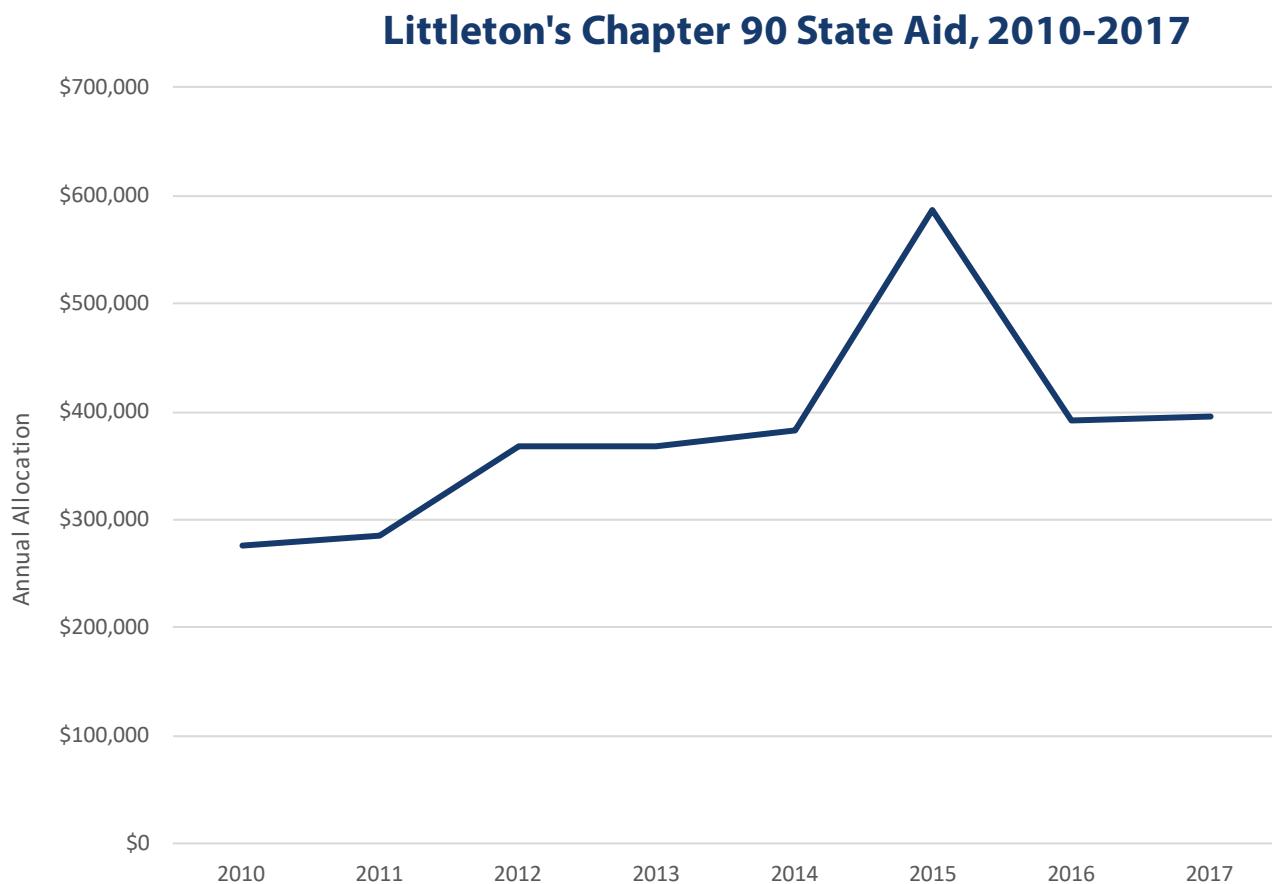
Residents also expressed interest in planning for and implementing a town-wide trails networks, which would traverse various open spaces across town to connect neighborhoods and activity centers. This network could utilize existing and future sidewalk connections as well to fill in gaps where private development may have occurred absent a plan for walking and biking connections, including off-road pathways. Residents expressed a desire to ensure the more densely populated neighborhoods in Littleton are connected to the Common, the Point, the commuter rail station, schools, parks, and other points of interest in Littleton. In order to accomplish this goal, the Town will need to be proactive in securing easements across private property, marking and maintaining trails on publicly owned land, and pursuing funding to close gaps in the sidewalk network where off-street trail connections are not possible.

## □ Transportation Funding

One of the many challenges facing communities in Massachusetts, and the nation as a whole, is how to pay for the on-going maintenance costs of the transportation system. Chapter 90 funding is the primary transportation funding source municipalities depend on year after year in addition to any appropriations made through the Town's annual budgeting process. Between Fiscal Year 2010 and 2017, Littleton averaged about \$380,000 per year in Chapter 90 allocations from the state.<sup>10</sup> That figure has stayed relatively flat for the past five years, with the exception of a one-time bump in overall Chapter 90 funding in Fiscal Year 2015 to \$586,500.

<sup>10</sup> MassDOT. Annual Chapter 90 Apportionments. <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/LocalAidPrograms/Chapter90Program/Chapter90Apportionment.aspx>

**Figure 3.2 - Littleton's Chapter 90 Annual Allocation (MassDOT Annual Chapter 90 Apportionments)**



This comes at a time when materials and construction costs for transportation projects continue to increase. The full reconstruction of a two-lane roadway with shoulders, similar to what can be found throughout much of Littleton, can cost upwards of \$1.5 to \$1.7 million dollars per mile. To maintain that road through a mill and resurfacing job can cost close to \$500,000 per mile. The Town has been doing a good job planning out roadway maintenance and reconstruction projects using their Capital Improvement Plan and Roadway Improvement Plan. The challenge will be to continue thinking ahead about future transportation needs, and how to pay for those in the face of relatively stagnant state funding apportionments.

An additional challenge will be finding ways to satisfy the demand for new sidewalk connections and bike facilities, while still funding critical roadway improvements. During the public process for this plan, the desire for more pedestrian and bike connectivity was brought up at nearly every meeting. While the desire is strong, the reality is 90 percent of Littleton residents still get to work using a vehicle. In order for the Town to address fiscally and environmentally sustainable modes of transportation, there will have to be a slight shift in funding or an increase in funding. Transportation dollars will also have to be spent on maintenance of infrastructure, not just the construction of new infrastructure.

## **□ Roadway Jurisdiction**

A challenge Littleton has, particularly in and around the Common, is the town does not control three major travel routes carrying substantial volumes of traffic. State routes 2A, 110, and 119 are owned, operated, and maintained by MassDOT, an entity with competing priorities may not be able to immediately help Littleton achieve its vision of making the area around Littleton Common safer and more accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. While staff at MassDOT would likely agree that a more pedestrian-friendly Littleton Common would be a benefit, there are competing interests for state funding across the nearly ninety towns in MassDOT's District 3 region. Competition for funding at the Boston Region MPO is even

**MassDOT will likely weigh the benefits of pedestrian and bicycle improvements and any reduction in vehicle capacity through some of the major intersections like King Street at Great Road. However, the Town will first need to make a choice to have a well-defined, pedestrian-friendly town center, or a place that vehicles pass through rather than stop and visit.**

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more difficult and unpredictable. MassDOT will likely also weigh the benefits of pedestrian and bicycle improvements and any reduction in vehicle capacity through some of the major intersections like King Street at Great Road. However, the Town will first need to make a choice to have a well-defined, pedestrian-friendly town center, or a place that vehicles pass through rather than stop and visit.

## **□ Transportation Choices for Seniors**

As was noted in the inventory section of the transportation element, the number of seniors subscribing to the Council on Aging's transportation service is outpacing the COA's ability to meet demand. The COA is understaffed and underfunded, and it does not have enough vehicles (or the right type of vehicles) to adequately serve the growing request for rides. As the senior population continues to grow and age in place in Littleton, the Town will be faced with continued pressure to provide assistance to those who cannot or choose not to drive. Improvements to the pedestrian infrastructure in town, and focusing on a more compact development pattern with accommodations for senior living will help relieve some of the burden on the COA. The key will be their ability to serve longer-distance medical trips, shopping trips, and provide rides (regardless of distance) to residents with disabilities.

## **□ Safe Routes to School**

In addition to a growing need for senior transportation options, there is also a growing cohort of younger Littleton residents who have expressed interest in being able to walk and bike from their home to school. The development pattern and location of many neighborhoods relative to the location of schools makes it challenging to easily connect the two in a cost-effective manner. While the Town has made strides toward improving connections to and from schools, work still remains to create a series of safe walking and biking routes for students to get to school. Investments in safe routes for children will help improve health outcomes, increase physical activity (for both parents and children), and reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

## **□ Community Resilience**

Transportation is key to meeting a number of objectives that support the resilience of the community. These were also strongly supported by participants during the Master Plan process. Transportation is integral to accomplishing the following, among other things:

- Supporting and even spurring economic development by providing connections to employment and choices for how employees get to work.
- Building community by connecting people and places. Roads, sidewalks, bike paths, walking trails, and community transit connect people to each other and increase opportunities for social interaction.
- Non-vehicular transportation choices improve the environment by reducing emissions, and can support the physical and mental wellbeing of residents by providing healthy means of getting around.

# Connecting Littleton's "Pieces"

## Ideas for Improving Transportation in Town

Growth, both within Littleton and in the surrounding region, have placed additional demands on the Town's transportation system. Regional roadways bisect Littleton and create congestion and safety issues. No place is this more evident than in and around Littleton Common where state-owned roadways are currently inhibiting a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. At the same time, the transportation amenities in Littleton have attracted new businesses and residents who are looking for access to the regional transportation network.

In the face of these transportation challenges, the Town has continued to work with local, regional, and state partners to forge its own future. Recent improvements to the Littleton Commuter Rail station and the train schedule have now created a more viable commuter option for both residents and employees. The Town is actively working on ways to better connect people to the station (and other key destinations) using CrossTown Connect, a regional shuttle van service. Finally, the Town continues to seek funding locally and at the state level to implement needed improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in hopes of creating more Complete Streets. These improvements will help residents, employees, and visitors get around Littleton safely and efficiently.



### On the Cutting Edge

Littleton was one of the first municipalities (after Boston) to adopt a Complete Streets policy. The policy asks decision makers to consider ALL users of the transportation network when making infrastructure investments. Littleton's policy was voted best in the country for towns of a similar size in 2013. Recently, the Town was awarded a grant from MassDOT to implement high priority Complete Streets projects.

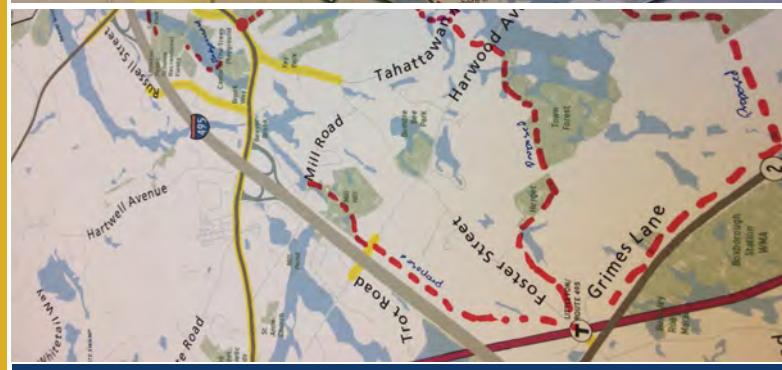
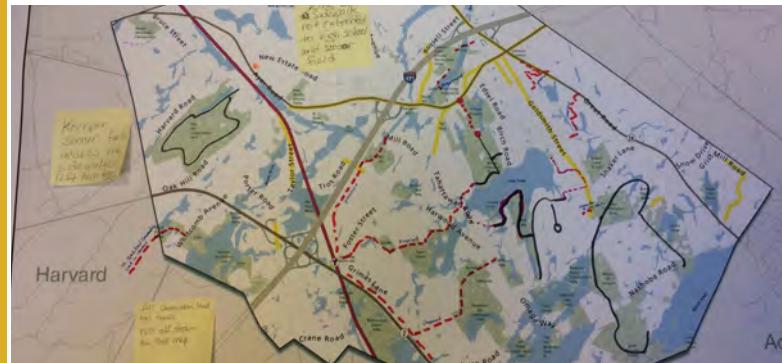
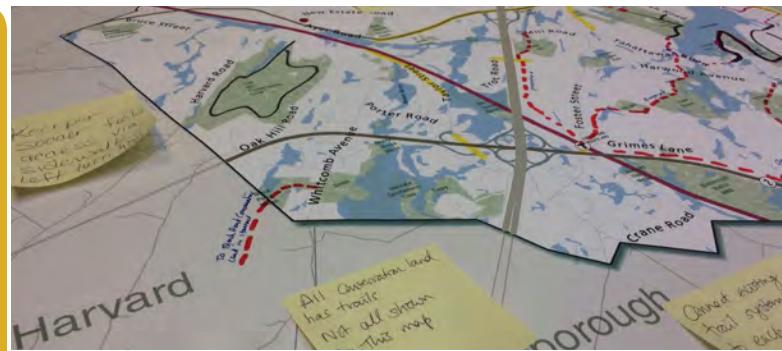


### COMMUNITY INPUT

from the two-day charrette

The Town held a two-day charrette focused on ways to improve and connect transportation in Littleton. Key ideas included:

- Find ways to safely connect neighborhoods, schools, and activity centers for kids who want to walk.
- Improve sidewalks and crosswalks in and around Littleton Common.
- Create a circulator shuttle system that can take passengers around Littleton.
- Connect the MBTA station via off-street pathways, sidewalks, and in-town shuttle/bus system.
- Connect disparate pieces of the existing trail system to each other and to Littleton Common.



### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

from the Master Plan

- Invest in improving transportation options for Littleton's seniors and residents with disabilities.
- Work with MassDOT to monitor traffic levels and crash frequency over time as a way to identify problem intersections and roadways segments.
- Prepare a comprehensive trails plan that identifies and prioritizes opportunities to connect existing trails and open spaces to form a network of off-street trails for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Improve transportation connections between area businesses and Littleton's MBTA commuter rail station.
- Create a local funding source for walking and cycling improvements across Town.



## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

**Transportation Goal: To improve the safety and ease of getting around town and better connect the “pieces” of Littleton with safe and pleasant bike and walking paths, and public transportation.**

### 1. Invest in improving transportation options for Littleton’s seniors and residents with disabilities.

Invest in a series of logical and financially sustainable choices to improve transportation options for seniors in Littleton. Current service levels are not meeting demand, and pressure will continue to mount on the Council on Aging if additional services are not offered. Options could include:

- Allocate additional financial resources to the Department of Elder and Human Services to purchase an additional van, and hire at least one additional driver.
- Partner with Acton Toyota (or a similar car dealership) to lease or purchase an electric or hybrid vehicle for ambulatory seniors who need rides.
- Pilot a program that uses ride sharing services, such as Uber or Lyft, to provide rides to seniors where a portion of the fare is paid for by the Town or through COA donations.
- Strengthen the CrossTown Connect regional transportation management association (TMA) by moving forward with agreements to share shuttle vans across participating municipalities and providing a greater level of service for users.
- Explore the potential for a fixed-route, or a flexible fixed route public transportation service in Littleton. Options could include:
  - Partner with the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) to extend the Route 15 bus line past IBM and create a circular route in Littleton stopping at key activity centers and residential clusters before heading back to Lowell.
  - Appropriate town funds to create a small intra-town shuttle service that runs on a fixed route with designated stops across Littleton (e.g. Lexington Lexpress as a model).
  - Appropriate town funds to create a small intra-town shuttle service that runs on a flexible fixed route and would have the flexibility built into the schedule to deviate from its traditional route to pick up passengers along the way. This may be a better option for seniors and disabled residents who are not able to walk a long distance to get to a bus stop.

### 2. Prepare a comprehensive trails plan that identifies and prioritizes opportunities to connect existing trails and open spaces to form a network of off-street trails for pedestrians and cyclists.

In order to map and assess the different travel routes, points of interest, and gaps in the network, the Town should undertake a comprehensive trails plan. This plan would not only produce a map showing the desired network and the gaps that exist, but it should also describe potential funding sources, conflict points, and priorities for trail connections. Options for preparing the plan include:

- Hiring a private transportation consulting firm to work with the Town on plan development.
- Seek funding through the Boston MPO or MAPC to develop the plan in partnership with one of the agencies.

## **LITTLETON MASTER PLAN**

- Charge the Littleton Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee with leading the development of the trails plan in coordination with other committees in town who share common interests.

### **3. Improve transportation connections between area businesses and Littleton's MBTA commuter rail station.**

Commuter rail riders utilizing Littleton's commuter rail station arrive primarily by car as the walking and biking routes are either non-existent or dangerous. There is a strong desire in town to create links to the commuter rail station from some of the larger businesses in town, from the Common, and from the Point. The Town could implement this recommendation by:

- Continue to invest in CrossTown Connect and utilize this shared service to provide connections to the commuter rail station during peak morning and evening commute times.
- Continue to push for CrossTown Connect to be included as a recognized transportation management association (TMA) by MassCommute.
- Work with the LRTA to extend the Route 15 bus from IBM to the commuter rail station.
- Engage area businesses in a discussion of funding shuttle service to get employees to and from the commuter rail station.
- Invest in the creation of safe and accessible walking and biking routes that will connect the commuter rail station to employers and activity centers in town.
- Connect the MBTA station to the Common while still preserving the residential character of Foster Street. Promoting biking and walking as opposed to vehicular traffic.

### **4. Invest in transportation improvements in and around Littleton Common.**

The Common serves as a historical hub in Littleton. Both residents and businesses have expressed a desire to add sidewalks and crosswalks in the area, improve access for cyclists, increase the visibility of public parking, and look for opportunities to slow vehicle speeds around the Common.

- Increase the number, and visibility, of crosswalks in key locations around the Common and along the section of Great Road east of the Common toward Donelan's. This includes crosswalks at traditional intersections, as well as mid-block crossings. Consider solar-powered flashing lights to indicate when a pedestrian is crossing (see West Acton as an example).
- Fill in gaps in the sidewalk network connecting the area around the Common to nearby neighborhoods.
- Partner with the Littleton Business Association to develop a streetscape plan that includes pedestrian scale lighting to increase safety and visibility.
- Place bike parking in strategic locations around the Common.
- Look for ways to improve safety for all users at the intersection of Goldsmith Street and Stevens Street. This could include a series of short-term pilot projects to test different improvement ideas prior to making any substantial investments in design and construction.
- Install visible signage directing drivers to public parking lots around the Common.

### **5. Work with MassDOT to determine an appropriate pathway forward for encouraging or making modifications to transportation infrastructure on state-owned roadways around Littleton Common.**

In order for the Town to improve sidewalks and crosswalks in and around Littleton Common, there must be a formal engagement with MassDOT to determine the appropriate course of action. This discussion

will likely involve design considerations, safety, impacts to vehicular congestion, funding, and long-term ownership and maintenance. The Town has adopted a strong Complete Streets policy, and has a history of coordinating with MassDOT on Complete Streets prioritization projects and signalization improvements at several intersections in town.

First, the Town should work with MassDOT to determine the agency's appetite for making changes to the transportation network around the Common. Once both entities determine what is feasible, they should work together to implement the agreed upon changes. As a last resort, the Town could consider assuming ownership and control of sections of Route 2A, Route 119, and Route 110 in order to make the desired changes on their own. This option would result in the Town assuming responsibility for the long-term maintenance of these roadways and associated infrastructure.

## **6. Work with MassDOT to monitor traffic levels and crash frequency over time as a way to identify problem intersections and roadways segments.**

The roadway network cutting through Littleton is both an amenity and a detractor. Increases in regional population and employment growth, coupled with a falling unemployment rate is causing daily traffic levels to increase. Unfortunately, much of the local and regional traffic flows through the Common creating congestion and safety challenges. The Town has worked closely with MassDOT to mitigate for this where possible, but both entities should continue to monitor traffic counts and crash frequency on heavily traveled roadways segments and at key intersections to get ahead of any future issues.

## **7. Create a local funding source for walking and cycling improvements across Town.**

In order to better connect the "pieces" of Littleton, the Town will need to make funding decisions for how transportation dollars are allocated and spent in the future. The demand for safe and accessible walking and biking infrastructure continues to grow in Town, yet available funding remains stagnant. Options for addressing this recommendation include:

- Consider setting aside a small portion of the Town's annual Chapter 90 funding allocation and dedicate it to building and maintaining infrastructure that supports sustainable transportation options.
- Create a new source of funding, akin to a sidewalk construction and maintenance fund, that would be a component of the town's budget and would fund construction and maintenance of walking and biking infrastructure.
- As new development, or redevelopment, occurs in town, mandate the inclusion of pedestrian facilities as part of the transportation improvement package. If improvements cannot be made at the time, require the applicant to pay into a sidewalk fund (if established).

## **8. Continue to update the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and align the recommendations with the Town's Capital Improvement Plan.**

- Continue to update its recently completed and approved Complete Streets Prioritization Plan to remain active and eligible for future state funding grants. As projects in the Plan are completed, text in the document should be amended and the prioritization map should be updated.
- Include Complete Streets priority projects in the Capital Improvement Plan to be implemented with Chapter 90 funding or funding through the Town's budget allocation. Aligning the Prioritization Plan with the Capital Improvement Plan will ensure that Complete Streets improvements move forward in the absence of state and federal funding opportunities.
- Continue to actively engage with the Boston MPO and MassDOT to pursue funding for Complete Streets priority projects.

## 9. Develop healthy and sustainable policies connecting transportation and schools.

The Town should invest in the development of Safe Routes to School plans for each of the schools in Littleton. The plans should be followed up by strategic investments in walking and biking infrastructure to create safe ways for children and parents to get to school for pick-up and drop-off.

- Prioritize sidewalk construction and repairs around schools.
- Participate in MassDOT's Safe Routes to School program<sup>11</sup>
- Place signage in school pick-up and drop-off areas that discourage vehicle idling and reduce pollution from automobiles. The signage would direct drivers of cars, trucks, and buses to shut off their engines within three hundred feet of a school.

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<sup>11</sup> MassDOT's Safe Routes to School program (<http://commute.com/schools>)

# 4 Economic Development



## OVERVIEW

### Relationship to Master Plan Goals

Economic development is a very broad topic area, similar to land use, that touches on many different aspects of the community. Successful economic development policies and outcomes can:

- Concentrate development and preserve open space and agricultural land;
- Bring jobs to Littleton, and increase the commercial tax base;
- Support existing businesses, and encourage new businesses to open;
- Provide amenities to residents and visitors, and;
- Encourage the Town to allow for different types of housing at a variety of price points that support the local workforce.

Throughout the Master Plan process, residents expressed a desire for additional amenities in town which included more local retail shops and restaurants. A particular emphasis was placed on getting these new businesses to locate in the area around the Common to help create the town center peo-

#### Key Policy Recommendations for Economic Development

- Littleton has several well-defined commercial and mixed-use nodes that could be intensified to produce additional commercial and residential development opportunities. By concentrating development efforts in a few key locations, land in other parts of Littleton could be preserved. The Town will need to develop specific area plans for these locations and ensure zoning and other policies align with the future vision for these locations.
- Littleton has a strong agricultural base that plays an important role in local economic development efforts. By partnering with local farmers, the Town could make this connection even stronger which would not only help the farming community, but could draw additional spending to other parts of town.
- Littleton is quickly becoming a very popular place for both housing and business development with a housing stock that is more affordable compared to surrounding communities, and a growing list of amenities attractive to businesses. While the Town has done a good job of recruiting new commercial and industrial development, more could be done to create a business-friendly atmosphere and market available options for commercial land or space.

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ple are looking for. There was also a desire to see investment occur around the Taylor Street and Foster Street areas with the reuse of existing buildings and the potential for a mixed-use center. These ideas are a reflection on Master Plan goals that strive to create a local economy with a variety of businesses that result in more jobs and an increase in local goods and services for residents.

### Key Findings

- Littleton has a very healthy employment base and low unemployment.
- Only 10 percent of Littleton residents who are employed work in Littleton.
- Littleton's employment base is primarily comprised of jobs in retail sector and professional and technical services.
- Development of The Point significantly increased the number of retail jobs and retail space in Littleton.
- Littleton has many amenities that are attractive to employers, including transportation access, a skilled workforce, low energy and water rates, and a great school system.

### In this Chapter

- A snapshot of economic conditions in Littleton.
- Description of the ways that agriculture plays a critical role in Littleton's economy.
- Locations where future economic development efforts could be explored.
- Recommendations for ways the Town could market available space and amenities to potential companies.

## INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

The economic conditions in a town are largely driven by sources of household income, the commercial and industrial base a community can attract and retain, and the uses a community chooses to allow on its land. The economies of each community then comprise a larger regional marketplace, where cities and towns are connected by a population and employment pool, an interrelated set of industries, and somewhat similar labor and trade characteristics. Economic regions are usually defined by similar land use characteristics, utility connections, and a shared transportation system of roads, bridges, waterways, and in some cases public transportation.

The term "economic development" is often understood to mean the physical development of commercial and industrial space in a community. In fact, true economic development supports the improvement of the town and the people who live there. The economy of Littleton depends on many factors that influence the decisions businesses make when choosing a location. These include the town's labor force, current housing stock, transportation system, public utilities, school quality, open space and recreation amenities, and more. The overall development of the Town's attractiveness as compared to regional competitors is a component of economic development, and a way of increasing economic growth.

In Massachusetts, local governments depend on property taxes for their operating revenue and pay close attention to how their tax base is structured. In general, some commercial and industrial uses are less service-intensive for local governments to support compared to other types of land uses. This can result in very deliberate actions to zone areas of the community for business and commercial use, with possible support of tax incentives, infrastructure extensions, or other public/private partnership arrangements. In Littleton, these deliberate strategies have resulted in economic success bringing companies like IBM, Potpourri, and FIBA Technologies to town.

## Labor Force

Littleton's labor force includes all residents over the age of 16 who are either currently employed or are actively seeking employment. As of June 2016, Littleton's labor force included 5,149 people and the town has a remarkably low unemployment rate: 3.3 percent, or about one percentage point lower than the unemployment rate for Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup>

The labor force in Littleton is extremely well-educated, with 60 percent of residents having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is very similar to the surrounding communities, which also have a highly educated labor force.<sup>2</sup>

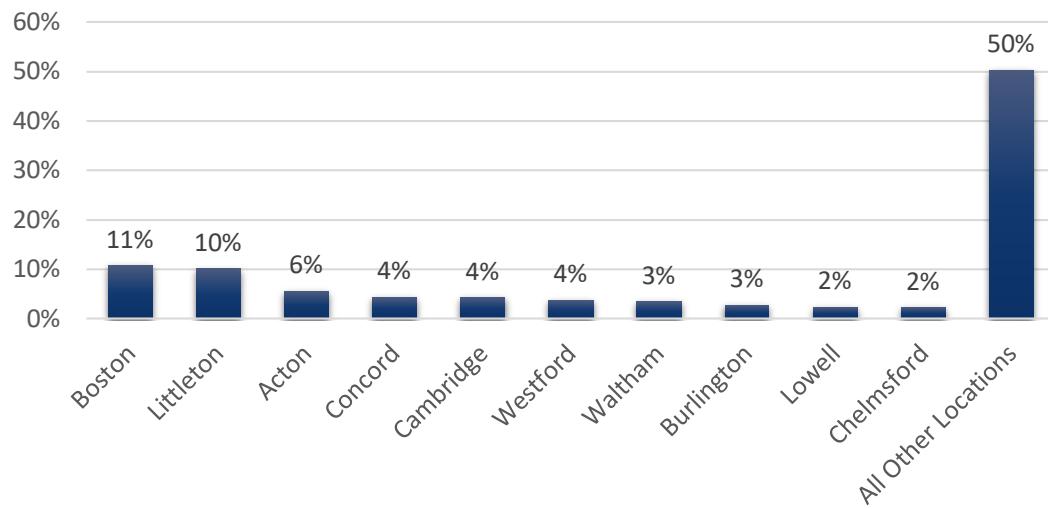
In general, Littleton residents are employed in educational and health care services, professional services and management, and retail trade. Estimates from the 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS), show that approximately 7 percent of Littleton's residents work for themselves as self-employed individuals.<sup>3</sup> The most popular employment destinations for Littleton residents are Boston, at 11 percent of the labor force, and Littleton itself, at 10 percent of the labor force.

Even though about 90 percent of Littleton's labor force travels outside the town for employment, there were substantial reductions in commute times between the 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 ACS reporting periods. The most recent ACS estimates an increase of 55 percent for workers with a commute to work under nine minutes. Commute times decreased nearly across the board with the exception of commutes between sixty and ninety minutes, where the ACS reported an estimated 70 percent increase.

**Figure 4.1 - Place of Work for Littleton Residents**

### Where do Littleton residents work?

(Source: ACS 2010-2014)



<sup>1</sup> Executive Office of Workforce and Labor Development (EOWLD). "Labor Force and Unemployment Data", June 2016.

<sup>2</sup> The Economic Development chapter uses Acton, Ayer, Boxborough, Groton, Harvard, and Westford as comparison communities.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census American Community Survey, "DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics."

## Employment Base

The employment base in Littleton includes all wage and salary jobs reported by most of the town's public and private employers. Littleton's employment base includes 7,642 jobs, with a large majority of the employment in industries that provide professional, technical, financial, or personal services. Over the last ten years, the employment base in Littleton has grown by about 44 percent.<sup>4</sup> This is largely attributed to the opening of the IBM campus, new retail jobs at The Point, and increases in the wholesale trade, healthcare, and educational service sectors.<sup>5</sup> As of 2014, IBM employed over 4,000 people in Littleton and this accounted for nearly 60 percent of the town's employment base.<sup>6</sup>

Within Littleton, there are nearly three thousand more jobs than there are resident workers to fill them, which means the Town serves as a net importer of employees and jobs. Table 5.2 compares the industry of employment for resident workers in Littleton to the types of jobs located in Littleton. Where the ratio of jobs to workers is higher than 1.0, that particular employment sector is a net importer of jobs to the community. Where the ratio is less than 1.0, there are more resident workers employed by that industry than there are jobs in Littleton. The construction, wholesale trade, retail trade, and professional, scientific, management service industries are all net importers of employees to Littleton.<sup>7</sup>

Between 2005 and 2015, the number of business establishments grew from 354 to 382, or 8 percent. During the same ten-year period, the number of employees in Littleton grew by 44 percent. This indicates that some of the new businesses that opened during that time were large employers. Average

**Table 4.2. Ratio of Jobs in Littleton to Resident Workers in Littleton by Industry**

Industry Sector	Resident Workers in Littleton	Jobs in Littleton	Ratio of Jobs to Workers
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	51	35	0.7
Construction	275	453	1.6
Manufacturing	709	406	0.6
Wholesale trade	99	315	3.2
Retail trade	633	1,114	1.8
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	85	28	0.3
Information	130	0	0.0
Finance, insurance, real estate	224	115	0.5
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, waste management	946	1,038	1.1
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,118	824	0.7
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food services	202	150	0.7
Other services, except public administration	141	128	0.9
Public administration	201	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,814</b>	<b>7,642</b>	<b>1.6</b>

Source: Employment and Wages (ES-202), 2015, ACS 2010-2014, C24030, and RKG Associates

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. ES-202, 2005-2015.

<sup>5</sup> One of the challenges with employment data for Littleton is the suppression of professional, scientific, and management services jobs due to the large employment base of IBM. The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) suppresses data in communities where one employer comprises a bulk of the employment base in one particular industry sector to protect data confidentiality. In Littleton, there are about three thousand jobs that are not accounted for in the breakdown of industry sectors, but are counted in the Town's total employment base number. It is highly likely that employment in the professional, management, and administrative service sectors increased substantially with the opening of IBM's facilities in 2012.

<sup>6</sup> IBM employment data provided by CrossTown Connect as part a commuter survey of IBM employees. It is worth noting that not all employees of IBM Littleton work at the facility, some may telecommute or work from home.

<sup>7</sup> It is very likely that the professional, scientific, management sectors are severely underrepresented due to data suppression by EOLWD. If that data reflected a true 100 percent count of employment base in Littleton, that employment sector would likely be the largest net importer of jobs.

weekly wages for people employed by establishments in Littleton rose by 63 percent, from \$1,131 in 2005 to \$1,839 in 2015. Littleton's local economy improved at a far greater rate than the state as a whole during this ten-year period. Total employment state-wide grew by 8 percent, and weekly wages grew by 33 percent.<sup>8</sup> Since 2015, other major employers like FIBA Technologies and Potpourri have opened and brought additional employees to Littleton. Their contribution to Littleton's employment base is not reflected in the most current data from EOLWD.

### Location Quotients

Location quotients compare employment by industry in two or more geographic areas. The location quotient is a ratio of the percentage of an industry's employment in one geography to that of a larger comparison geography. If the ratio falls between 0.90 and 1.10, then the proportion of jobs is very similar in both geographies. If the ratio is less than 0.90, then the identified industry sector is thought to be under-represented in the local economy. Conversely, a ratio greater than 1.10 can show a specialty within the local economy as compared to the larger geography. For purposes of the Master Plan, the location quotient can be useful in pointing out opportunities for certain industry sectors to gain a larger share of the employment base. It can also be used to indicate when a community may be heavily reliant on one or two industry sectors and may seek to diversify its employment base. In some cases, a high location quotient may indicate a specialty area in the local economy such as tourism and hospitality or agriculture if those industry sectors play a prominent role in the community.

In the case of Littleton, the location quotient analysis in Table 4.3 shows the town has industry concentrations in professional and technical services, retail trade, construction, and wholesale trade sectors. It also has a fairly high location quotient for the agriculture sector, yet agricultural employment is listed at only 35 people for the year 2015. The location quotient is high because the larger comparison geography (Boston-Cambridge-Nashua NECTA<sup>9</sup>) has a very low percentage of total employment in this industry sector compared to Littleton. By contrast, Littleton has clearly benefited from the arrival of

**Table 4.3. Littleton Location Quotient by NAICS Sector, 2015**

NAICS Industries	Location Quotient	Rank
54 - Professional and Technical Services	3.82	1
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	2.75	2
44-45 - Retail Trade	1.54	3
23 – Construction	1.36	4
42 - Wholesale Trade	1.20	5
55 - Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.98	6
31-33 – Manufacturing	0.79	7
61 - Educational Services	0.63	8
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.49	10
56 - Administrative and Waste Services	0.36	11
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	0.26	12
52 - Finance and Insurance	0.15	15
48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing	0.12	16
21 – Mining	0.00	19
22 – Utilities	0.00	19
51 – Information	0.00	19

Source: Employment and Wages Report (ES-202), 2015, and RKG Associates, Inc.

<sup>8</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. ES-202, 2005-2015.

<sup>9</sup> NECTA stands for New England City and Town Area. These are geographic and statistical entities defined by the U.S. Federal Government for use in the six-state New England region. NECTAs are used as economic sub-districts for reporting purposes in EOLWD's ES-202 employment data. The Boston-Cambridge-Nashua NH NECTA was used because of Littleton's professional and technical services employment base.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

businesses such as IBM, which has brought an infusion of high-wage employment to the town.

### New Employers

Since 2010, Littleton has attracted several large employers which added substantially to the Town's employment base and local economy. These include companies like IBM, Potpourri Group, and FIBA Technologies. The town has also had success in attracting and retaining retailers both large and small. In 2012, the Point was approved by the Town's Planning Board and subsequently began construction on a regional retail, dining, and entertainment complex which today is approaching its full build-out. At the same time, smaller retail and service-oriented businesses continue to operate in locations along Littleton Common, along Great Road heading toward Acton, and in a small pocket at King Street and Taylor Street near the old Littleton Depot.



Conversations with local business owners, developers, and town boards and committees have revealed why Littleton is an attractive location to open up a business, large or small.<sup>10</sup> Even though Littleton is a relatively small town of just over 9,000 residents, it provides public services akin to a town of a larger size. Littleton provides excellent fire, police, and emergency services; town staff are responsive and professional, and the school system provides an excellent education for families of employees who chose to live in Littleton. A major selling point for Littleton is the Littleton Electric Light and Water Department (LELWD), which provides local water and power at one of the cheapest rates in Massachusetts. For large employers who have manufacturing facilities or large offices, this can be a significant factor in choosing Littleton over other similar towns.

Littleton's transportation assets also play an important part in attracting and retaining employers. The Town is fortunate to be located directly along Interstate 495, Route 2, and Route 2A which provide access to and from the regional transportation system. The industrial park located off Ayer Road on Distribution Center Drive has become a hub for larger-scale industrial and warehousing businesses because of the truck access from Route 2A to I-495. While this creates some issues with traffic and noise, it does give Littleton a unique locational advantage over other similar towns. Littleton also has an MBTA Commuter Rail station along the Fitchburg Line providing access between Boston and Fitchburg and points in between. Employees who commute into Littleton for work could choose to take the commuter rail, although getting from the station to their place of employment is be challenging.

The Town's amenity package plays an important role in not only the attraction and retention of businesses, but also the desire of employees to live in Littleton. Schools, open space, recreational opportunities, retail and shopping, entertainment, and safety all add to the attractiveness of a location for economic opportunity. Littleton benefits economically by having an excellent school system, a community where open space has been preserved, a variety of recreational programs, and a growing retail and entertainment industry. While there is some desire in the community to continue to improve upon these amenities, overall the Town offers a very competitive amenity package.

Littleton's small businesses benefit from a consistent client base and a small business culture that is cultivated by the Littleton Business Association (LBA). Established in 2015, the LBA is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of small businesses in town. The group hosts and promotes

<sup>10</sup> The Consultant Team held a group interview on Economic Development in July 2016 with local boards and committees, small and large businesses, and town staff.

local events, communicates with local boards and officials, holds networking events, and has a listing of commercial properties for lease and sale. The LBA has a listing of over ninety-three individual small business members.<sup>11</sup>

## Commercial and Industrial Development

Littleton has three primary commercial and industrial clusters, each with their own mix of uses, size and scale, and character. The Town currently has one hundred and sixty parcels assessed as either commercial (77 parcels) or industrial (83 parcels) uses. These two use categories account for 1,358 acres of land in Littleton and nearly four million square feet of built space.<sup>12</sup> Of the 1,358 acres of land, industrial uses currently occupy 86 percent or 1,163 acres. The industrial operations in Littleton tend to be much larger, and include areas like the Industrial Park and the Aggregate Industries quarry.

There are pockets of industrial and commercial development in Littleton that is currently vacant and listed for lease or for sale. As of September 2016, about 566,000 square feet of industrial, office, and research and development (R&D) space was available for lease with rents ranging from \$6.95 per square foot (industrial) to \$20 per square foot (medical office). A large majority of the vacant space in Littleton is clustered along Taylor Street, Foster Street, and Harvard Road. These tend to be previously occupied buildings and complexes where prior businesses either left or were acquired by other companies.

As was noted earlier, Littleton has three primary commercial/industrial clusters that comprise a large portion of the land currently zoned for these uses. These three areas are described in more detail below and include:

- Great Road generally between Acton Toyota to the east and The Point to the west.
- Interchange of I-495 and Route 2, Foster Street, and Taylor Street.
- Route 2A from Indian Hill to the east and the Littleton/Ayer town line to the west.

### Great Road Cluster

The commercial and retail area along Great Road radiates out from the Town Common which, in its current built form, is a mix of small businesses, banks, and food establishments. Just to the north of the Common along King Street is the IBM Littleton campus which employs thousands of employees. To the east of the Common along Great Road is a commercial cluster anchored by the Donelan's plaza, and supported by Acton Toyota, many banking institutions, and several strip retail plazas and stand-alone retail businesses. There are several vacancies along this stretch, most notably 20,000 square feet of office space in the former DCU bank building at 255 Great Road.

On the western edge of this commercial cluster is the new retail node The Point. While somewhat polarizing in Littleton, The Point has brought a concentration of commercial and retail space unlike anything Littleton has had in the past. At full build out, this development will be home to a Market Basket, a Courtyard Marriott hotel, a movie theater, and several restaurants and retail spaces. The development is in its final phase of building out, and at its completion will have about 540,000 square feet of mixed-use retail.<sup>13</sup> This development is seen by some in Littleton as an amenity that will help draw more businesses to locate in Littleton.

### I-495 and Route 2 Cluster

The area around the interchange of I-495 and Route 2 is one of the larger industrially-zoned locations in Littleton. The landscape is dotted with a number of large, stand-alone buildings that house industrial, manufacturing, and office uses surrounded by very large surface parking lots. A number of these buildings were owned by Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) prior to their acquisition by Compaq in

<sup>11</sup> Littleton Business Association. <http://littletonba.org/>

<sup>12</sup> Littleton Assessor's Database, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> The Point, <http://www.thepoint495.com/leasing/>.

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the late 1990s, and then by Hewlett-Packard in the early 2000's. Today, some of these buildings have been repurposed and in some cases subdivided to provide flexible space for multiple businesses. There are still a number of vacancies in the buildings along Foster and Taylor Streets, with recent estimates close to 100,000 square feet of leasable space.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to what is already constructed, plans have been approved for the construction of an additional 330,000 square feet of office and R&D space at the proposed Littleton Tech Park at 225 Taylor Street. The proposed project by the Gutierrez Company is planned to have three 3-story office buildings on a fifty-six-acre site with frontage along I-495 and Taylor Street just south of the interchange. The site is also a half-mile from the Littleton Commuter Rail station.<sup>15</sup>

### Route 2A Cluster

The third commercial/industrial cluster is the area that spans Route 2A between Indian Hill and the Littleton/Ayer town line. This area is almost exclusively industrial in nature and is home to Littleton's industrial park (Distribution Way), the Aggregate Industries and Quarry, Littleton Electric and Light Department, and the Patriot Beverage bottling plant just south along Harvard Street. This area represents the largest concentration of industrial, manufacturing, and warehousing operations in town. The hub of new industrial companies and facilities are located along Distribution Center Drive at the Littleton Industrial Park. New employers Potpourri and FIBA Technologies have recently brought new employment opportunities to Littleton. The Town's water and electric rates/services, property tax considerations, and access to major roads has helped attract new companies to this area.

The Littleton Depot area, at the intersection of Harvard Road, Taylor Street, and King Street, is an interesting mix of commercial, retail, and industrial properties. The small retail node houses a liquor store, automotive shop, Dunkin Donuts, and a Post Office branch. To the west along Harvard Road is the bottling plant that is now occupied by Patriot Beverage, which includes about 300,000 square feet of space on the north and south sides of the road. The Town and property owner have been actively marketing the site to other industrial users that may have a need for a bottling facility.

### Priority Development Areas and Chapter 43D Sites

In 2012, the Town of Littleton participated in an effort run by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) to identify local, regional, and state Priority Development Areas (PDAs) that could support future commercial, retail, industrial, office, and housing development. The 495 Development Compact was a facilitated process by which thirty-seven municipalities bordering Interstate 495 were asked to identify local priority areas which were then filtered through a screening process by two regional planning commissions (MAPC and CMRPC), and then through a state screening process to identify locations for regional and state assistance.

In Littleton, there were ten locally-selected PDAs of which seven align with existing business and industrial zoning districts. Six local PDAs were then designated as State PDAs by EOHED. These included the



<sup>14</sup> Loopnet, September 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Littleton Tech Park, <http://www.littletontechpark.com/>.

Map 4.1

## Economic Development Areas

Littleton, Massachusetts

### Commercial Zoning & Industrial Districts

- Business District (B)
- Village Common District (VC)
- Industrial A District (I-A)
- Industrial B District (I-B)



43D Site

Local Priority Development Area

**RKG**  
ASSOCIATES INC

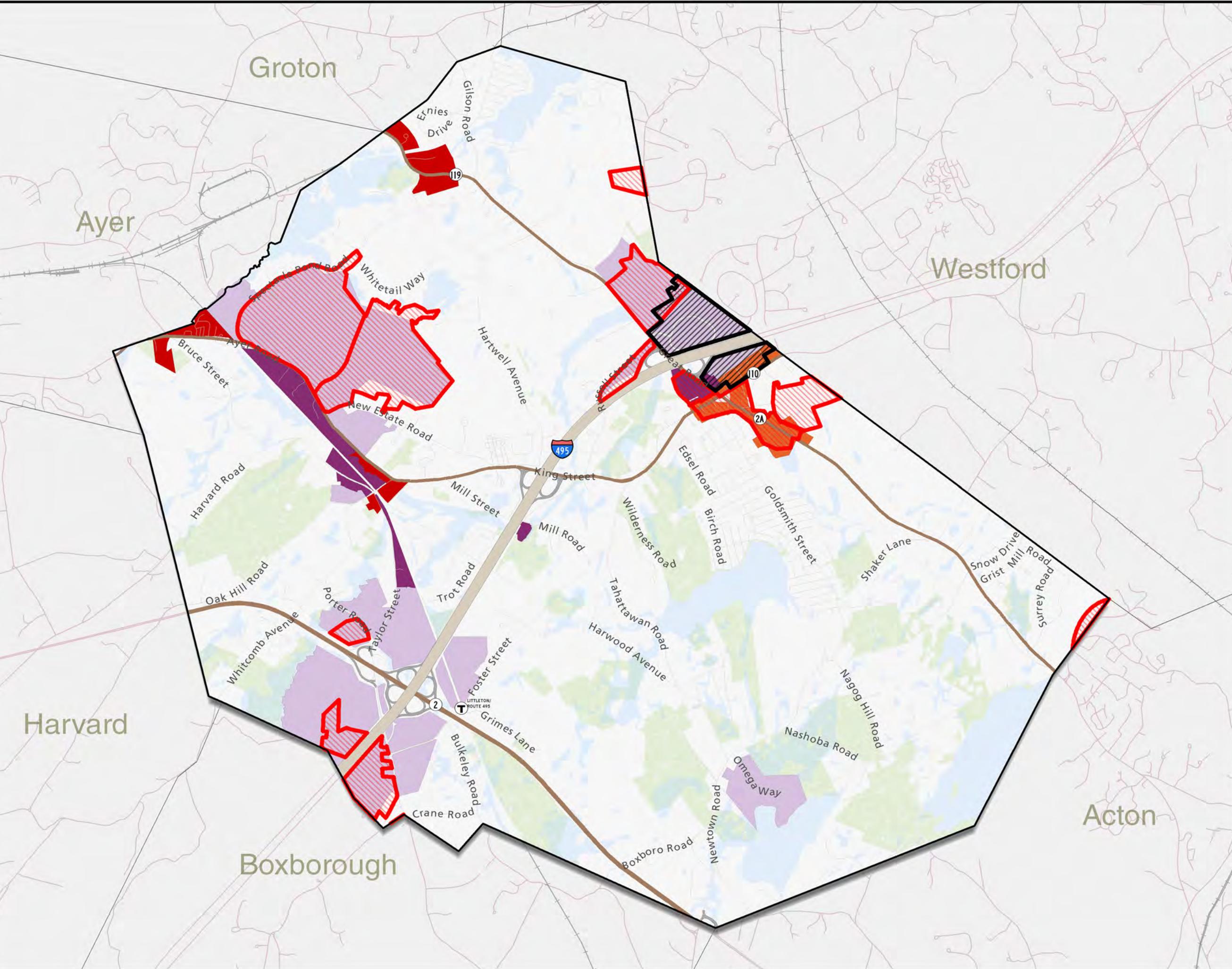


Date: 9/15/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, Mass EOEEA, USGS, EOHEA, MAPC

This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations or delineating natural resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.



0 1/2 1  
Mile





site where The Point is built today, the IBM site, the Common, and land around the I-495/Route 2 interchange.<sup>16</sup> Participating in this planning process has allowed Littleton to begin the conversation about priority areas for stimulating and encouraging economic development in strategic locations.

In addition to the 495 Compact PDAs, Littleton has also taken the initiative to designate two Chapter 43D Local Expedited Permit sites. The first is the site where The Point is currently located and the other is where IBM is located. The Chapter 43D program allows municipalities to designate specific sites in their community to promote targeted economic and housing development by increasing transparency and efficiency in the municipal permitting process. The 43D permitting process puts in place a process that guarantees a local permitting decision within one hundred and eighty days.<sup>17</sup> The program also increases the visibility of the targeted sites, prioritizes consideration for state funding and grants, and signals to the development community that these sites are prioritized for development that meets the vision of the town.

Map 4.1 shows the Commercial and Industrial zoning districts in Littleton, as well as the designated 43D streamline permitting sites and locally designated Priority Development Areas (PDAs).

### Property Tax Policies

In addition to the regulatory environment in Littleton, there are also financial implications businesses factor in when making choices about where to locate. Littleton has a split tax rate between residential and commercial properties. With the exception of Ayer, Littleton's commercial tax rate is quite a bit higher than the surrounding communities. Littleton also has a split tax rate resulting in a higher tax rate for commercial than for residential development. Ayer is the only other surrounding Town that has a split tax rate. Between Fiscal Year 2006 and 2015, the commercial tax rate in Littleton increased 57 percent, the highest increase of any surrounding community by far.

**Table 4.4: Tax Rate and Tax Base Trends**

Town	Property Tax Rates		% Change FY06-FY15		Tax Levy: Res. to C/I/P Ratio (FY2015)	Avg. Property Tax Bill (FY2015)	% Chg. Property Tax Bill FY06-FY15
	Res.	C/I/P	Res.	C/I/P			
Acton	\$19.05	\$19.05	30.7%	30.7%	7.5	\$10,128	31.1%
Ayer	\$14.62	\$29.97	55.7%	22.1%	0.8	\$3,982	45.3%
Boxborough	\$16.65	\$16.65	25.8%	25.8%	3.1	\$8,848	21.1%
Groton	\$18.27	\$18.27	28.9%	28.9%	14.9	\$7,279	24.2%
Littleton	\$18.10	\$29.89	48.7%	57.2%	2.4	\$6,724	44.5%
Westford	\$16.24	\$16.44	25.7%	25.5%	5.5	\$7,543	26.5%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Municipal Databank/Local Aid Section Tax Rates by Class, 2016. RKG Associates.

Businesses may also consider the cost to employees who choose to live in Littleton when they are looking at opening up an office or relocating to a new location. The average single-family property tax bill in FY15 was \$6,724, which was lower than all the surrounding towns with the exception of Ayer.

### EDSAT Report

In April 2016, the Town had an Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) study completed by Northeastern University. The EDSAT helps identify strengths and weaknesses and any potential "deal

<sup>16</sup> 495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan, EOHD, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Chapter 43D Permitting, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/zoning-and-permitting/43d/>

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

breakers" to future economic development and town-attractiveness.<sup>18</sup> The report highlighted several strengths and weaknesses. The ones that fell under Very Important in the assessment are summarized below:

- Very Important Strengths
  - Excellent access from the regions highway system, and access to the commuter rail system.
  - Most major commercial developments feature ample off-street parking.
  - Littleton's workforce is technically-skilled and well-balanced.
  - Littleton's residents are more highly educated than the comparison geography as a whole.
  - Traffic in Littleton is not as severe as traffic across the comparison geography.
  - Existing website is currently being upgraded.
- Very Important Weaknesses
  - Rents for industrial space and Class B and C office space are much higher than the comparison geography. The Town also has a very small share of office space in general for attracting national or regional business headquarters.
  - Littleton does not have a public sewer system, which limits the amount and type of industries that could locate in town.

## ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

### □ Redeveloping the Common

Littleton Common is observed to be the center of the Town, but many wish it had more shops, restaurants, retail spaces, and in general more to attract people and keep people there. In order to create the type of place people want, there are several infrastructure improvements that are likely necessary to support the small town New England Village many envision. To facilitate the redevelopment of existing buildings, or even changing the tenancy of existing spaces to include more restaurants, offices, and even residential, the Town will need to decide how to handle the added wastewater that is generated by those types of uses. An initial exploration of the issue was undertaken by the Littleton Common Sewer Feasibility Study Committee from 2010-2013, and November 2016 Town Meeting just approved funding to conduct a Sewer Strategic Plan. This will help determine wastewater treatment options, locations, extent, and cost.



The transportation network in and around the Common has also been a point of discussion throughout the Master Plan process. Residents and business owners would like to see more sidewalks and safer crossings that would connect points around the Common, as well as connecting to surrounding residential neighborhoods. It has also been noted that there is not enough parking in the areas around the

<sup>18</sup> Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool Report for the Town of Littleton; Northeastern University, Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy. April 2016.

Common to support additional business growth. Some of this may be handled by better management of existing parking including additional signage, reorienting parking spaces, or looking for efficiencies in striping patterns on existing roadways.

## □ Infrastructure and Amenities for Attracting and Retaining Businesses

There are a number of reasons to focus on retaining existing, and attracting new businesses, including providing goods and services to Littleton residents, providing employment opportunities, and expanding the town's commercial tax base to help support Town services. During interviews and discussions with businesses, residents, and members of the Economic Development Committee, several issues were brought up which if not addressed could impact the Town's ability to retain existing businesses and attract new economic development opportunities. The first is the reliability of the power grid and system. It was noted that from time to time sporadic power outages or brown outs do occur due to the overhead network of electrical wires bringing power to businesses. These outages can cause severe issues for businesses that rely on computers, servers, heating and cooling systems, etc. There is a desire by some in town to look at under-grounding these utilities to reduce instances of power outages.

Another issue that arose during discussions with business owners in Littleton is the fact that it is very difficult to get younger, high-skilled workers, as well as lower-wage unskilled workers to Littleton without the use of a personal automobile. The Town has worked tirelessly with the MBTA and MassDOT to improve the commuter rail schedule so workers could arrive in Littleton prior to 8 A.M. The difficulty lies in making the connection from the commuter rail station to places of employment, which in many cases are several miles away. Young workers who live closer to Boston often do not have a car and may be unwilling to commute out to Littleton. Transportation is also a challenge for lower-wage workers who may not have access to a car, or cannot afford to own a car. Potpourri has invested in a fleet of shuttle buses to pick up workers at designated locations and bring them to Littleton in order to fill jobs in their new facility.

Housing is also a critical economic development issue. Littleton currently offers very few housing choices outside of traditional single-family units. While the Village Green 40B development offers new housing product (both market rate and income restricted units), it exists in isolation as most other multi-family developments are either age-restricted or income-restricted. As the price of housing in Littleton continues to escalate, and the workforce continues to age, business in town may have a more difficult time gaining access to a trained and qualified workforce. Providing additional housing choices in Town will not only help with workforce attraction and retention, but will also serve seniors looking to downsize and households who may not be able to afford a single-family home but still desire to live in Littleton.

Finally, retail and food options in Littleton are limited. While the opening of The Point helps fill a large gap in retail and restaurant offerings, current restaurants tenants tend to be more casual eateries with the exception of Great Road Kitchen. During discussions with local businesses, there is a desire for ad-

**Young workers who live closer to Boston often do not have a car and may be unwilling to commute out to Littleton. Transportation is also a challenge for lower-wage workers who may not have access to a car, or cannot afford to own a car. Potpourri has invested in a fleet of shuttle buses to pick up workers at designated locations and bring them to Littleton in order to fill jobs in their new facility.**

## **LITTLETON MASTER PLAN**

ditional higher end restaurants perhaps with a more local flavor and located in the vicinity of the Common. This is challenging because of the lack of sewers and capacity to deal with wastewater treatment.

### **□ Opportunities for Redevelopment**

Littleton is ripe with opportunities for redevelopment. Remnants of prior businesses and industries have left ample openings for creative and innovative solutions for adaptive reuse. The old Digital Equipment buildings that dot the landscape along Foster Street and Taylor Street are prime examples as many have at least some percentage of their building footprint currently sitting vacant. At a smaller scale, but of similar importance to Littleton, is the widely supported idea of reinvigorating Littleton Common. This idea is one that threads many topic areas of the Master Plan together. Reinvigorating Littleton Common will require consideration of the following elements:

- Economic development strategies to retain and attract new businesses;
- Changes to current zoning to allow a wider variety of uses, encourage parcel consolidation to deal with issues of multiple small lots under private ownership, and a hard look at dimensional requirements like setbacks and height restrictions;
- Improved transportation network that includes cars, pedestrians, and cyclists;
- Historical and cultural designations to preserve the history and significance of place;
- Protection of Littleton Common as an open space and gathering place;
- Investment in public facilities such as a wastewater treatment system, and improved public parking options, and;
- Housing to provide activity and life in Littleton Common and a built-in customer base for businesses.

As the Town progresses through its planning and execution of the various elements that go into the Common, it will be critical to ensure the approach is holistic and considers the important linkages between elements.

### **□ Nodes and Neighborhood Activity Centers**

Throughout the Master Plan process, residents expressed concern about pursuing economic development opportunities at the expense of maintaining some of the small town characteristics that give Littleton its charm. While increasing the commercial tax base is an important goal, it should not come at the expense of completely changing the character of the town. Throughout Littleton's development evolution, several nodes and activity centers emerged and still remain relatively active. These include Littleton Common, Littleton Depot, Taylor and Foster Street, the Littleton industrial park, and most recently The Point. As new development opportunities arise, or redevelopment is pursued in these locations, the Town should consider how best to accommodate a growing commercial tax base that provides economic stability and financial sustainability while not wholly sacrificing the character of the Town.

The Town should also work with existing businesses to look for opportunities to create spin-off ventures that may be looking for smaller and cheaper space. Existing buildings, like the ones along Taylor and Foster Streets could serve as opportunities sites for housing smaller start-up businesses. The Town should also look for opportunities to encourage co-working space for those who are looking for small offices with shared amenities.

### **□ Agriculture as Economic Development**

Agricultural land should be viewed not just as a pristine, bucolic element of Littleton's history and community fabric, but also as an economic development driver. Many of the farms in Littleton are actively



used to produce crops and goods, to be sold on-site or elsewhere, as a means of subsistence for farmers and their employees. Moreover, Littleton's agricultural character helps to distinguish the Town as a unique and attractive place to live and work amongst the myriad of expanding municipalities throughout the Greater Boston region. While maintaining and protecting agricultural land is an important goal and a tenet of this Master Plan, it is critical to recognize that the success or failure of a farm depends on many factors, some of which are outside the control of the Town. However, the Town and its residents can help farmers succeed by shopping locally, promoting farms to those outside Littleton, putting in place policies that protect and benefit farmers, and ensuring that local regulations do not impede or unduly complicate the efforts of local farmers to operate thriving agricultural businesses. The continued existence and success of farms will help accomplish the goals of economic development, open space, natural resources, and provide fresh, healthy, and sustainable food options for Littleton residents.

### □ Marketing Littleton

Up until recent years, Littleton had remained a relatively undiscovered community. The growth and expansion of the Greater Boston job and housing market over the last ten to fifteen years has changed that. Residents and businesses have discovered the wide range of amenities and offerings the Town has, including its strategic location along major travel routes and the MBTA commuter rail. Many communities looking to attract commercial development in strategic locations have moved to a web-based marketing system by creating a separate economic development website to promote the Town and available space or land. Littleton has no shortage of amenities to market, and as the Town continues to think strategically about the future of its activity centers the opportunity exists to promote them to a wider audience using an online platform.

### □ Community Resilience

Economic development strategies can promote Littleton's resilience in the following ways:

- Actively supporting existing businesses and recruiting new ones help to ensure the economic vitality of the town.
- Supporting the economic viability of farming helps diversify the economy, thus making it stronger, but also to provides for local food production, important to a community's resilience.

## **LITTLETON MASTER PLAN**

- Exploring new mitigation practices for stormwater retention and recharge may result in more effective ways of protecting water quality.
- Undergrounding overhead utility lines in some parts of town will result in more dependable power during storms, but also increases safety by reducing vehicular crashes involving utility poles
- Redeveloping the Littleton Common area into more of a Town Center creates a civic space where the community can gather. This contributes to the town's resilience by helping to support socialization and community activity among Littleton residents.
- Attracting more jobs to Littleton helps contribute to the Town's resilience by increasing opportunities for residents to work in town, thus reducing vehicle emissions from long commutes.

## **GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**Economic Development Goal: To encourage a local economy that includes a variety of businesses, increases the tax base, provides local jobs, and results in more goods and services available to residents.**

- 1. Invest in infrastructure changes in Littleton Common that enhance walking, biking, signage, and parking to make it easier and more convenient for customers and residents to visit local businesses.**
  - Evaluate the recommendations from the upcoming Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan, and determine next steps. If the desire is to see redevelopment and a new mix of uses happen in the Common, wastewater treatment will need to be dealt with.
  - Invest in infrastructure changes that enhance walking and biking in and around Littleton Common. This should include, but not be limited to, sidewalks, crosswalks, on-street bike facilities, bike racks/ parking, ADA-accessible intersections and crossings.
  - Improve traffic circulation, parking, and signage around Littleton Common to make it easier, safer, and more convenient for customers to visit local businesses.
  - Look for ways to improve the utilization of public parking through signage, marketing, shared parking, or the creation of new parking locations in the Common.
  - Encourage the reuse of existing buildings for redevelopment by considering the provision of incentives to do so and/or the adoption of an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance.
  - Promote mixed-use, including housing on upper stories.
  - As vacancies fill, and redevelopment takes place in Littleton Common, the Town should work with property owners and the LBA to determine if a Business Improvement District (BID) would be appropriate and useful. This tool can help produce public/private partnerships to help pay for streetscape improvements, signage, promotional material, and infrastructure projects. This can also help to achieve a more cohesive sense of place as efforts to improve and beautify are coordinated.

# Agriculture as Economic Development

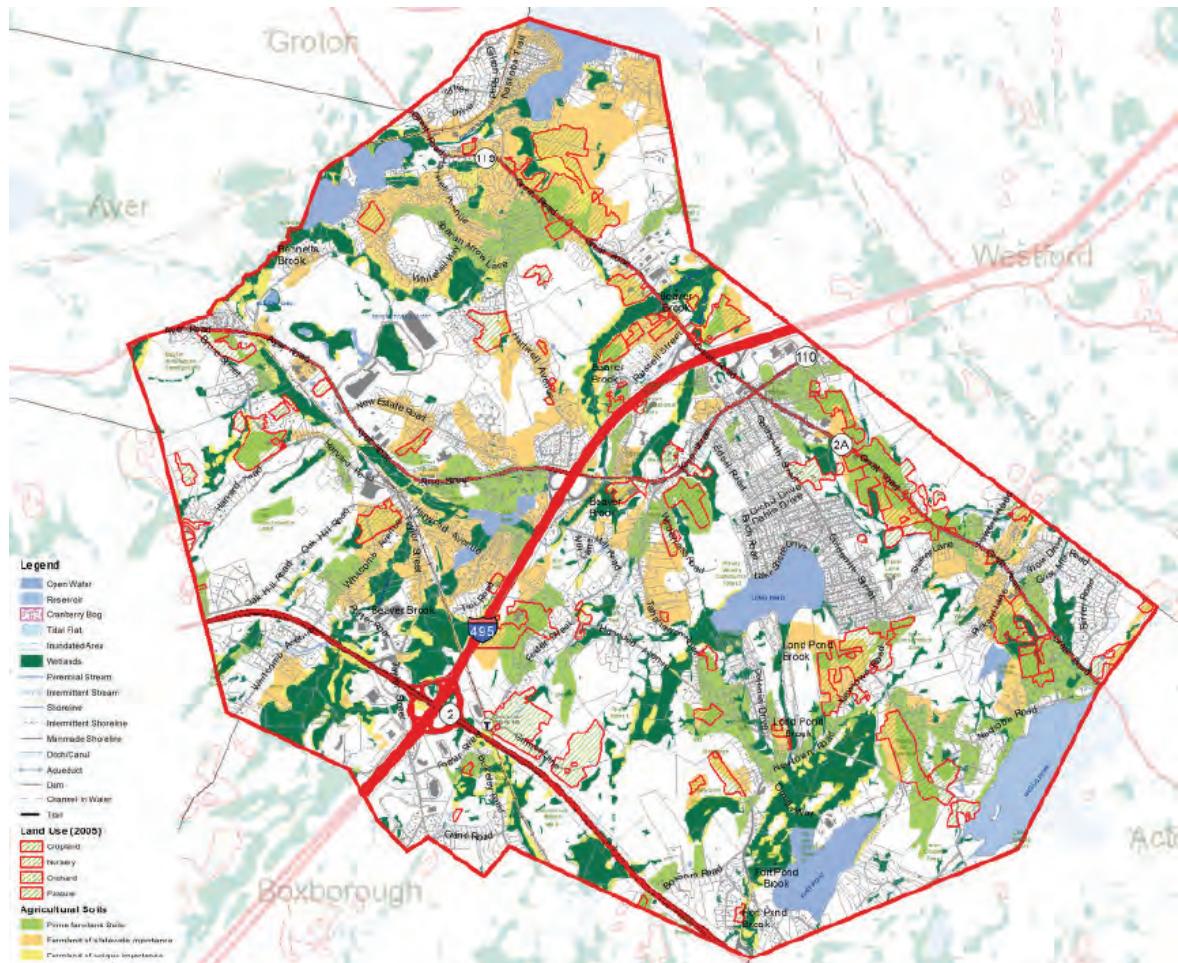
## Ideas for Strengthening and Sustaining Littleton's Farms

Agricultural land should be viewed not just as an element of Littleton's history and community fabric, but also as an economic development driver. The farms in Littleton are actively used to produce crops and goods as a means of subsistence for farmers and their employees. Moreover, Littleton's agricultural character helps to distinguish the Town as a unique and attractive place to live and work amongst the myriad of expanding municipalities throughout the Greater Boston region.

The Town and its residents can help farmers succeed by shopping locally, promoting farms to those outside Littleton, putting in place policies that protect and benefit farmers, and ensuring that local regulations do not impede or unduly complicate the efforts of local farmers to operate thriving agricultural businesses. The continued existence and success of farms will help accomplish the goals of economic development, open space, natural resources, and provide fresh, healthy, and sustainable food options for Littleton residents.



## Agricultural Resources in Littleton



### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

from the Master Plan to help support Littleton's agricultural economy

- Revise and promote the existing Accessory Business Uses at Active Farms bylaw to enhance opportunities for appropriate commercial uses.
- Review and enhance the Agricultural Commission's roles and responsibilities. Encourage the Commission to play a more formal role of liaison between the Town and the farming community.
- Develop formal guidelines and systems for the acquisition, leasing, and management of Town-owned agricultural land.
- Create and promote a "Littleton Loves Its Farms" marketing and educational campaign to highlight the Town's farming community and products.
- Support the Agricultural Commission in their efforts to provide a centralized clearinghouse of information to benefit Littleton farmers.



## 2. Develop and promote more business-friendly practices in Town Hall.

- Designate a “business liaison” within Town Hall to act as a first point of contact for anyone looking to start a new business in Littleton, or to help existing businesses with questions and issues. This person would also be responsible for updating and maintaining a future economic development webpage or site.
- Develop a set of brochures and guide books for business owners and developers that explain the development and permitting process. Have the materials available online and in print version at Town Hall.
- Upgrade the Town’s website to make it more user-friendly, and include in the web development process the production of an economic development marketing page or site. This should include a list of amenities, transportation access, utilities, existing businesses, and available vacancies or land for development.
- Develop a direct and strategic partnership with the Littleton Business Association (LBA) as a way to coordinate work on issues in the Common and elsewhere.

## 3. Continue to galvanize support for local agriculture in Littleton and help sustain local farming as a component of Littleton’s economy.

- Revise and promote the existing Accessory Business Uses at Active Farms bylaw to enhance opportunities for appropriate commercial uses.

In 2011, Town Meeting approved a zoning amendment to allow, by Special Permit, a series of accessory business uses on active farms, including agricultural equipment and supply dealers, farm machinery repair, veterinarian offices, feed milling and delivery, facilities for weddings and other functions, food processing and sales, farm stand restaurants and animal boarding. To date, no one has applied for this Special Permit. After five years, several potential improvements to the bylaw have been identified, including making some commercial uses as-of-right instead of by Special Permit and clarifying requirements for restaurants and food service uses to enhance economic viability.

- Review and enhance the Agricultural Commission’s roles and responsibilities, and encourage the Commission to play a more formal role of liaison between the Town and the farming community.
  - Develop specific guidelines that address these roles and responsibilities, including the protocol for communication between the Agricultural Commission and other Town boards and committees regarding the development/redevelopment, planning, and regulatory change affecting agriculture in Littleton.
  - Consider providing an Agricultural Commission liaison to the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Board of Health to improve communication between the boards and provide better guidance and advice on issues related to agriculture.
  - Support the Agricultural Commission in their efforts to provide a centralized clearinghouse of information to benefit Littleton farmers, including details about the Accessory Business Uses at Active Farms bylaw, the Farmland Assessment Act (Chapter 61A), the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR), and funding opportunities for farm enhancements.
  - Working together with the Agricultural Commission, develop an inventory of existing farm land, describing the features of each parcel such as size, structures and types of agricultural activities currently taking place there. Estimate each property’s value.
- Develop formal guidelines and systems for the acquisition, leasing, and management of Town-owned agricultural land.

- Continue to support the Agricultural Property Working Group in the development and adoption of a formal process for determining when and how the Town should buy agricultural land.
- Identify parcels of existing conservation land suitable for farming, and work with the Littleton Conservation Commission and the Littleton Conservation Trust to transfer these parcels to the Town for agricultural purposes. Bid out the agricultural land to experienced farmers through a flexible management agreement between the Town and the farmer.
- Develop a town-sponsored compost program in partnership with local farms under the Massachusetts Agricultural Composting Program, similar to curbside composting programs throughout the Commonwealth.
- Create a new staff position, or assign duties to an existing Town staff position, to act as the Town's first point of contact for all agricultural related issues, including the management and oversight of all Town-owned agricultural land and property leases, as well as the administration of agricultural-related grant opportunities.
- Work with local farmers to identify existing and potential access issues to farms caused by recent transportation improvements throughout Littleton, including the intersection of Bruce Street and Route 2A, and Kings Street and Route 2A. Additionally, consider reopening Taylor Street to trucks to allow for easier access to Route 2.
- Create and promote a "Littleton Loves Its Farms" marketing and educational campaign to highlight the Town's farming community and products, including printed and digital guides to all of Littleton's farms, Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSA) programs, educational programs, and agricultural-related community events. Install Right-to-Farm signage throughout Town, especially on Town gateway signage.
  - Work with the farmers to enhance existing educational programs and to create new programs around farms and agriculture and involve the local parks and rec department and public schools in program development and participation.
  - Provide realtors and town departments with clear information regarding what it may mean to live in a farming community (e.g. access to local food, open space, positive visual features of the rural character, as well as the tradeoffs of smell of manure in the spring, occasional traffic congestion due to tractors, etc.).
- Review and revise the Open Space Development bylaw (Article XIX) to more easily allow for greater density, while protecting scenic woodland or agricultural lands in a manner that still conserves working farms in an economically sustainable way.
  - Consider loosening the restrictions placed on the protected open space, so as to not reduce the value of the farmland.
  - Consider forming a Task Force to assist in the amendment of this bylaw. The Task Force may include members of the local farming community, development community, conservation commission, and other relevant boards, committees, and individuals.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a regional poultry processing facility in Littleton.

With only two processing facilities in the entire state of Massachusetts, Littleton is a prime candidate to take on this regional need, given its access to roads and highways and its historical connection to the poultry industry.

**4. Proactively plan for and promote other commercial activity nodes in Littleton, particularly the area around Taylor and Foster Streets.**

- Undertake an area plan for the area around the intersection of Taylor and Foster Streets. The plan should consider infrastructure, transportation connections, desired land uses and development patterns, economic development incentives, and zoning changes.
- Begin conversations with area landlords and business owners.
- As a way to fill vacant commercial space, develop partnerships with high tech companies in Littleton and surrounding communities to leverage opportunities for spin off businesses.
- Encourage, through zoning and other incentives, the development of co-working spaces and affordable office/industrial space to support small businesses and start-ups. These spaces could locate in and around the Common or in the Taylor and Foster Street area.

**5. Continue to support The Point and look for opportunities to encourage the expansion of uses at that site, which could include the integration of housing.**

The Point is quickly becoming a successful commercial node that includes retail, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging. These uses not only serve the local economy, but also draw patrons from around the 495 region with its location directly off the interstate. This node is unique to Littleton because of its size, scale, mix of different uses, and that it has its own wastewater treatment facility. The Town should continue to support The Point as a short-term opportunity to draw in additional revenue generating amenities, while longer-term plans are formulated for how to reinvigorate the Common.

**6. Reexamine the value of utilizing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to attract new businesses to Littleton.**

The Town has had recent success in using TIF as an incentive tool for businesses looking to relocate to Littleton. While there has been measurable success, the Town should use the tool sparingly and only when absolutely necessary to avoid losing out on commercial tax revenue, or being the victim of a company jumping from community to community looking for TIFs after they expire. When evaluating the necessity of a TIF for a specific property, the Town may wish to consider requesting a development pro-forma analysis and financial feasibility study to ensure the TIF is a necessary component of making the real estate transaction work.

**7. Evaluate the current functions of the Planning Department to determine whether the Town would benefit from having a dedicated staff person working on economic development opportunities.**

Economic development is a complex topic in Littleton. The Town has a wide variety of businesses, from large corporations, to small businesses, to farms and a regional commercial center. Staff housed within the Planning Department may not have the time or expertise to serve as a liaison between businesses in Littleton and the Town. A thorough evaluation of staff knowledge and capacity should be undertaken to determine if an economic development professional should be brought on board. If the decision is made to hire someone with this expertise, the Board of Selectmen should determine the appropriate department for this employee.

**8. Update the Town's Aquifer and Water Resource Protection District bylaw to clarify its purposes and requirements, bring it in line with MA Department of Environmental Protection's standards, and look for opportunities to reduce the impact of the bylaw on commercially- and industrially-zoned parcels.**

The current bylaw limits the amount of impervious surface on a parcel of land within the protection district. While it is important to protect surface and underground water resources in Littleton, the bylaw restricts development on land that could produce future commercial taxes for the Town. The Town should revisit the boundaries of the district to ensure parcels are not unduly encumbered by these restrictions. The Town should also compare the regulations in the bylaw to DEP's regulations to ensure the two are compatible. There may be new mitigation practices for stormwater retention and recharge that the Town's bylaw could take advantage of.

**9. Ensure new development, and redevelopment, is sited and designed in such a way that is consistent with the character of the zoning district and location within Littleton.**

- Continue to discourage "big box" establishments in business districts by regulating maximum square footage.
- Where historic architectural features are present, encourage new development to use similar design aesthetics.
- Consider disincentives for strip malls, drive-thru, and other site and building design characteristics that would negatively impact the aesthetics or pedestrian experience in a given business district.

**10. Underground overhead utility lines along portions of Great Road and King Street to increase the reliability of delivering power and improve aesthetics around the Common.**

- Partner with property owners and businesses owners along Great Road and King Street, and the State, to pay for undergrounding overhead utility lines.
- The Town could also look at moving power lines to an easement behind buildings along these two streets to save on costs, but this option does not reduce chance of power outages from storms or wind. Obtaining utility easements behind buildings could also be challenging and expensive.

# 5 Housing & Residential Development



## OVERVIEW

### Relationship to Master Plan Goals

There are concerns in the community that Littleton's current housing stock will not meet the needs of changing demographics. The predominant housing typology in Littleton is single-family homes on larger lots. The price point for these homes is a moving target that continues to climb with each passing year. Throughout the Master Plan process, residents expressed a strong desire to have a mix of housing types and price points to support those who are in the community today, as well as those may someday who wish to call Littleton their home. Housing policy in Littleton has an impact on transportation infrastructure, facilities and services, the local economy and workforce, and use of available land for development or redevelopment.

### Key Policy Recommendations for Housing and Residential Development

- Littleton's population and household composition is changing. The percentage of Littleton's residents who are over the age of sixty-five are expected to continue to increase. Currently, there are very few options for older residents who wish to continue to live in Littleton if they choose to leave their current place of residence. This is a particularly challenging for residents who are over-housed in a larger single-family home. The Town should consider ways to encourage development that supports older residents who wish to remain in the community, but do not want to remain in their current residence.
- In addition to the projected increase in older residents, younger households (including those with children) are moving into Littleton. As single-family homes are vacated by older residents, they are often backfilled by families with children. While this is a great thing for supporting the economy, vitality and liveliness of

the community, it does create potential implications for school capacity, parks and recreation, and service delivery expectations. The Town should continue to monitor changes in school enrollment, and consider strategic investments in recreation facilities to support increased utilization of park and recreation facilities.

- Littleton has been discovered. The Town's school system, transportation access, open space and recreation options, employer base, and community character create a very desirable location within the I-495 belt. Littleton also happens to offer a more affordable housing stock compared to many of its surrounding communities. These desirable characteristics are creating pressure on the current housing stock, and are therefore driving prices upward to levels unaffordable to many who want to remain in Littleton or who want to move to Littleton. The Town should look for ways to encourage housing production that includes options at a variety of price points and types.

## INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

Littleton is a town of just over nine thousand people, located along Interstate 495 on the outskirts of the Boston-Metro region. It maintains a distinct landscape with a mix of lakes, open spaces, farms, housing developments, and commercial nodes. The community prides itself on the quality of town services and the school system, making Littleton an attractive place to live and work.

The supply and cost of housing play a major role in determining who can live in a town. Communities influence the make-up of their population by the steps they take to control housing growth, and Littleton is no exception. When zoning limits the development of housing for a variety of household types, the result is a fairly homogeneous population. Littleton's large percentage of family households and families with children correlate with the long-standing pattern of single-family homes in traditional neighborhoods built for traditional families. Residents value Littleton's small-town feel and the rural features it retains, and these qualities help to define what it means to live in the town. Like all towns that are trying to plan for their future, Littleton faces tough housing policy decisions that need to be integrated with other elements of the master plan. This section provides both a snapshot and a trend analysis to shed light on Littleton's potential trajectory and changes may be desired or needed in the future.<sup>1</sup>

### Demographic Snapshot

Critical to developing any master plan is understanding the basic demographic composition of the community. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau was gathered to help understand the changes that have occurred over time in Littleton, and projecting what may happen in the future. The baseline demographic data portrays some of the changes that have occurred, and highlights how Littleton compares to surrounding communities and the region. This provides policymakers with the appropriate information to address important questions and concerns within the community. The demographics explored in this section include population, households, age, race, education, and income.

#### Population

Littleton's population has continued to grow steadily since 1970, when its total population was 6,380. By 2010, the population reached 8,924. The historical growth of Littleton's population is consistent with general trends in many towns on the fringe of the Boston metropolitan region. Four of the six surrounding towns also experienced significant population growth between 1970 and 2010.

According to population and household projections from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Littleton's population is expected to continue to grow through the year 2030. The most recent estimates from the 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) place Littleton's current population at 9,157. Over the next fifteen years, Littleton is expected to grow by another 9 percent.<sup>2</sup> Littleton is projected to grow faster than all of the other comparison towns, with the exception of Groton, and it is also projected to grow faster than the MAGIC subregion as a whole, which is projected to grow at a combined 3 percent.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The data sources used for this chapter include the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, Littleton Assessor Database, and Zillow housing sales and rental data. The comparison communities used as part of the analysis were: Acton, Ayer, Boxborough, Groton, Harvard, and Westford. In some instances, comparisons were also made to the Boston Metro-region, as well as the MAPC Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) region.

<sup>2</sup> MAPC Projections, Metro Boston Population and Housing Demand Projections, 2014

<sup>3</sup> MAPC Projections, Metro Boston Population and Housing Demand Projections, 2014.

#### In this Chapter

Develop a baseline snapshot for population, household, income, and housing market trends in Littleton and surrounding communities.

Identify how housing and household composition has changed, and is expected to change, over time.

Recommend housing policies and strategies the Town could undertake to encourage a variety of housing types and price points to support residents at various stages in their life cycle.

Map 5.1

# Reference Map

Littleton, Massachusetts

Census Tract 101

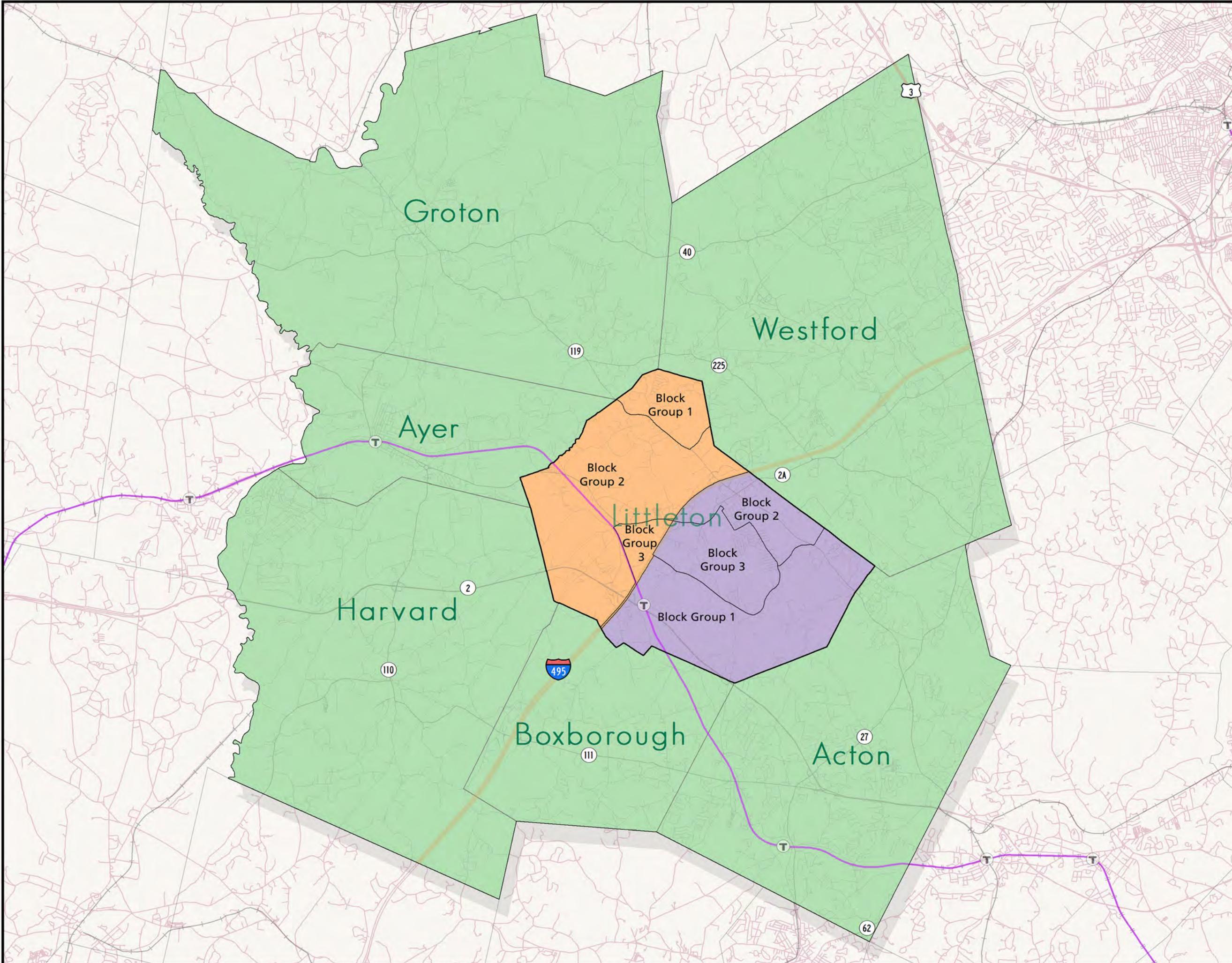
Census Tract 102

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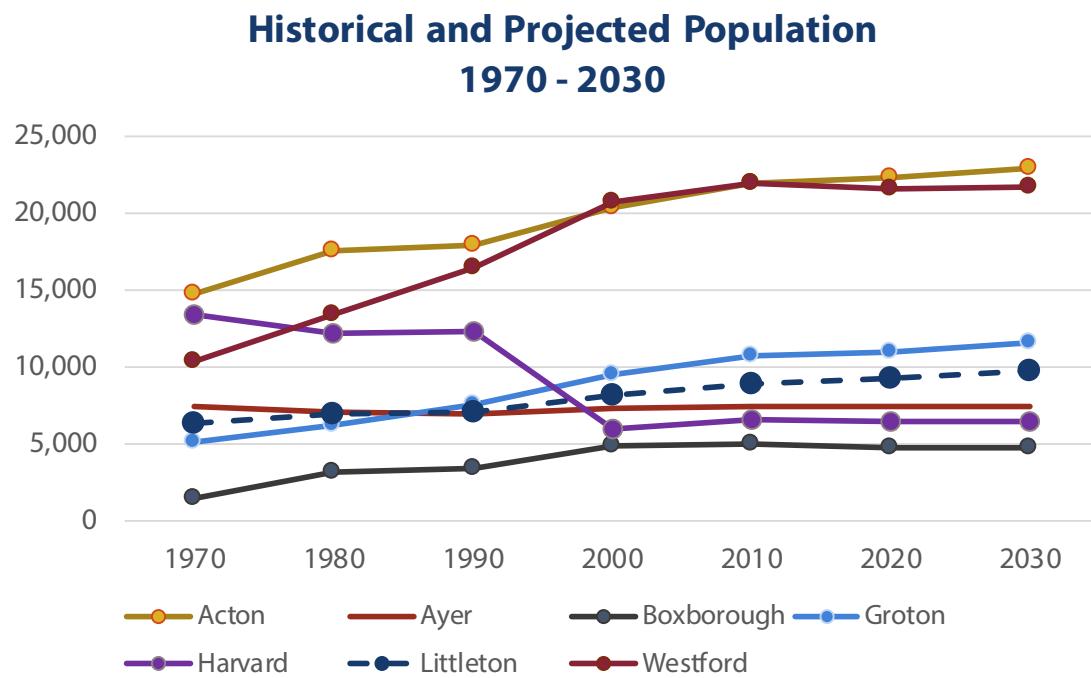
Date: 9/14/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, US Census

This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations or delineating natural resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.





**Figure 5.1 - Historical and Projection Population Trends**

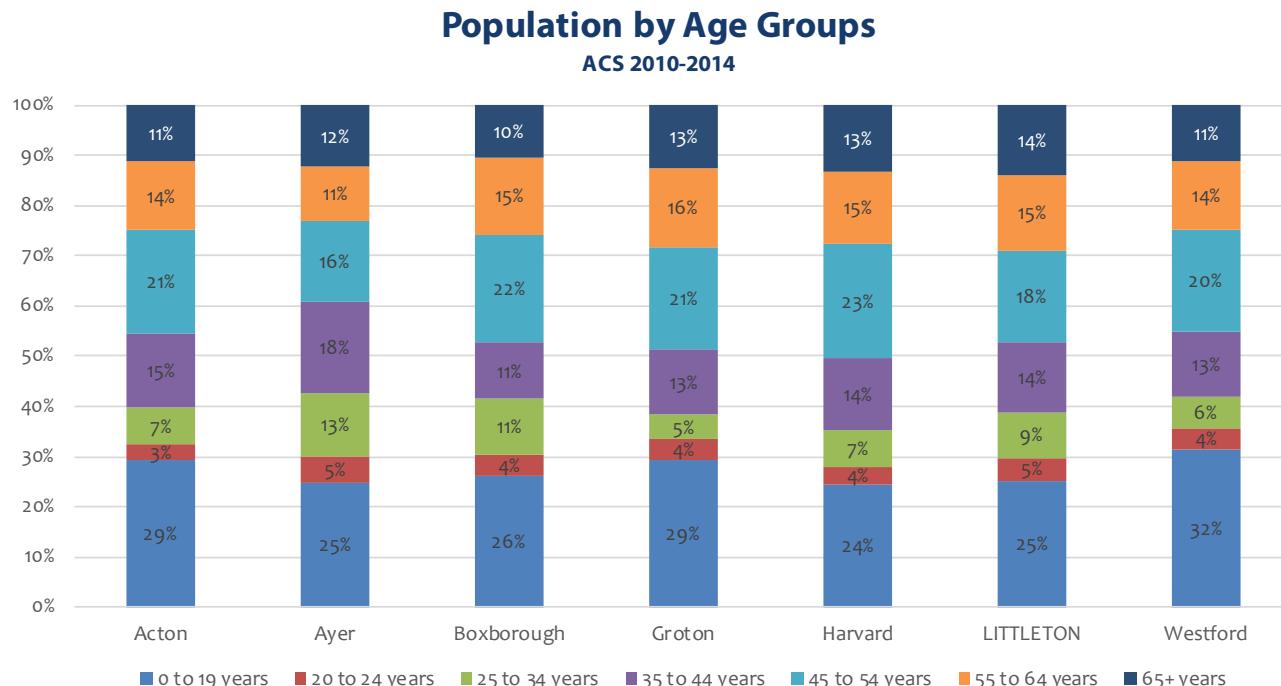


Source: Minnesota Population Center, MAPC, RKG Associates. Note: Harvard population loss is due to closure of Fort Devens.

## Population Age

The most recent 2010-2014 ACS estimates show that about 25 percent of Littleton's population is under 19 years of age, which means that one-quarter of the population is in school or approaching school age.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, 32 percent of the population falls into the child rearing age cohort: 35 to 54 years old. This group includes people in their prime earning years and they contribute significantly to the local economy.

**Figure 5.2 - Population by Age**



<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014, "Sex by Age," B01001.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

Seniors, defined as those 65 and over, currently account for 14 percent of Littleton's total population.<sup>5</sup> Population projection data from both the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the Donahue Institute show this number increasing to 31 percent of Littleton's total population. This would equate to a near tripling of those residents age 65 and over. The increasing senior population will likely have an impact on demands for, and delivery of, town services. Currently, Littleton has the largest percentage of residents over the age of 65 when compared to any of the surrounding towns.

It appears that young adults are either staying in or moving to Littleton. Over the past decade, Littleton experienced a 33 percent increase in the population 20 to 24 years. Regionally, only Harvard experienced a greater percent change, with 35 percent. In addition, the population between 25 to 34 in Littleton increased 24 percent, the largest increase of all the surrounding communities.<sup>6</sup>

### Race

Littleton has the second largest percentage of white residents of all the surrounding towns except Groton. The racial and ethnic composition of Littleton is approximately 92 percent white, and 8 percent non-white, with the dominant minority group as Asian. While the present population is not very diverse, Littleton has experienced minority population growth over the last ten years, roughly doubling from 324 to 743 people. Within Littleton, five of the six census block groups are over 90 percent white. In the sixth block group (census tract 3241.02, block group 3), located near Mill Pond and adjacent to Interstate 495, King Street, and Harwood Avenue, Asians make up 21 percent of the population and people self-identifying as more than one race, 9 percent, so the white population is a smaller share of the total, at 68 percent.<sup>7</sup>

### Education

Education plays an important role in Littleton and all of the surrounding communities. The educational attainment of residents is an indicator of the type of employment and wages available to residents. Of the population 25 years and older in Littleton, 60 percent hold a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>8</sup> Only 19 percent possess a high school degree or less. Boxborough has the highest percentage of residents with an undergraduate degree or more (78 percent) and Ayer, the lowest (36 percent). Not only does Littleton compare favorably to the surrounding towns in terms of educational attainment, but also to the state as a whole. In Massachusetts, 40 percent of the 25-and-over population holds at least a bachelor's degree.<sup>9</sup>

### Households

In every community, the number of households is the same as the number of year-round occupied housing units. A **household** is one or more people living in the same housing unit as their principal place of residence. Over the past forty years, Littleton has experienced continuous growth in total number of households. In 1970, the number of households in Littleton was 1,833 and by 2010, the number had reached 3,297 households, i.e., an 80 percent increase. Five of the six communities surrounding Littleton also experienced significant household growth in the same period. Boxborough and Westford had the highest household growth at 391 percent and 172 percent, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

Littleton is expected to continue to grow through 2030 by 7 percent, or 649 households. Compared to the surrounding towns, Littleton has the second highest projected rate of household growth, surpassed

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

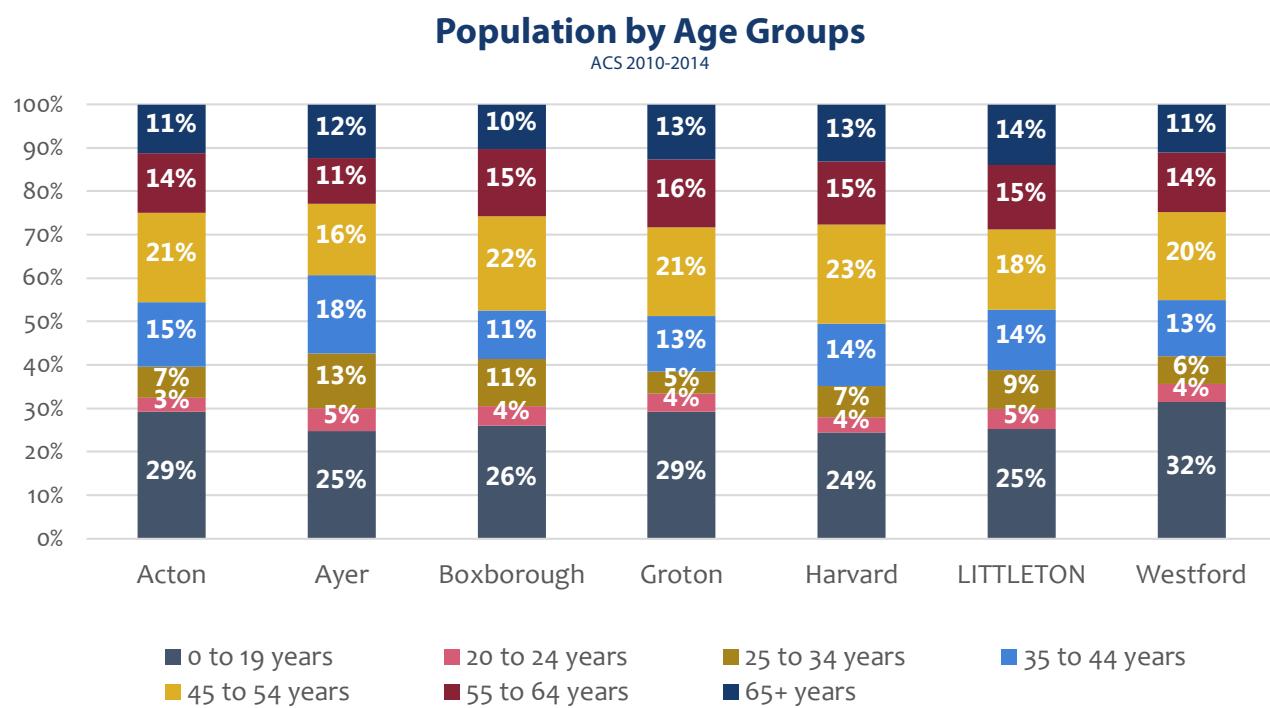
<sup>6</sup> ACS 2005-2009 and ACS 2010-2014, "Sex by Age," B01001.

<sup>7</sup> ACS 2005-2009 and ACS 2010-2014, "Race," B02001.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over," B15003, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Educational Attainment," S1501, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>10</sup> Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011. Historic U.S. population data is archived with the Minnesota Population Center.

**Figure 5.3 - Educational Attainment**

only by Groton at 9 percent. For the MAGIC subregion as a whole, the projected household increase for 2010 to 2030 is only 2 percent.<sup>11</sup>

### HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY INCOMES

High educational achievement, quality jobs, and the presence of families as the dominant household type all contribute to Littleton's high household incomes. As of 2014 (the most recent year), the median household income in Littleton was \$111,652, with nearly 31 percent of households having incomes greater than \$150,000. Comparatively, Littleton has the fifth highest median income among the surrounding towns. Only Ayer and Boxborough have lower median household incomes at \$67,110 and \$103,996, respectively, and the highest is in Harvard, \$131,563. Littleton's median household income is higher than that of the Boston metropolitan region and the state as a whole. The statewide median household income is \$67,846 and Metro Boston's, \$74,494.<sup>12</sup>

### Housing Characteristics

Housing attracts new residents and employers to a community. The quality of the housing stock, the availability of housing, and the price points for renter and owner-occupied housing all play a critical role in determining the make-up of a town's population and households. The variation in the type, physical characteristics, and layout of housing in Littleton depends on location. For example, older, traditional neighborhoods with smaller homes and grid streets typical of an early 1900s lake community can be found off Goldsmith Street. By contrast, single-family homes on large parcels dot the landscape reminiscent of a more rural character along Newtown Road. There are also newer suburban-style cul-de-sac subdivisions in Littleton, characterized by large homes on large lots, such as along Great Road near the Acton town line and off Spectacle Pond Road and Hartwell Avenue. Littleton's homes range from ranch-style housing to colonials and very large residences. There is a limited mix of multi-family housing in Littleton, too, such as the new Village Green Chapter 40B development and the smaller-scale Pine Tree Park.

<sup>11</sup> MAPC Projections, Metro Boston Population and Housing Demand Projections, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> ACS 2010-2014, "Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2014 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)," B19001, and "Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2014 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)," B19013.

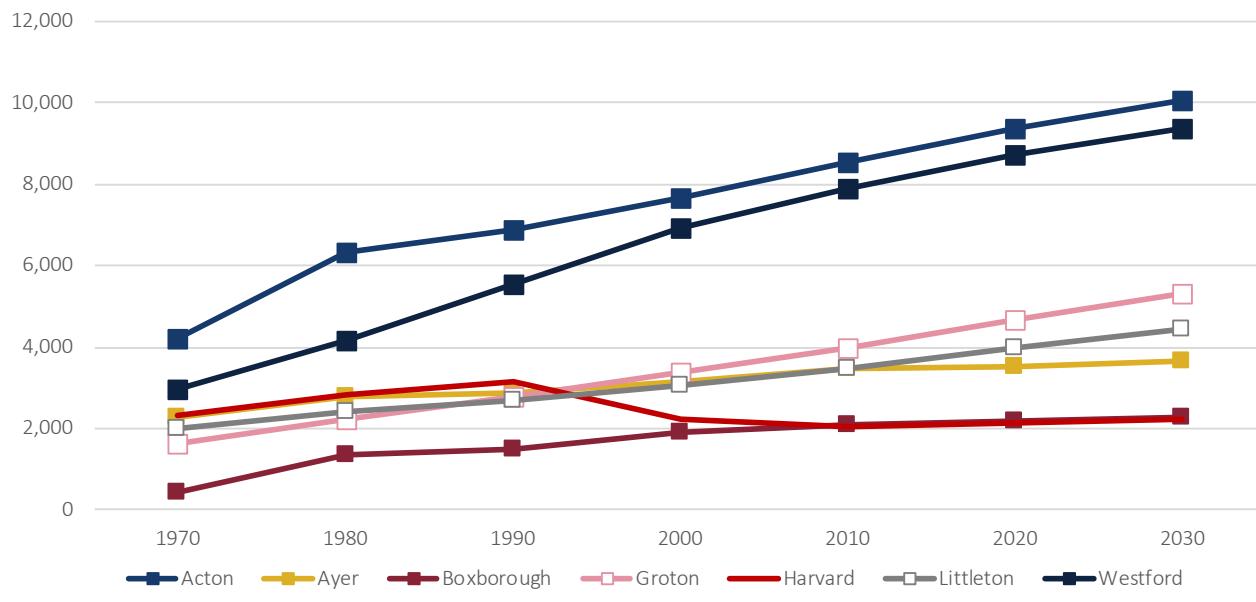
## Housing Stock

The increase in population and households that occurred in Littleton between 1970 and 2010 was inextricably tied to housing growth. The town gained 1,489 housing units, or a 75 percent increase, in that forty-year period.<sup>13</sup> These new units consisted primarily of single-family homes, many of which were constructed on fairly large lots. What happened in Littleton was hardly unique. All of the surrounding towns experienced considerable housing growth, too, such as Boxborough, which grew by an astounding 406 percent.<sup>14</sup>

Currently Littleton has 3,572 housing units.<sup>15</sup> Based on projections from MAPC, Littleton may see an increase in housing units of 28 percent (958 units) between 2010 and 2030.<sup>16</sup> Of all the surrounding communities, only Groton has a higher projected growth rate (33 percent). Littleton is also expected to gain new housing units at twice the rate of the MAGIC subregion (15 percent) as a whole.<sup>17</sup> Littleton will remain an attractive location for new residents.

**Figure 5.4 - Housing Unit Counts**

### Historical and Projected Housing Units



Source: Minnesota Population Center, MAPC, RKG Associates

## AGE OF HOUSING

About 40 percent of Littleton's present housing units were built before 1959, 48 percent between 1960 and 1999, and 11 percent since 2000.<sup>18</sup> There is considerable variety in the age of housing by location (census tract) in Littleton. Many of the older residences in Littleton were built along the main roads. As the town grew, many new homes began to populate the landscape, particularly around or near the water bodies. Another interesting pattern of development is the in-filling of properties in older residential neighborhoods. Along Goldsmith Street, for example, there are some housing units built after 1990 interspersed with housing built in the 1940s and earlier.

<sup>13</sup> Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Units in Structure," B25024, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>16</sup> The projected number of housing units is greater than the projected number of households because not all units will contain people (household) 100 percent of the time. Housing vacancy accounts for the differential between housing units and households.

<sup>17</sup> MAPC Projections, Metro Boston Population and Housing Demand Projections, 2014. This data does not include 15 Great Road.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Year Structure Built," B25034, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

Map 5.2  
**Year Built**

Littleton, Massachusetts

**Residential Structures**

- Before 1900
- 1901 - 1940
- 1941 - 1970
- 1971 - 1990
- 1991 - 2015

**RKG**  
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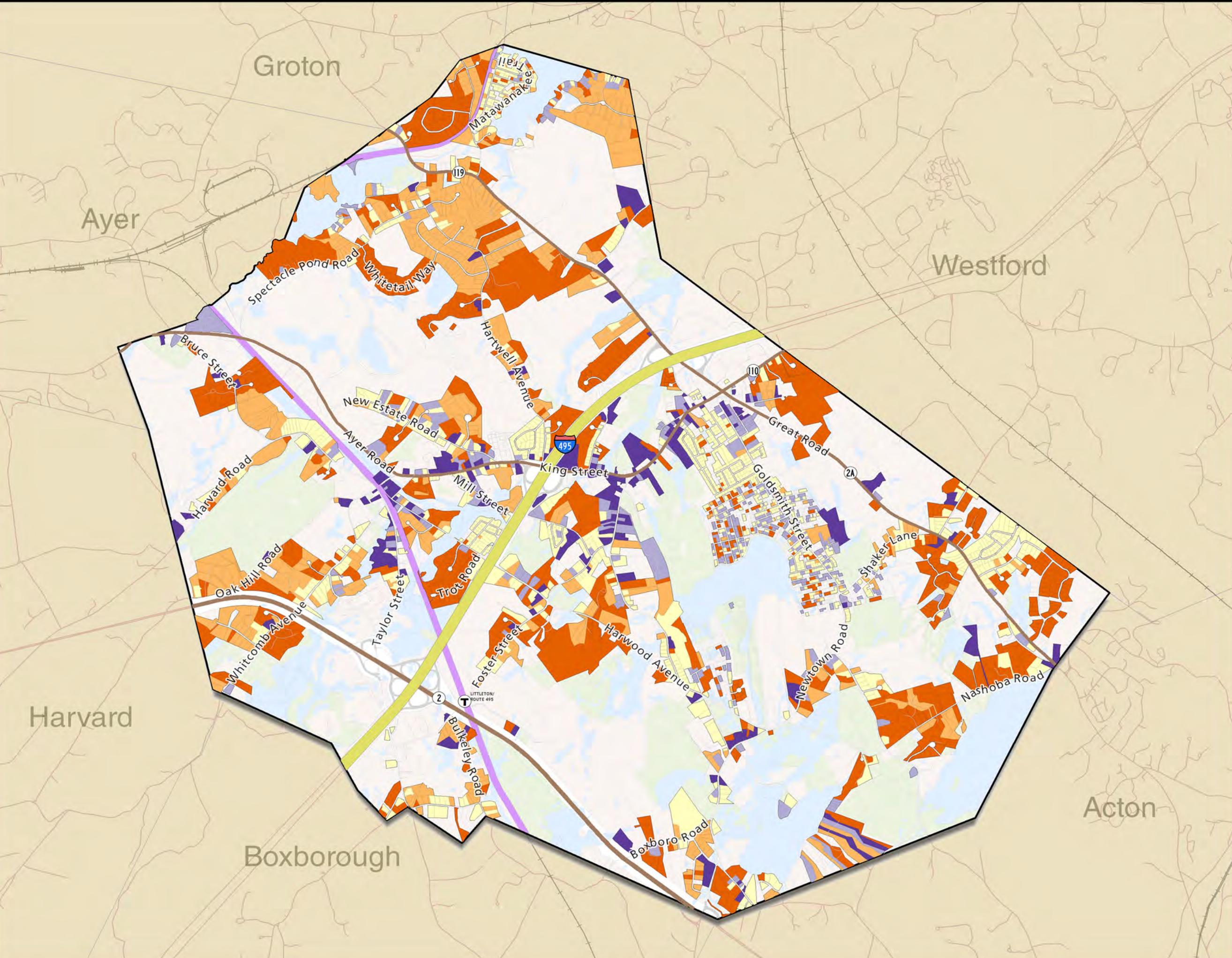


Date: 9/14/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, Mass EOEIA,  
USGS

This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations or delineating natural resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.



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## UNITS IN STRUCTURE

The composition of housing and the number of units in buildings are important indicators of the diversity of the housing stock. In towns like Littleton – small towns that are transitioning to a suburban form – the dominate housing type is the detached single-family home. This unit type provides large living areas for families and typically has homes with two or more bedrooms on larger lots. Multi-family housing plays an important role in a community, too, offering sale or rental options, smaller units, less maintenance, and sometimes a different level of affordability.

In Littleton, 84 percent of the housing stock is comprised of detached one-unit dwellings while multi-family structures containing 10 or more units account for 6 percent of the housing stock.<sup>19</sup> The area around Mill Pond is the only section of Littleton where single-family homes comprise less than half of all units. In this part of town, 29 percent of the housing units are in larger multi-family buildings.<sup>20</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, the north side of town by Forge Pond is developed almost exclusively as neighborhoods of single-family homes. These findings generally correlate with the locations of higher and lower household incomes in Littleton.

There is a wider variety of housing around Littleton than within it. Ayer and Boxborough have a more diverse housing stock than the other five towns (including Littleton). In Ayer, 42 percent of the housing units are single-family homes and 33 percent are in two-family and small multi-family dwellings.<sup>21</sup> Boxborough, on the other hand, has 57 percent of its units as single-family homes and 33 percent in buildings between ten and thirty-nine units.<sup>22</sup> Harvard has the largest percentage of single-family homes, 93 percent. Together, these communities form a regional marketplace bookended by Ayer on one end and Harvard on the other.

## Building Permits

Building permits are filed by owners or builders when they initiate any type of major construction or demolition on a piece of land in Littleton. Permits for activities such as new construction, renovations, and demolitions are good indicators of the housing market in Littleton. Based on building permit information provided by the town, over the past four years Littleton experienced an uptick in building permit activity. Table 5.1 shows that over the last three years there were 233 permits for residential renovations/additions and 152 for new residential structures.

Table 5.1. Number of Building Permits, 2013-2016

Permit Type	2013	2014	2015	Total
Demolition	16	14	14	44
New Residential	42	54	56	152
Residential Renovation/ Addition	43	97	93	233
Total	101	165	163	429

Source: Town of Littleton, 2016

Aside from the total number of permits issued by the town, the associated value of construction work is indicative of the investment homeowners and builders are committing to houses in Littleton. For the year 2015, of the 56 new residential permits issued, the average cost of construction associated with the project was \$243,512.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, in 2015 for the 93 permitted projects focused on residential renovations and additions, the average cost of construction was \$33,560, indicating significant investment on the part of property owners.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Units in Structure," B25024, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Occupied Housing Units," B25003, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Town of Littleton, 2016

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## Housing Tenure

According to estimates from the 2010-2014 ACS, 79 percent of the occupied housing units in Littleton are ownership units, while 15 percent are rental units. This is equal to about 2,821 ownership units, and 525 rental units.<sup>25</sup> The remaining 6 percent of housing units are vacant.<sup>26</sup> In Littleton, 94 percent of the owner-occupied units are single-family homes and another 2 percent are part of two- and three-family structures. The ACS estimates there are no owner-occupied units in a multi-family structure larger than three units. This indicates that there are few if any opportunities in Littleton to purchase a smaller unit, e.g., a condominium. In general, the mix of building types for rental units in Littleton is far greater than that of owner-occupied units.<sup>27</sup>

Much of the multifamily rental housing is clustered in specific block groups, particularly census tract 3241.01 block group two and census tract 3241.02 block group three. Census tract 3241.01 block group two is located in the northeastern part of the town, and incorporates the area where Route 2A and Route 110 intersect. While census tract 3241.02 block group three is located in the Mill Pond area. Within census tract 3241.02 block group three, the block group maintains 68 percent of the housing stock as single family units and has 32 percent of the housing stock in some form of multifamily housing, most of which is rental.<sup>28</sup> Within census tract 3241.02 block group two, there is a majority of multifamily units with 51 percent of the housing stock listed as one-unit attached or greater, again most of which is rental.<sup>29</sup>

A review of the comparison communities shows Harvard having the largest concentration of single-family ownership units at 96 percent.<sup>30</sup> Littleton and Groton both have 94 percent of units as single-family home ownership. For occupied rental housing, Littleton had a total of 525 occupied rental units, with nearly 38 percent provided as single-family units. In contrast, Ayer which has a total of 1,311 occupied rental units, has only 6 percent of its total rental units as single-family homes, and the majority located in multi-family developments.

## Home Values and Rents

Littleton is a desirable community. The excellent schools, open spaces, recreation opportunities, and community character creates the strong demand for housing. The desirability of the community is reflected in both the housing values and rental prices. According to estimates from the 2010-2014 ACS, the median occupied home value in Littleton was \$390,300; while the median contract rent price for the same time period was \$1,057 per month.<sup>31</sup> Between the ACS periods of 2005-2009 and 2010-2014, rent prices increased by 58 percent.<sup>32</sup> During the same time period, median home values increased by 13 percent.<sup>33</sup>

Littleton's median home value is lower than all the surrounding communities with the exception of Ayer. One of the challenges Littleton has been facing is the fact that the town is one of the more "affordable" options in and around the MAGIC subregion. The good schools and quality of life are putting pressure on the housing market resulting in higher median prices and fast sales. Of the surrounding communi-

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Occupied Housing Units," B25003, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Tenure by Units in Structure," B25032, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

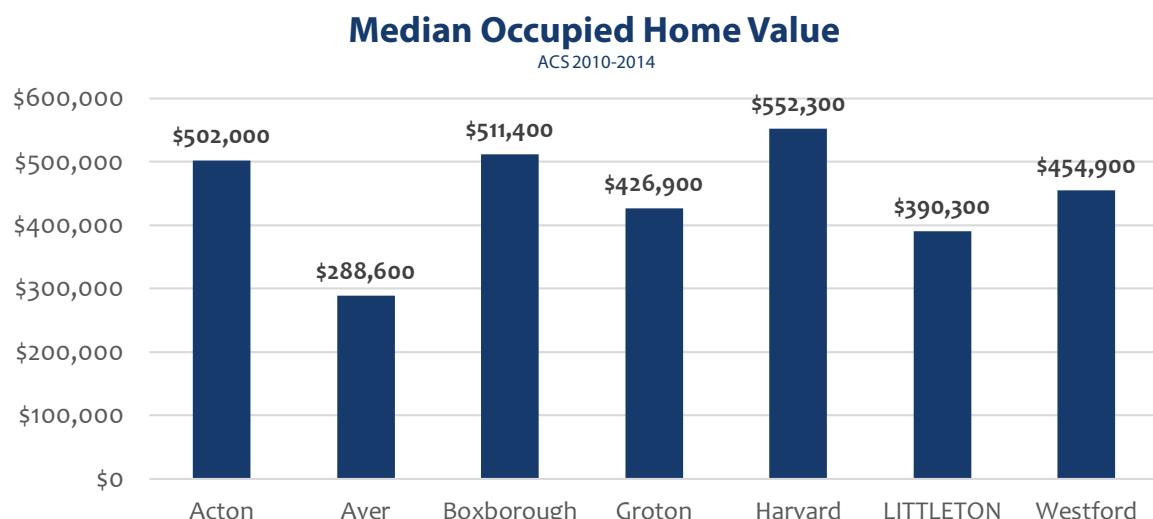
<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Tenure by Units in Structure," B25032, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Median Value (Dollars)," B25077, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Median Contract Rent (Dollars)," B25058, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Median Value (Dollars)," B25077, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014.

**Figure 5.5 - Median Home Value**

ties, Harvard has the highest median home value at \$552,300; while the lowest median home value is located in Ayer with \$288,600.<sup>34</sup>

Contract rent prices in Littleton have also escalated over the last decade. As noted earlier, the median rent increased by 58 percent between the ACS reporting periods. Of the comparison communities, Westford has the highest median rent at \$1,367 per month; while the lowest median rent is in Ayer at \$819 per month. Littleton has the fourth highest median rent price of the seven communities, and also experienced the greatest increase in rent prices over the ACS reporting periods.

Looking at current information on market rents in 2015, the average rent for a single-family home in Littleton was \$2,379 per month. Between 2011 and 2015, rents for single-family homes rose by 8 percent.<sup>35</sup> For rental housing located in multi-family buildings, the average rent in 2015 was \$2,115, an increase of 19 percent over 2011.<sup>36</sup>

### Housing Affordability

Chapter 40B is a state law that went into effect in 1969 with the purpose of providing a regionally-fair distribution of affordable housing for people with low- or moderate-incomes. When deed restricted affordable units comprise less than 10 percent of a town's year-round housing supply, Chapter 40B authorizes the Zoning Board of Appeals to grant a comprehensive permit to qualified affordable housing developers. A comprehensive permit is a unified permit, i.e., a single permit that incorporates all of the local approvals required under zoning and other local bylaws and regulations. The Town has also approved, and even taken part in, the provision of affordable housing without the use of 40B. Pine Tree Park is one example, providing forty-eight units of affordable housing for senior residents.

As of 2016, Littleton has 12.72 percent of its year-round housing stock set aside for affordable housing.<sup>37</sup> The Department of Housing and Community Development's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) indicates there are 438 affordable units, out of a total of 3,443 housing units. While nearly all of the affordable units on the SHI will be affordable in perpetuity, there are fifty-eight units that are set to expire between 2022 and 2024 as part of the Mill Pond development and the Minuteman Housing development.

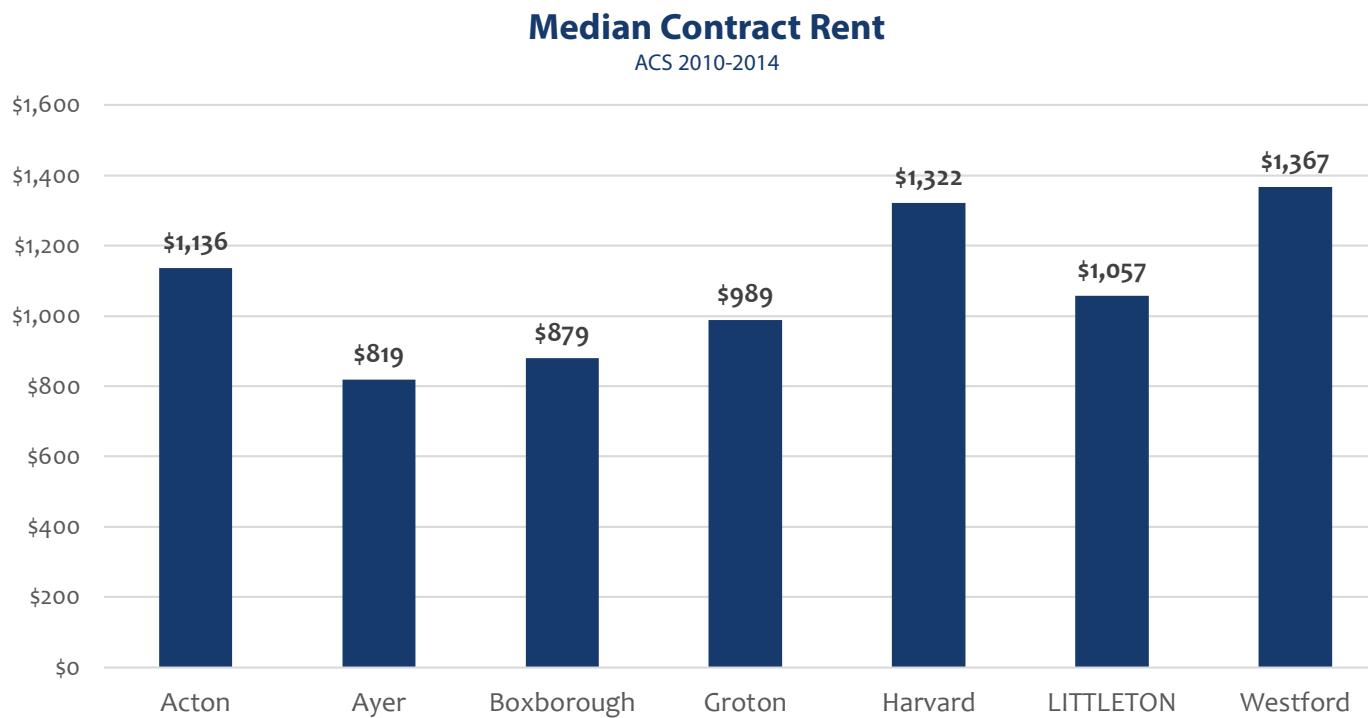
<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Zillow, 2011-2015

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Department of Housing and Community Development, Subsidized Housing Inventory, 2016

Figure 5.6 - Median Contract Rent



Aside from Chapter 40B units, overall affordability in Littleton is threatened by ever-increasing rents and for-sale prices. Market rate rents and home prices have escalated within Littleton and the surrounding communities. This trend is not just a local phenomenon but one that parallels the broader Metro Boston region. There is a risk of housing becoming unaffordable for existing Littleton residents and unattainable for those that are seeking to call Littleton their home.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### □ Population and Household Growth

Based on the projected population and household growth in Littleton, proactive planning is essential for accommodating new growth while maintaining the characteristics and qualities that make Littleton a great place to live and work. Littleton is projected to grow by about 9 percent between 2010 and 2030. This future growth has the potential to impact transportation, public infrastructure, housing, and town services in Littleton. The increase in population requires a proactive strategy on the part of the town to minimize impacts, while not completely closing the doors on new development or redevelopment.

Changes in population and households are not all bad. The growing number of residents between the ages of 35 and 54 years old are helping to fill jobs, occupy homes that are on the market, and fuel local spending to support retailers in Littleton. This generates sales and property taxes that are reinvested back into the community. While homeowners and renters in this age group do contribute substantially to the vitality of the community they also rely on town services such as schools, recreation facilities, and the library. The Town needs to plan for the changing demographics and the shifts in age groups to continue to provide a high quality of life for its residents.

### □ Seniors

Residents ages 65 and older currently account for about 14 percent of the total population in Littleton and is projected to increase to a 31 percent share of the population by the year 2035. Seniors have

special needs and require services that can be different from the rest of the population. The need for amenities such as transportation services, grocery delivery, increased calls to the police and fire departments, and programming to maintain social interaction are all critical pieces to the health and general well-being of senior residents.

In Littleton, the escalating housing prices and housing-related costs (taxes, utilities, insurance) can make it difficult for senior residents to remain in their homes. There are also very few options for seniors to move into a different type of housing such as an apartment, condominium, smaller single-family home, or a fully accessible housing unit for those with a physical disability. Seniors maintain a special place within the community and ensuring their presence through targeted initiatives by the town can help improve the situations faced by seniors.

## □ Housing Choices

Housing is a controversial subject in most small towns. While they may want to provide affordable senior housing, or housing that simply offers more options than conventional single-family homes, communities often say it is difficult to absorb the impact of new development. Opinions about housing, taxes, and loss of open space often drive many land use policy decisions, sometimes at the expense of sound planning and social fairness. However, housing needs and limited housing choices go hand-in-hand. It is not uncommon for towns with small percentages of young households, minorities, or lower-income families to also have fairly homogeneous housing. An important policy question for Littleton is whether local regulations provide for a good balance of housing opportunities or create barriers to fair and affordable housing.

## □ Housing Affordability

Chapter 40B statistics are often used to estimate a community's affordable housing needs, but when Chapter 40B was enacted in 1969, the legislature actually established a regional planning standard, not a housing needs standard. The overriding purpose of Chapter 40B was to assure that cities did not shoulder a disproportionate share of low- and moderate-income housing in any region of the state. By definition, the 10 percent statutory minimum is merely an indicator that suburbs and small towns have provided their "fair share" of affordable housing.



Littleton currently exceeds the 10 percent statutory minimum under Chapter 40B, and it seems poised to remain there even when its total housing count increases with Census 2020. According to the most recent affordable housing monitoring report for Littleton, the Town could add as many as 485 new units before its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) falls below 10 percent. That is very unlikely before April 2020. While important for maintaining control over future housing growth, however, Littleton's 12.9 percent SHI does not mean that its affordable housing needs have been met.

Senior citizens, young adults, and low- or moderate-income families often have difficulty finding housing they can afford, and renters are more likely to be affected by high housing cost burdens than homeowners. Littleton tends to follow this pattern. However, the high percentage of young, cost burdened homeowners in some parts of town suggests that at times, families may be buying homes they can barely afford. To some extent, this mirrors a larger pattern throughout the Boston/Metro labor shed: the difficulty of finding affordable housing within a reasonable commute distance to work. Priced out of higher-end towns to the east, working-age people with jobs in Boston-area employment centers are looking to I-495 and beyond for housing that is within their means, in towns with good schools and

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services and, ideally, public transportation. For many people, Littleton meets these needs. Nevertheless, it is clear from housing sales records that young families are stretching their resources to buy a home in Littleton, and the consequences show up in housing cost burden statistics.

### □ Inclusionary Zoning

Littleton's 55 and Older Bylaw supports additional affordable housing, but limits those new units to householders age 55 and over. Many inclusionary and affordable housing bylaws today do not place age restrictions on the units, and allow anyone who matches the income limits to enter the housing lottery. As Littleton's housing values continue to rise, the need for affordable housing will grow at all income levels and for individuals and families of all ages. However, the town does not have zoning in place to meet these needs.



### □ Housing and Economic Development

The health of a community's economy hinges on access to housing choices: a range of housing types and prices, opportunities to purchase or rent, and neighborhood settings that support different lifestyles and different stages in the life cycle. Housing matters to economic development. It can enhance economic performance and place competitiveness. A significant imbalance between housing prices and the wages paid by local establishments contributes to making some towns into "bedroom communities," or labor force exporters with a relatively small daytime population. For growing companies, access to a diverse labor force with a mix of skills matters as much as access to infrastructure, utilities, and transportation options.

Housing also has a direct impact on the local economy because the construction industry provides jobs – and generally higher-wage jobs – for people in the trades. Housing construction has a high ratio (62.3 percent) of value-added to total gross outlays, i.e., a high percentage of the gross outlays for a residential construction project are available for wages and salaries, thus catalyzing job creation. The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) estimates that building 100 affordable housing units can lead to the creation of more than 120 jobs, on average, during a project's construction phase. More importantly, long after the homes are occupied, the economic activity of the new residents can support as many as 30 new jobs in a variety of industries, such as retail and healthcare. The "multiplier" employment effects of new housing are roughly the same for affordable and market-rate units.

In Littleton, residential development generates 73 percent of the town's property tax revenue and most of the demand for municipal and school services. Littleton's housing, population, and socioeconomic characteristics are inextricably linked, which underscores the role that housing plays in shaping household wealth, the employment options available to a community's labor force, and consumer spending patterns.

### □ Residential Development Pattern

Littleton has a single residential district for the entire town. While this policy is fairly common in small towns, it is often a poor fit with the historic development pattern that evolved before the adoption of zoning. This can be seen in Littleton, where there are recognizable nodes of development at Littleton

Common, the depot, and around the ponds, that differ markedly from the more predictable, regular form of modern subdivisions.

Zoning that prescribes regular lot dimensions and sets restrictive parameters for residential land use have the advantage of setting rules most people can understand. Except for comprehensive permits under Chapter 40B, future housing growth in Littleton is likely to follow the same pattern as other recent housing development: large homes on large lots, carving up large tracts of land. And, as the available sites dwindle, Littleton will “fill in” more and its appearance will change considerably. Controlling overall growth matters, but shaping what growth looks like and where and how it occurs matter far more.



## □ Community Resilience

- Part of what makes a community resilient is its ability to provide a wide range of housing types that accommodate all stages in a person’s lifecycle, and having housing options available for individuals and families who come with a range of incomes.
- Providing housing types that are appropriate in size, location, amenities, and design allow individuals to age in place and help them stay close to family and friends. Housing is one component of a community that keeps people connected and knits social fabric across generations.
- Providing housing that is affordable and available to young families helps replenish the town with new residents, including enabling adult children who grew up in Littleton with opportunity to move back.
- Housing choice also helps employees work closer to home regardless of their employer or income.
- While housing, especially units with children, have a large fiscal impact on the town (e.g. cost of town services, schools), providing a range of housing types can have a positive economic impact on a municipality. Encouraging housing options for a wide range of household types and incomes can help strengthen the local labor force by ensuring residents with a variety of skill sets can live and work in Littleton.

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

**Housing Goal: To encourage a variety of housing that meets the needs of different age groups and is affordable to people of different socio-economic backgrounds.**

1. **Focus on allowing greater density in places where it makes sense to intensify land use, e.g., in recognized activity areas, near the train station, around the Common, and in older industrial or commercial areas where redevelopment opportunities exist.**
- Adopt effective redevelopment/reuse policies, including “streamlined” or efficient permitting procedures such as joint public hearings, performance zoning (as an alternative to special permits).

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This also has the added bonus of providing housing that supports employees who want to live and work in Littleton, as well as providing more local spending to support businesses in town.

- Consider adopting design standards or design guidelines as part of any new zoning changes in these activity areas. These standards will help shape the look, character, and scale of new development or redevelopment.

### **2. Work toward increasing the diversity of Littleton's housing stock in neighborhood-friendly ways by encouraging small accessory apartments on owner-occupied residential lots.**

- Update Littleton's existing accessory dwelling bylaw by reducing restrictions on accessory apartments.
- Allow accessory apartments as of right inside single-family homes as long as the owner lives in the house and there are no visible changes to the exterior of the building.
- Allow accessory apartments in free-standing structures (e.g., a backyard cottage or an apartment over a detached garage) by special permit.

### **3. Make the over-55 housing bylaw a more effective tool for creating options to help Littleton residents stay in the community as they age.**

- Update Article XXIII in the Town's Zoning Bylaw by providing for a variety of housing types, from single-family cottages to assisted living residences.
- Create an option to develop a continuing care retirement compound in Littleton.
- Consider replacing the requirement for age restrictions in senior housing with a requirement for "age-targeted" design – that is, housing units designed and intended for occupancy by older residents but not restricted to that age group.

### **4. Establish a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust in order to build local capacity for housing advocacy, housing finance, and housing development.**

- Adopt the provisions of G.L. c. 44, § 55C and appoint the board of the Housing Trust.
- Every year, appropriate and transfer Community Preservation Act (CPA) housing funds to the Housing Trust and let the Trust determine how best to invest the Town's housing resources (in compliance with CPA requirements).
- Dedicate other housing funds that come to the Town of Littleton to the Housing Trust, e.g., developer "fee in lieu" payments under a revised and updated inclusionary zoning bylaw.
- Provide the Trust with training and capacity building resources, such as hiring a consultant to assist with a housing trust action plan and a business plan for the trust fund.
- With CPA or other housing funds, acquire land for construction of additional low-income senior housing.

### **5. Adopt an inclusionary housing bylaw to require affordable housing in any residential development that requires a special permit.**

- Provide meaningful density bonuses and other cost offsets to encourage developers to build affordable units. In suburban markets where zoning regulations limit the density of housing developments, a developer may need cost offsets such as additional market rate units to make a mixed-income development financially viable. One way to help offset the loss of revenue from

income restricted affordable units is to provide a density bonus so more market rate units can be constructed. This is typically a one to one bonus, where one market rate unit is added as a bonus for each affordable unit required.

- Allow an option, under limited circumstances, for developers to pay a fee in lieu of units, while emphasizing that the Town's priority is affordable unit development, not funding.



# 6 Historic & Cultural Resource Areas



## OVERVIEW

### Relationship to Master Plan Goals

Littleton has a rich history which gave rise to a unique set of historical structures and landscapes, some of which have been preserved to this day. When residents expressed their optimism and their concerns throughout this process, one thing that held constant was their love for the community's overall character and feel. While that sense of place is difficult to quantify, it is often related to the landscape and built environment that has evolved organically throughout the town's history. There is a strong desire to protect the resources that make Littleton a unique place with its own story. In order to do that, the Town will need to dedicate time and money to updating the inventory of historic and culturally significant resources, and putting in place policies and regulations to protect the things that make Littleton the place that it is today.

### Key Findings

- Littleton's historic and cultural assets include buildings, areas, structures, objects, landscapes and archaeological sites located throughout the community.
- To date, Littleton has documented more than 200 historic resources in the community that are included in the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth.
- Littleton has adopted a demolition delay bylaw and a scenic roads bylaw, which

### Key Policy Recommendations for Stewardship of Historic Resources

- One way to help protect historic structures and the character of neighborhoods in Littleton is to consider establishing local historic districts or neighborhood conservation districts where appropriate. If applied to very specific areas with historical resources, and done in a way to provide some flexibility to property owners, a balance can be achieved that respects property rights while still offering protections for historic structures.
- If the Town is ready to make policy and financial commitments to historic preservation, it may be a benefit to empower members of the Historical Commission to engage with their peers throughout the state to learn what other communities are doing and what resources are available. The Town should consider allocating funding to help defray the costs of sending Commission members to conference and trainings.
- Historic resources in Littleton include more than just buildings. Assets also include historic landscapes, structures, objects, and archaeological resources. Therefore, successful preservation will require a combined effort across multiple boards and committees including historic, conservation, environmental, planning, and economic development advocates to protect the character and heritage of the town.

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provide limited protection for historic assets.

- The Town continues to use CPA as a source of potential protection of historical preservation resources.
- The Town has not adopted other preservation –based regulatory tools to protect historic resources from inappropriate alterations or loss.

## INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

Littleton's history is physically represented in its historic building fabric and in the development pattern of its concentrated villages surrounded by remaining agricultural landscapes. Together, these resources tell the story of Littleton and create a built environment that is unique and beloved by the community. Preservation of these resources not only protects the town's heritage, it also provides a vital component in the community's sustainability efforts. Reusing historic buildings and structures as an alternative to new construction is the ultimate in recycling and limits the amount of refuse placed in local landfills.

Despite public appreciation of the important role that historic assets play in defining the town's visual character – such as the town's historic farmhouses set amidst open fields, the iconic Littleton Common surrounded by historic commercial, residential and former industrial buildings, and the numerous steeples of the town's historic churches - and recommendations set forth in previous planning studies, Littleton has had limited success adopting regulatory tools to protect these historic resources from intensifying development pressures.

### Historic Resources<sup>1</sup>

Littleton's historic resources encompass more than the town's oldest Colonial-era houses. They include all remnants from the community's past, including houses, mill buildings, outbuildings, bridges, roadways, stone walls, cemeteries, landscapes, mill ponds, structures and archaeological artifacts. These historic resources reflect four centuries of development, from pre-seventeenth century artifacts from the area's original Native American inhabitants to buildings and structures reflecting Littleton's mid-twentieth century suburban development. Although many acres of farmland have been developed over the past half century, Littleton has been able to preserve vestiges of its historic character through a combination of private initiatives and public efforts.

Littleton has engaged in several planning initiatives relating to its historic resources. These initiatives include the Littleton Historical Commission's efforts to document historic buildings in 1998 and 2004 and participation in the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program in 2006. The Town's previous master plan studies and open space and recreation plans have also discussed Littleton's historic assets and identified general recommendations and goals relating to historic preservation. In 2014, the Littleton Historical Society published Littleton, Massachusetts 1714-2104: Celebrating 300 Years of History to celebrate the town's remarkable history. Through narrative and extensive graphics, this impressive book traces the history of Littleton from its early Native American history to modern times.

### In this Chapter

- Review the Town's current inventory of historic and culturally significant resources.
- Identify existing resources and policies that Town has in place today to protect and preserve historically-significant buildings, properties, and landscapes.
- Identify strategies to limit the impacts of development on historic and cultural resources.
- Identify strategies for increasing local capacity to work on historical preservation activities in town.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, historic information in this section was gathered from the town's 1997 Survey of Historic Resources Project Completion Report and individual historic resource inventory forms.

## Historic Villages

Much of Littleton originally served as farmland, but three concentrated centers developed in the community: Littleton Common, Littleton Center, and Littleton Depot. Today, each village presents a unique set of resources, opportunities, and challenges. In the past, the Littleton Historical Commission has considered designating these villages as historic districts, but efforts were unsuccessful or were not pursued.

The historic village of Littleton Common began as a residential and agricultural enclave in the eighteenth century around the open green of the Meetinghouse Common at the intersection of roads to Groton, Acton, Concord, and Westford. Over the next two centuries, commercial and manufacturing enterprises were introduced and the village became a mixed-use district with many historic residential buildings converted to retail and office use, including farmsteads modified for commercial uses. Development after World War I and the introduction of the automobile greatly affected the Common with widened roadways, increased traffic, and new development constructed to serve the auto trade.



Today, Littleton Common includes a collection of early Federal style farmhouses and later Italianate, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival style residences interspersed with new construction and open lots for parking. Distinctive landmarks of the village include the former Conant, Houghton and Company manufacturing complex and the modest nineteenth-century Victorian-era worker's cottages that line several streets radiating off the common. Other landmarks include the impressive steeple of the Baptist Church and the picturesque views of the Old Burying Ground on King Street. In 1995, the Littleton Historical Commission proposed to designate the Town Common area as a local historic district, but the proposal did not receive the two-thirds vote necessary for Town Meeting approval, although a majority voted in favor.<sup>2</sup> The Historical Commission has also considered the Common for designation as a Neighborhood Preservation District.<sup>3</sup>

The village of Littleton Center, also referred to as the Foster Street area, remained primarily a residential enclave with some civic and institutional buildings. Located west of the Common, Littleton Center developed in the eighteenth century along Foster Street from King Street to Tahattawan Road. Today, the village is well-preserved with late eighteenth century through the early twentieth century houses and barns set within a picturesque landscape of stone walls, scenic roadways, fields, and forested lots. Other landmarks include the expansive lawn and wood gazebo of Fay Park (est. 1917), the impressive yellow brick Classical Houghton Memorial building, the distinctive white spire of the Greek Revival Unitarian Church, the red brick former Town Hall building that now serves as a fire station, and the Masonic Lodge, an unusual brick building with stained glass windows. Numerous planning studies have identified Littleton Center as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register and worthy of local historic district designation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Description of the type of historic district designations available for the town to consider is discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> The Town has identified Littleton Common as a potential local historic district. However, the Massachusetts Historical Commission issued a preliminary determination in 2000 that the area did not retain significant integrity to qualify for listing as a National Register Historic District.

<sup>4</sup> These studies include Littleton's 2006 Heritage Landscape Inventory Report and the Town's previous Master Plan.

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The small hamlet of Littleton Depot, or West Village, developed at the intersection of King Street, Harwood Avenue, and Taylor Street after the Fitchburg Railroad established a stop here in 1845. Over the next century, a second railroad depot was constructed as well as a general store, post office, and residences. Today, the 1879 Italianate style Littleton Depot continues to stand as the visual center of the village surrounded by well-preserved homes, including an early five-bay Federal style house, end-gable Greek and Gothic Revival cottages and Victorian-era Italianate and Queen Anne style homes. This village has been identified as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register.



Other distinct areas in Littleton include the small hamlet of Pingreyville at the junction of Bruce Street and Ayer Road, and mid-twentieth century residential neighborhoods around Long Lake, Mill Pond, and Forge Pond, where modest summer homes are clustered on smaller lots. In most instances, these small cottages have been converted to year-round use. The Historical Commission identified Long Lake as a potential Neighborhood Conservation District to protect the scale and character of this small cottage development. Another summer cottage community, the Finnish Camp Kaleva on Fort Pond, is an important historic resource as well. The historic buildings of Pingreyville have been documented on historic resource inventory forms, but the former cottage communities have not been documented and their historic importance is less understood.

## Historic Buildings<sup>5</sup>

Littleton's historic buildings represent a variety of uses ranging from residential, civic, institutional, commercial, agricultural, and industrial uses. In some instances, these buildings are owned and cared for by the Town, but in most instances they are privately owned. The variety of architectural styles present in Littleton are represented in both grand and more modest "vernacular" versions, and are rendered on a variety of building forms. These include late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival styles; mid-nineteenth century Italianate styles; late nineteenth century Queen Anne and Shingle Styles; and early twentieth century Revival styles, all of which provide a diversity of decorative ornamentation that provides visual interest to the town's historic streetscapes. These buildings are generally well-preserved by their owners, with many buildings retaining original slate roofs, multi-paned wood windows, and decorative architectural trim. In some instances, modern synthetic siding obscures original historic details and in other more limited instances, buildings are exhibiting signs of benign demolition by neglect, particularly in situations where elderly owners are no longer able to maintain their homes.<sup>6</sup>

### Residential Buildings

Littleton's historic residential buildings span more than three centuries and represent a diversity of architectural styles and building form and scale. In addition to traditional houses, resources include farmhouses, workers housing and former summer cottages, all rendered in the popular architectural styles of their era. The Town's earliest residences, including Colonial-era, Federal and Greek Revival style homes have been well-documented and in most instances are well-preserved by their owners. The town's collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century homes, including Italianate, Queen Anne, Shingle,

<sup>5</sup> The Littleton Historical Commission (LHC) has documented many historic resources on historic resource inventory forms. Unless otherwise noted, these inventory forms are the main source of historic and architectural information in this report.

<sup>6</sup> Benign demolition by neglect is the loss of a building's architectural features and historic materials through lack of maintenance efforts over a prolonged period. In these instances, a property owner is unable to undertake building maintenance due to physical or economic reasons.

and Colonial Revival styles are no less impressive and the Historical Commission continues to document these resources in survey efforts. While most of the town's historic architectural styles are dispersed throughout the community, several streetscapes display concentrated collections of architectural styles including the modest Victorian-era workers cottages on Adams Street in the Common, late nineteenth century Stick style, Queen Anne, Shingle homes and Craftsman bungalows along Shattuck Street, and mid-twentieth century Ranches and Capes on Murray Park and Bruce Street.



More recent in construction, the distinctive twentieth century summer cottages around Long Pond and within Kaleva Camp are also important historic residential buildings. The town's previous master plan and its 2006 heritage landscape report highlighted these areas as worthy of documentation and preservation.

Perhaps the most recognized house type in Littleton is the historic farmhouse, examples of which are located throughout the community. These early houses exhibit the traditional two and one-half story building form with symmetrical five bay facades and decorative front entrances. Most have extended forms with numerous additions and barns. In some instances, these farmhouses are preserved within their historic agrarian setting of stone walls, hay fields and forest. Many of these farmhouses have been documented on historic inventory forms and identified as worthy of National Register listing, but only one farmhouse – the Reed-Wood property – has been listed and none have been protected through historic designation. A review of Littleton's existing inventory and future survey efforts can provide a list of these historic assets for the town to consider for future preservation efforts.

## Outbuildings

Perhaps it is Littleton's outbuildings that are most evocative of the community's past. New England barns dot the landscape both within the town's remaining farmland and within its more densely settled villages. In most instances these buildings no longer serve their original agricultural use. Some have been converted to new uses and others are now used for residential storage. Most have been well maintained by their owners. While the town's early inventory forms often omit historic outbuildings present on the property, new inventory forms are more inclusive, frequently documenting historic barns and other outbuildings such as early and mid-twentieth century garages. According to the Town's 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the only example of an outbuilding protected in Littleton is the former Gray Farm barn on Hartwell Avenue, which has been protected within a new residential development.<sup>7</sup>

## Civic Buildings

While not numerous and in many instances more recent in construction, Littleton's historic civic buildings continue to serve as important cultural landmarks in the community. The majority of these civic buildings were constructed in the early twentieth century and display the distinctive classical features typically found on buildings of this era. The Town has at times been a good steward of its historic civic buildings, preserving the architectural details and historic building fabric and reusing or leasing buildings that no longer can serve their original intended purpose.

- The historic Shattuck School on Shattuck Street between Littleton Common and Littleton Center, now serves as Littleton's Town Hall and Public Library. The original two and one-half story brick school built in 1922 with a 1938 addition features Classical elements of corner quoins, decorative

<sup>7</sup> Littleton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2016, 9.

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panels with swags, and a decorative cornice with dentils and a capped parapet. Entries feature elliptical fanlights with tracery and Roman Doric pilasters supporting an entablature and pediment.

- Littleton's former Town Hall building at 20 Foster Street in Littleton Center now serves as the town's Fire Station. Built in 1950, this modest two-story hip-roofed Colonial Revival brick building features a decorative entry with a multi-light transom above the paneled entry doors and pilasters supporting a semi-circular pediment.
- The Houghton Memorial Building at 4 Rogers Street was originally constructed in 1895 as Littleton's public library. Today, this yellow brick and terra cotta Colonial Revival style building is leased by the Historical Society for use as their museum and archive. The iconic building set at the entrance to Foster Street in Littleton Center features elaborate decorative details, including highly ornamented arched windows, columns with elaborate capitals of carved acanthus leaves, volutes and rosette-studded egg and dart molding, terra cotta water table, lintel course and denticulated cornice. The building also features bronze tablets listing the town's Civil War dead. The Littleton Historical Society recently restored the building's slate roof and copper roof with support from the Town's Community Preservation Act funds. The building is listed in the National Register.

## Commercial Buildings

Littleton's historic commercial buildings can be found around Littleton Common and in Littleton Depot. They play an important role in visually defining the town's historic development patterns. These include the wood-frame Josiah P. Thacher General Store at 3 Taylor Street in Littleton Depot and commercial buildings in Littleton Common, including the Littleton General Store (1841) at 486 King Street, the single story flat-roofed Classical Revival The Block (ca. 1922) at 23 Stevens Street, and the simple concrete and brick Nashoba Garage (ca. 1920) at 341 King Street, all in Littleton Common.

Now in commercial use, the former West Littleton Depot (1879), retains much of its original appearance as an historic train station. The owner has preserved the highly decorative wood-frame building, including its eave brackets, sliding wood doors and paired, semi-circular windows as well as its decorative corbeled chimneys.



The town's oldest remaining commercial building is now housed in storage as it awaits reconstruction on a new site. The late eighteenth century Long Store was formerly located at 499 Great Road on an 18-acre parcel that was known as the Chase Farm. When a new owner purchased the property for development, the long narrow single-story building, which was vacant and in poor condition, was slated for demolition. The property owner offered the building to the Historical Commission with the caveat that it must be moved off-site. Without a new site available, the Commission had the building dismantled and it is now stored in a trailer. (See further discussion later in this chapter.) In 2014, the Commission sponsored a study to determine the feasibility of restoring the Long Store, which identified the need for significant capital required to reassemble structure. To date, the Commission has been unable to identify a new site for the building.

## Industrial Buildings

The square mansard-roofed tower of the former factory buildings of the Conant, Houghton and Company (b. 1882) on Great Road serves as a visual landmark in Littleton Common. Originally initiated as

an evaporated apple, cider and vinegar business, the company expanded for the weaving of elastic webbing. A new factory building was constructed in 1882 with a series of additions built from 1886-1958. Today, the complex includes a series of wood-frame buildings that have been renovated for commercial use. Despite the presence of modern vinyl siding, the buildings retain much of their historic fabric and appearance including original multi-paned wood windows. The historic inventory form completed for the building includes an assessment that the building is eligible for listing in the National Register.

## Churches

The white spires of Littleton's ecclesiastical buildings play a key role in defining the town's visual character. Within Littleton Common and Littleton Center, the continued presence of local churches helps to maintain each village's traditional appearance. Three of Littleton's four religious buildings were constructed in 1841 and feature the distinctive Greek Revival style details characteristic of the period. The Historical Commission has documented all four churches on historic resource inventory forms. Privately owned, these ecclesiastical buildings continue to serve important cultural roles in the community. The Town has supported the facility needs of two of the congregations through the distribution of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for steeple and stained glass repairs. (See later discussion in the section on the Community Preservation Act.)

- Littleton First Church Unitarian (1841) at 19 Foster Street is the best preserved of three ecclesiastical buildings constructed the same year.
- First Baptist Church of Littleton (1841) at 461 King Street. The steeple was in disrepair and was reconstructed in 2000 by a cell phone carrier to house wireless communications antennas.
- The Congregational Church of Littleton (1841) at 330 King Street; recent addition and renovation.
- Saint Anne Parish (1959) at 75 King Street is a modest one and one-half story Romanesque Revival brick building; recent addition and renovation.
- Boston Metrowest Bible Church (2011) at 511 Newtown Road.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1980) at 616 Great Road.



## Heritage Landscapes

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. These landscapes are dynamic and evolving and depict how the natural environment influenced the land use patterns of a community.

Littleton's heritage landscapes - where buildings, structures and natural settings combine to create a unified whole – are vital to the town's visual and cultural identity. In Littleton, these landscapes include public greens such as Littleton Common and Fay Park located within historic village settings, historic neighborhoods such as Kaleva Camp, local waterways with historic significance such as Beaver Brook, and agricultural landscapes such as those found on Great Road.

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While more traditionally considered significant as natural resources, the town's waterways and agricultural landscapes have historical significance and in many instances, contains historic assets worthy of preservation. For example, the Beaver Brook and Marsh is significant both as the location for Native American settlements and as a source of waterpower for local mills in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Historic resources associated with the brook include old stone bridges and a causeway. Other conservation lands such as Bumblebee Meadows contain resources such as stone walls.



In 2006, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) completed a study of Littleton's heritage landscapes, identifying sixty-six heritage landscapes in the community and highlighting nine for preservation consideration. (See section in Preservation Planning Initiatives, Studies and Regulations for further discussion of this report.) The Town has also documented some of these heritage landscapes on historic inventory forms, but most forms include only information on historic buildings and do not include information on other resources present such as fields, outbuildings, structures, and stone walls. In other instances, the historic significance of these landscapes and the presence of historic assets on-site are not as well-known or understood, particularly for the town's conservation lands and its waterways.

The town's heritage landscape study recommended that the town incorporate information about these historic resources as part of the brook's stewardship program and document remaining historic resources along its edges. The town's agricultural landscapes and its protected conservation lands also contain great historic significance to the community. In addition to farmhouses, these landscapes contain outbuildings, stone walls, and other built features that are worthy of documentation and protection.

## Historic Structures

Historic structures play an important role in visually presenting the town's history. To date, Littleton has documented 26 historic structures included in the MACRIS database, including bridges, parks and landscapes. The stone bridges across the Beaver Brook in the Hartwell Family Memorial Preserve owned by Littleton Conservation Trust, within the Robert and Emily Cobb Memorial Forest on Nashoba Road; and crossing over Porter Road have all been documented. Other structures present in Littleton include a unique collection of early nineteenth century root cellars that were constructed close to roadways to store milk prior to transport on the railroad. The Littleton Historical Commission has worked to document these assets and protect them from loss, but this information is not yet included in MHC's Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) database. (See later discussion under Historic Inventory.) Another historic structure, a stone chamber on Whitcomb Avenue, was highlighted as an area of special priority in the Town's 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Despite the town's efforts to inventory its historic structures, many important historic structures remain undocumented and vulnerable to removal or damage through neglect and general unawareness that the resources exist and are important. This is particularly true for the town's vast networks of early stone walls, many of which were once delineators of open fields and are now obscured by tree and brush growth. Littleton's stone walls remain a vital visual aspect of the town's character and their protection in conjunction with the preservation of the town's scenic roadways was identified as crucial concern in the town's previous planning studies.

## Scenic Roads

Littleton's historic roadways retain historic alignment, with their winding routes, narrow width, adjoining vegetation and scenic views over open fields and forested land provide tangible reminders of the town's past. Stone walls line many of these roads and mature trees and natural hedgerows are present in the right of way. The Town approved a scenic roads bylaw in 1974, designating twenty-eight roads in the community. The Town has not designated any additional roads through this bylaw. The town's 2006 heritage landscape report recommended that the Town consider designating additional roads under its scenic roads bylaw. While the report did not identify specific roads, it did recommend that the town complete an inventory of each designated road's character defining features and adopt design criteria to be considered when approving removal of trees and stone walls.

## Other Resources

### Historic Objects

Littleton's historic objects represent the town's agricultural, industrial, cultural, and military heritage. To date, the Historical Commission has documented only nine historic objects in the community, with seven of these being monuments, tombs, and markers in the Old Burying Ground. The remaining two are the Jonathan Whitcomb Memorial and the unusual Dufour stone structure, both on Whitcomb Avenue. Other historic objects present in the community include the town's military memorials, a well-preserved collection of watering troughs and fountains found in Littleton Common and Littleton Center, and boundary markers. These resources remain undocumented and the Town has not created a map of its local historic objects.

### Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries

The Town of Littleton maintains two public cemeteries, each with unique, historically significant funerary markers, tombs, monuments, and other features such as stone walls, gates, and fences, and both are well-maintained by the Town's Cemetery Commission. Only Westlawn Cemetery remains an active burial site. In the past, volunteers and conservators have met annually to clean and preserve the cemetery grounds and markers and the Littleton Historical Society has hosted programs on the cemetery carvings and the history of the families buried in the cemeteries.

- The Old Burying Ground (established 1721-1812) on King Street between Littleton Common and Littleton Center is a small one-acre cemetery surrounded by a stone wall with an iron gate supported by granite posts. The cemetery contains approximately 400 burial sites with many marked by early slate headstone bearing highly skilled carvings. In 1999, the Town received a matching grant to research, document, and restore portions of the cemetery, including landscape features. The iron gates, granite posts and berms, and side stone walls were repaired and restored and an opening in the front stone wall was widened to allow handicap access. The Cemetery Department created an inventory of the burial sites, which was depicted on new maps and entered into a database in the Cemetery Department's computer mapping program.<sup>8</sup> The Old Burying Ground is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Westlawn Cemetery on King Street was established in ca. 1812 and contains notable collections of marble markers and more recent granite headstones. The Town has not documented this cemetery on an historic inventory form, although burials are catalogued in a database on the Cemetery Department's website.

### Archaeological Resources

Littleton has six documented ancient Native American sites dating back to Late Archaic Period (6,000-3,000 B.P) and three documented historic archaeological sites. The Littleton Historical Society maintains a collection of archaeological artifacts within its collections. Since Littleton is located within an area of Massachusetts that was settled centuries before the first English settlers arrived, it is realistic to imagine

<sup>8</sup> "Old Burying Ground History", Cemetery Department, [www.Littletonma.org](http://www.Littletonma.org)

## **LITTLETON MASTER PLAN**

that there are significantly more archaeological resources existing in Littleton. The Town's 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan recommended that the archaeological assessments be undertaken on town, state, and other public lands that may contain historic significance.

Any significant archaeological sites identified in Littleton will be included in the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Inventory of Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. This confidential inventory contains sensitive information and is not a public record as required under G.L. c.9, s. 26A (1).

## **Historic and Cultural Resource Planning**

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### **Local Preservation Capacity**

Littleton has two local agencies dedicated to preserving the town's historic resources and community heritage - the Town-based Littleton Historical Commission and the private, non-profit Littleton Historical Society. While both groups are involved in preservation planning, advocacy and resource management, their activities differ significantly, albeit with some overlap. In the past, the historical commission and historical society have collaborated on efforts and have expressed interest in working together in the future. Other Town agencies involved in preservation activities include the Littleton Community Preservation Committee (CPC), which oversees distribution of the town's Community Preservation Fund for historic preservation needs, and the Littleton Public Library and Littleton Town Clerk's office, agencies that both engage in preservation-based efforts through historic document collection. Other municipal committees engaged in efforts to protect the resources that define Littleton's historic character include the Conservation Commission, the Cemetery Commission and the Planning Board, which administers the town's scenic roads bylaw. The private, non-profit Littleton Conservation Trust also maintains and preserves historically-significant landscapes that contain historic artifacts such as stone walls and bridges.

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### **Town Boards**

- The seven-member, volunteer-based Littleton Historical Commission serves as the official municipal agency responsible for community-wide historic preservation planning and advocacy. The Commission's activities include historic resource surveys and maintaining the Town's historic inventory files, organizing and presenting the annual Patriot's Day Ceremony, enforcing the Town's demolition delay bylaw, maintaining the old burial Ground in collaboration with the Cemetery Commission, and placing markers on historic buildings and sites. The Commission has a page on the Town's website with some information on Littleton's history, although members have expressed difficulty in maintaining this site and expanding it to include more information. In the past, the LHC offered a preservation awards program to recognize the restoration efforts of local property owners and hopes to resurrect the program in the near future.

As a local historical commission established under G.L. c. 40, § 8D, the LHC also serves as a municipal and public resource for historic preservation. This includes providing guidance to other municipal departments, boards, and commissions to insure that the goal of historic preservation is considered in community planning and development decisions.

- The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) was established in 2001 to oversee the administration of the Town's Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The CPC is a nine-member agency comprised of three Selectmen-appointed members and representatives from each of the following town committees: the Historical Commission, the Housing Authority, the Parks and Recreation Committee, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, and the Finance Committee. The CPC meets monthly to review applications for CPA funding and to provide recommendations to Town Meeting. As part of its duties, the CPC is responsible for reviewing preservation goals and needs relating to the Town's open space, historic preservation, affordable housing, and recreation concerns.

- Reuben Hoar Public Library is a public institution that promotes the historical, social, and cultural development of the town. The Library' Houghton Historical Room includes a collection of books relating to local, regional, and state history, Town Reports, vertical files, and other ephemera documenting Littleton's history.
- The Cemetery Commission continues to work to preserve the town's two historic cemeteries and burial grounds, including marker restoration at the Old Burying Ground.
- The Town Clerk is responsible for maintaining the Town's public records, which date back to Littleton's incorporation. Through the CPA, the Town recently approved funding to improve its archival storage in the Town Archives.

### Local Private Non-Profit Organizations

The Littleton Historical Society (LHS) is a private non-profit organization founded in 1894 for the preservation of Littleton's history. In addition to its recently published Littleton Massachusetts 1714-2014 celebrating 300 Years of History and its extensive archives, the organization also maintains a website with images of Littleton's historic markers, including photographs of markers and buildings (or site for resources no longer extant), and "Littleton Then & Now" with historic photographs alongside current views of Littleton.<sup>9</sup> In 1991, the Historical Society moved into Houghton Memorial Building and recently completed restoration of the building's roof.

### Regional Preservation Organizations

Littleton is one of thirty-seven communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire that are part of the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (FWNHA), designated by Congress as a nationally significant area where historical, cultural, and natural resources combine to form a cohesive, common landscape. The Freedom's Way Heritage Association manages and coordinates efforts to build civic appreciation and understanding of unique assets and stories of the area. The organization's website highlights historic resources present in each participating community, including a number of sites in Littleton.<sup>10</sup> In addition to highlighting ten houses and sites in Littleton associated with the Revolutionary War, the FWHA website also highlights the priority landscapes listed in the DCR Heritage Landscape Inventory. The FWHA also publishes a "Strollin' and Rollin'" newsletter highlighting different towns in the region. Littleton's issue highlights the Fox Tavern in Littleton Center, the Houghton Memorial Building, the Old Burying Ground, Oak Hill Conservation Land, and the Yapp-Cobb Conservation Land.<sup>11</sup>

### Local Regulations, Policies & Initiatives

Littleton has engaged in a variety of planning initiatives relating to historic preservation. In the Town's previous master plan and open space and recreation plans, historic resources are highlighted and general goals and recommendations established to preserve the town's historic character. The Town has not completed a municipal historic preservation plan, but other studies have established priorities for historic survey efforts and recommendations for historic district designations. In many instances, these recommendations remain relevant today.

### Historic Resource Inventory

Identifying a community's historic resources through a cultural resource inventory forms the basis of historic preservation planning at the local level. During a cultural resource survey, a town documents its historic resources on individual inventory forms that include historic and architectural significance narratives, photographs, and locus maps. To date, the Littleton Historical Commission has submitted more than 200 properties to MHC's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. In some instances, such as the workers housing on Adams Street, more than one resource is included on a single Area Form. Resources identified in Littleton's inventory date from 1682 to 1975. The Historical

<sup>9</sup> Littleton Historical Society website, <http://www.littletonhistoricalsociety.org>

<sup>10</sup> Freedom's Way Heritage Association, [www.freedomsway.org](http://www.freedomsway.org).

<sup>11</sup> "Strollin' and Rollin'" Spotlight on Littleton!", May 2011. <http://www.freedomsway.org/projects/strollin.html>

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

Commission is in the process of a commissioning a new town-wide historic survey that will inventory previously undocumented resources and update older forms. The Town recently allocated CPA funds for this effort. Paper inventory forms are located at the Public Library and are available to view and download on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's searchable MACRIS online database at [www.mhc-macris.net](http://www.mhc-macris.net).

A review of the table below shows the town's inventory broken down by the three areas defined in MHC's MACRIS – Littleton, Littleton Common, and Littleton Depot.

Table 6.1. Littleton Historic Resource Inventory			
Resource Type	Littleton	Littleton Common	Littleton Depot
All types	21	112	23
Areas	1	3	2
Buildings	17	89	21
Objects	0	7	0
Structures	3	12	0
Burial Grounds	0	1	0

Source: MACRIS database accessed July 1, 2017.

## Heritage Landscape Inventory

In the mid-2000s, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) embarked on a project to inventory heritage landscapes in communities throughout the Commonwealth. The DCR worked with local residents and officials to identify and prioritize heritage landscapes present in their community. In 2006, DCR completed the Littleton Reconnaissance Report that identified 66 heritage landscapes in the community and highlighted the following nine resources as priority heritage landscapes for preservation consideration:<sup>12</sup>

- Beaver Brook and Marsh
- Littleton Depot Area
- Farms on Great Road (Route 2A/119)
- Long Store
- Kaleva Camp
- Parlee Sawmill
- Littleton Center Area
- Yapp Farm
- Littleton Common Area

For each heritage landscape, the report provided general preservation recommendations, many of which are still relevant today. In addition, the report highlighted the critical concern voiced by local residents about preserving Littleton's scenic roads and stone walls.

## National Register of Historic Places Listings

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that have been deemed significant in America history, architecture, archaeology, engineer-

<sup>12</sup> MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program: Littleton Reconnaissance Report, 2006.

ing, and culture. Littleton has three individual properties listed in the National Register (See Table 6.2 below).<sup>13</sup> Many other resources and areas in Littleton have been identified as eligible for listing in the National Register. These include Littleton Center, Littleton Depot and individual resources such as out-lying historic farmsteads and the Conant, Houghton and Company mill complex.

### State Register of Historic Places

The State Register of Historic Places is a compendium of all properties in Massachusetts that are afforded some level of preservation protection through historic designation. In Littleton, only the town's three individually-listed National Register properties are included in the State Register since the town does not have any resources listed as National Historic Landmarks, listed within a National Register Historic District, or protected within a local historic district or by a preservation restriction.

**Table 6.2. Littleton Properties Listed in National Register of Historic Places**

Name of Property	Address	Date Listed	# of Resources
Houghton Memorial Building	4 Rogers Road	3/18/1991	2
Old Burying Ground	King Street near junction with White Street	2/5/2002	18
Reed-Wood Place	20 Meetinghouse Road	9/14/2000	2

Source: State Register of Historic Places, 2015

### Community Preservation Act

Littleton first adopted the Community Preservation Adopted in 2007 with a 1 percent surcharge. In 2014, Littleton was the first community to adopt a "blended" CPA program that allows the Town to appropriate additional municipal revenues into the fund to increase the base for State CPA matching funds up to 3 percent. This has included significant funds appropriated to the historic resources reserve from mitigation payments. To date, the Town has allocated funds for restoration projects at two of the town's historic churches, for preservation projects at the town's former public library now serving as the historic society museum and archives, for archival preservation at Town Hall, and for Historical Commission sponsored studies.

### Preservation Restrictions

A preservation restriction (PR), under M.G.L. c. 184, ss. 31-33, can be placed on both public and private resources. Similar to a conservation restriction for natural resources, a PR is attached to the deed of a historic property and it is one of the strongest preservation tools available. Historic properties acquired with CPA funds and privately-owned resources supported by CPA funds are required to be protected with preservation restrictions to ensure a public benefit.

**Table 6.3. Preservation Projects Funded through Community Preservation Act**

Project	Description	Date
Houghton Building	UV radiation window protection	2015
Town Archives	Archival storage/vault dehumidifier	2013
Long Store Feasibility Study	Feasibility study for reconstruction	2014
Baptist Church	Repairs to historic clock tower	2011
Congregational Church	Restoration of stained glass windows	2014
Houghton Building	Replacement of slate roof	2009
Old Burying Ground	Monument assessment	2016
Littleton Historic Inventory	Survey Update	2016

Source: Littleton Town Meeting Reports 2015 and 2016 and Community Preservation Committee website, [www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org)

<sup>13</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Register of Historic Places 2015.

## Local Regulations

- **Scenic Roads.** Recognizing the need to protect the character defining features of its roadways that contribute to the town's overall rural character, Littleton adopted the provisions of the Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act and a local scenic roads bylaw in 1974, designating twenty-eight local roads as scenic. (Massachusetts legislation prohibits the designation of State numbered routes.) The Planning Board is responsible for oversight of the bylaw, reviewing proposals to remove trees and stone walls located with the public right of way. During a public hearing process, the Planning Board is required to consider aesthetic considerations and preservation of natural and physical features and public safety. The Town's 2006 heritage landscape report noted the presence of other scenic roads in Littleton and recommended that the Town consider designating additional roads under its scenic roads bylaw. The report did not identify specific roads for consideration. In addition, documenting the physical characteristics of each roadway would ensure that the Planning Board is aware of specific resources present on each roadway to ensure that resources are not lost without proper review.
- **Demolition Delay Bylaw.** Littleton adopted its demolition delay bylaw in 2000. Per the Town's bylaw, any building listed in the town's inventory or listed in the National Register is subject to review by the Littleton Historical Commission when a property owner proposes to demolish the building. If the Commission determines the building is preferably preserved during a public hearing process, the bylaw imposes a six-month delay to allow the opportunity to work with a property owner to find alternatives to demolition. For owners who are not willing to consider an alternative solution, the bylaw only results in a temporary delay before the building is demolished. The Commission currently has one building in the delay period and one building is pending.

The Historical Commission has identified the need to strengthen the town's bylaw, particularly in relation to the six-month delay period, which provides a very limited timeframe to work with a property owner to encourage retention of the building on-site, find alternate locations to relocate the building, or find a new owner. In addition, the bylaw's limited jurisdiction to inventoried buildings only, leaves many undocumented historic buildings in the town vulnerable to loss. MHC has a model demolition delay bylaw available for municipalities to consider adopting in their community.

In Littleton, there is no one particular area more threatened with demolition than another. The Historical Commission is aware of a number of properties poised for development, particularly around the Point development and IBM. The Commission's experience with protecting the Long Store highlighted the need to identify potential at-risk buildings before they are threatened.

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## Preservation Education and Interpretive Activities

Littleton's preservation groups seek to foster a greater appreciation of the town's heritage and historic assets through a variety of educational outreach initiatives. One of the goals of the Town's 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan is to promote education and awareness of the town's history. The Littleton Historical Commission operates an historic house plaque program, offering plaques to owners of historic properties, and has placed markers at sites to highlight where historic resources were once present. The Commission hopes that the upcoming historic resource survey project will encourage more property owners to participate in the program. A page on the Historical Society's website identifies these signs and provides photographs and locational information.

Other educational programming is offered by the Littleton Historical Society. In addition to special events and programs, the Historical Society hosts local schoolchildren as part of the town's third grade local history curriculum. The Society and the Public Library also assist local high school A.P. History students with annual historic research projects.

Both the Historical Commission and the Historical Society have expressed interest in expanding their education outreach efforts to encourage more appreciation of the town's history and historic artifacts.

This could include a joint program between the historical society, historical commission and the private residents of Camp Kaleva to highlight the unique history of this development, which was a recommendation set forth in the town's heritage landscape study.<sup>14</sup>

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### **□ Building Capacity for Local Preservation Efforts**

While Littleton residents value the town's heritage, and its well-preserved collection of historic resources stand as testament to this pride, local historical groups still struggle to increase awareness that historic resources are fragile and need to be protected. The Historical Commission is a volunteer board that operates with limited administrative support at Town Hall. Through CPA funding, the group has been able to undertake some preservation planning projects but continues to find it challenging to build support for preservation efforts. Identifying additional funding sources could assist the Commission with preservation planning initiatives. The Massachusetts Historical Commission provides funding through its Survey and Planning Grant Program to assist local communities with preservation planning efforts. Establishing a dialogue with other local historical commissions could also assist the Littleton Historical Commission.

Opportunities for local historical commission members to engage with their peers throughout the state have increased in the past decade. The Statewide Preservation Coalition, a broad coalition of local, regional, and state preservation partners, continues to meet regularly. The resurrection of the Statewide Preservation Conference as a biennial event provides an opportunity for preservationists to come together to discuss preservation concerns and learn more about preservation opportunities. MHC continues to host regional workshops on preservation issues, and the statewide preservation listserv also provides opportunities to solicit input from other preservationists on local preservation concerns.

It is also important to remember that the town's historic resources include more than just individual buildings. These assets are part of a larger setting that includes historic landscapes, structures, objects and archaeological resources. Therefore, successful preservation will require a concerted collaborative effort by the town's historic, conservation, environmental, planning, economic development advocates to protect the town's historic character and local heritage. Bringing these groups together in a single forum to discuss common interests would allow these groups to explore opportunities to collaborate towards this effort. Maintaining this dialogue and integrating historic preservation objectives with on-going conservation and planning efforts will be critical. Beyond traditional preservation-based regulatory tools, identifying planning tools to guide new development in a manner that respects the town's historic character and the architectural integrity of its historic villages and neighborhoods will be important.

### **□ Documentation and Protection of Historic Resources**

In order to protect a community's historic and cultural resources, the town needs to first identify what resources are present. The Littleton Historical Commission continues to prioritize historic resource inventory efforts and is in the process of completing a town wide historic survey. Ensuring that these efforts include all resources types, eras of significance, and geographic locations is important. For example, while historic buildings in Pingreyville have been documented on historic resource inventory forms, the town's former cottage communities have not been documented and their historic importance is less understood and appreciated by the community. In addition, many important historic structures and objects remain undocumented and vulnerable to removal or damage through neglect and general unawareness that the resources exist and are important. This includes the character defining features of the town's scenic roads including stone walls, trees and other elements in the public right of way.

<sup>14</sup> See further discussion on the Heritage Landscape Report later in this chapter.

**National Register listings are important for fostering public awareness and appreciation of a town's historic resources, designation within a local historic district provides legal authority to protect a building from inappropriate alterations or demolition. The town's heritage landscape inventory report also recommended the town consider pursuing Neighborhood Conservation District designation for its mid-twentieth century neighborhoods such as those located around the town's waterbodies.**

of Historic Place or through local historic districts. The inventory can also serve as a vital tool for a public awareness campaign to encourage residents to consider historic designations. Previous planning efforts have identified some areas and individual assets worthy of National Register listing and local historic district designation including portions of King Street, Foster Street, Littleton Depot, and individual resources such as outlying historic farmsteads and the Conant, Houghton and Company mill complex, but only one farmhouse – the Reed-Wood property – has been listed and none have been protected through local historic district designation. While National Register listings are important for fostering public awareness and appreciation of a town's historic resources, designation within a local historic district provides legal authority to protect a building from inappropriate alterations or demolition. The town's heritage landscape inventory report also recommended the town consider pursuing Neighborhood Conservation District designation for its mid-twentieth century neighborhoods such as those located around the town's waterbodies.

## □ Community Resilience

There is a saying that the most sustainable building is one that is already built. Focusing on the preservation and modernization of the existing building stock in Littleton is critical to ensure the historic fabric of neighborhoods remains, yet allowing retrofits to modernize the insides of buildings to today's standards. Littleton can become more resilient by considering:

- Protecting historic buildings and resources where there is support by the property owners.
- Documenting critical historic structures, cultural assets, and scenic roads to ensure the community character is factored into building design.
- Allowing for the modernization of historic structures to make them more energy efficient, while still maintaining the features that lend to the buildings unique historical character.

The Town has also documented some of its heritage landscapes on historic inventory forms, but most forms include only information on historic buildings and do not include information on other resources present such as fields, out-buildings, structures, and stone walls. In other instances, the historic significance of these landscapes and the presence of historic assets on-site are not as well-known or understood, particularly for the town's conservation lands and its waterways.

Providing the town's historic resource inventory forms on the town's website and incorporating the location of these documented resources into the town's Geographic Information System (GIS) provides an opportunity to foster awareness and appreciation of the town's historic assets both to local residents and municipal officials and boards. For example, local communities have created maps of their historic objects to build support for public art.

Once the town's inventory is complete, Littleton will have a better understanding of its historic resources and can plan for their protection. The town's inventory will provide the Historical Commission and Town with a framework to identify its historic buildings and determine those worthy of designation, either through the National Register

- Promoting the cultural history of Littleton for all to learn from and enjoy. This can help bring a community together and create events that support gathering and socialization. The celebration of history also deepens ones understanding and connection to a community.

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Historic and Cultural Resources Goal: To promote Littleton's unique history and preserve its variety of historic resources.**

#### **1. Pursue one or more historic districts that could include the area around Foster Street/Unitarian Church/Fire Station/Historical Society, as well as the area around Littleton Common that encompasses parcels and structures.**

Historic districts help protect the history and character of an area or neighborhood. Local districts also protect the investments of property owners who have spent money purchasing and rehabilitating historic structures and do not want to lose that investment if the character of the neighborhood changes. Districts can be crafted in many different ways to encourage better quality design, and do not have to be as strict as some may think. If protecting the character of Littleton's neighborhoods is a goal, a historic district is one tool the Town should consider pursuing with property owners.

#### **2. Complete an inventory of historic structures and heritage landscapes in Littleton, including photo documentation of present-day conditions.**

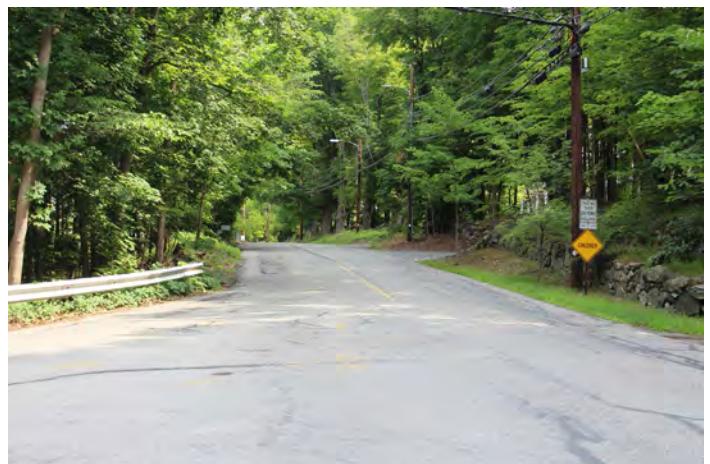
A completed inventory would provide the Town and the Commission with a photographic record of the existing structures and landscapes in their current condition. This can be useful when changes are proposed in an area or to a parcel of land. The Town and Commission can use the photos to describe what is there today and how changes can be made without disrupting the historic or cultural significance of an area or neighborhood.

#### **3. Update the Town's historic inventory and data collection forms to include heritage landscapes, not just historic structures.**

The Town should add space on the existing inventory and data collection forms to include heritage landscapes. This would save time when people are out in the field recording information on historic structures if everything was located on the same form for post-processing. Scenic vistas should be included in the inventory.

#### **4. Undertake an effort to determine whether the current list of scenic roads should be added to or subtracted from based on changes that have occurred since the adoption of the bylaw in 1974. Develop a photographic inventory of the most critical scenic roads.**

The visual characteristics of roadways in Littleton have changed over time. This strategy would help the Town inventory, document, and prioritize the list of scenic roads that were included during the adoption of the bylaw in 1974.



**5. Pursue Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) designations for mid-twentieth century neighborhoods such as those located around the Town's waterbodies.**

An NCD could help protect the character of some neighborhoods in Littleton where the buildings and overall neighborhood design are well-established, but maybe not historical in the truest sense. An NCD would require review and approval for changes to a structure, but can be limited to substantial changes such as demolition rebuilds or major additions. These can be less arduous when compared to a local historic district. The idea is to protect the character and built form of small-scale, traditional, and often more affordable single-family neighborhoods.

**6. Update the Demolition Delay bylaw to make the demolition waiting period at least one year.**

The Town already has a Demolition Delay bylaw in their zoning regulations and stipulates a six month waiting period for demolition. This strategy would increase the waiting period to one year with the hope of providing enough time for a thorough review and community input.

**7. Reconsider the current allocation of annual Community Preservation Act funds dedicated toward historic resource-related expenditures.**

Over the last five years, the Town has spent the bulk of its CPA funding on open space and recreation projects. The Town, Historical Commission, and Community Preservation Committee should work together to define a broader range of historic preservation projects that could be funded by CPA and allocate additional funding to projects in this category. Over the five-year period, the Town has allocated approximately 16 percent of its CPA funding toward projects in the historic preservation category.

**8. Allocate funding to support Historical Commission members that wish to attend statewide preservation conferences to learn best practices from local and state leaders in historic preservation.**

As part of the annual town budget process, the Historical Commission should request funding to help defray the cost of sending members to trainings and conferences to learn more about historic preservation. These lessons and best practices can be brought back to Littleton and shared more widely to help implement historic and cultural preservation goals and recommendations.

**9. Utilize Community Preservation Act funds to assist with the rehabilitation/reuse of historic properties around the Common.**

By bringing CPA resources to the table, the Town could play a more active role in the rehabilitation and improvement of historic structures around the Common. The Town could use this as a funding source to help offset some of the costs to property owners or developers looking to modernize or update buildings in accordance with the Town's vision for the Common.

**10. Encourage committees engaged in historical preservation, environmental protection, open space, planning, and economic development to meet periodically to explore opportunities to collaborate on historic and cultural preservation priorities.**

In the spirit of increasing communication across boards and staff, there should be periodic meetings that include a variety of boards and committees where historic and cultural preservation is touched upon. Coordinating these efforts, or at least conversing about them, could help triage issues and create a common platform from which each board or committee could work from.

# 7 Natural Resources



## OVERVIEW

### Relationship to Master Plan Goals

Protecting natural resources is extremely important to Littleton residents. This includes open space, farm land, forested land, and the numerous water bodies and water courses across town. As development pressures continue to increase, it will be important for the Town to identify resources that need additional protection. The Town should look at ways to prioritize natural resources and open spaces, and identify policies to help mitigate the impact of impervious surfaces from development in a way that is environmentally responsible but does not severely limit growth.

### Key Findings

- Major Watersheds: Concord River and Merrimack River
- Key Stream Corridors: Beaver Brook and Long Pond Brook
- Four public wells and one regional water supply for Town of Concord
- NHESP: Eight Rare, Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Special Conservation Concern
- NHESP BioMap2 Key Habitats
  - Core Habitat: 2,166 acres
  - Core Habitat Protected: 277 acres
  - Critical Natural Landscape: 396 acres
  - Critical Natural Landscape Protected: 155 acres or 39.2 percent.

### Key Natural Resources

#### Policy Recommendations

- Littleton residents strongly identify with natural features, particularly the Town's bounty of lakes and ponds. Some neighborhoods and areas are referred to by their proximity to water bodies. Littleton adopted one of the first aquifer and water protection districts in the state, and has continued its history of surface and subsurface water protection to this day. Still, more can be done to ensure water quality remains high and the Town should prepare a comprehensive strategy for maintaining or improving water quality.
- Residents also strongly identify with Littleton's open space resources, which support recreation and farming and serve as prime forest land and habitat for birds and animals. In order to protect the most critical open spaces, the Town should develop a prioritization process for remaining lands that are not protected. The Town should also consider ways to connect open spaces to reduce habitat fragmentation and create natural corridors across the community.
- The Town has an Open Space Development (OSD) Bylaw that allows a clustering of development on a parcel of land as a way of saving open space and views along roadways. To date, the OSD has been used for a few developments with mixed results. To improve the chances of more successful outcomes, the Town should consider revising the OSD to include more meaningful incentives to landowners who meet the Town's open space goals through the OSD process.

## INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

Situated within the Southern New England Coastal Plains and Hills, Littleton is an area of flat wetlands and low, rolling hills interlaced with a network of streams and ponds that drain to the Concord and Merrimac Rivers. Two of the largest streams, Beaver Brook and Long Pond Brook, provide an armature for several large areas of continuous intact forested lands.

Together, these streams, ponds, forests and wetlands provide a home to a diverse collection of flora and fauna, including several species recognized at the state level as being of special concern for conservation. Littleton's habitat areas also play a valuable part of important statewide and regional ecological networks. Several areas of Littleton are formally recognized as being of statewide importance for maintaining a biodiverse and resilient landscape by the state Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.

### Inventory & Existing Conditions

#### Geology

The Town of Littleton's geology is primarily characterized by shallow schist and gneiss bedrock, which outcrops in many locations, covered throughout the Town by a thin layer of unconsolidated glacial till. This bedrock and surficial geology have been critical to shaping the topography, hydrology, and ecology of the area and setting up the important ecological relationships that today connect Littleton to the larger New England landscape.

Littleton is situated at the boundary of two of New England's eleven geologic provinces: the NH-Maine Sequence and the Avalon Province. These geologic provinces share common rock types, age, and origin. The NH-Maine Sequence found in the western quarter of Littleton stretches from eastern Connecticut northward through New Hampshire and Maine. It consists primarily of Silurian to Devonian-aged metasedimentary rocks—that is, sedimentary rocks like shale and limestone that have been transformed through temperature and pressure into harder rocks like schist and marble.

The Avalon Province in the eastern three-quarters of Littleton extends from Connecticut and Rhode Island northeast to the coast near the Massachusetts-New Hampshire boundary. The Avalon is characterized by older Precambrian to Ordovician-aged granitic gneiss and metasedimentary rocks. The rock formations in both the Avalon and NH-Maine provinces tend to be configured in long narrow bands running from Northeast to Southwest—the physical remnant of continental landmasses colliding and pulling apart over the millennia. As these bands of rocks of different hardness and composition have weathered, they have influenced the northeast-southwest orientation to many of the ridges and valleys in Littleton and elsewhere in New England.

Both the Avalon Province and the NH-Maine Sequence bedrock contain intrusions of more recent Devonian-aged granitic rocks. In Littleton, these intrusions are mainly granite pegmatite. Pegmatite is characterized by large crystals of quartz, mica, and feldspar. One type of granite pegmatite, quartz monzonite, is currently quarried by Middlesex Materials Corp and provides a source of crushed stone for the regional construction industry. Abandoned marble quarries also exist within the town, though they haven't been active for the last century or so.

#### In this Chapter

- Inventory the Town's natural resource assets.
- Catalogue potential natural resources and endangered species that could be impacted by changes to Littleton's landscape.
- Recommend best practices for protecting critical natural resources in Littleton.

Glacial deposits of unconsolidated silt, sand, gravel and boulders lie above this bedrock throughout Littleton. These deposits are the remnants of glaciers that retreated from this area of New England 15,000 years ago. Meltwater from the glaciers subsequently shaped these till or hardpan layers, creating many of the more irregular landforms in Littleton.

### Soils

Over the last 10,000 years or so, decomposing organic matter mixed with weathered bedrock and glacial till have produced several different types of soils in Littleton. These soils have historically influenced the location and scale of human development as well as played a critical role in establishing the diversity of plant and animal communities within the Town of Littleton.

Four general classes of soil defined by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) exist in the Town of Littleton. The well-drained rocky soils underlain with glacial hardpan/till known as the "Paxton-Woodbridge Association" cover approximately 36 percent of the Town. These soils are unfavorable for high-density development. The sandy, gravelly soils of the Hinckley—"Merrimack-Gravel Pit-Made Land Association" covers 33 percent of the Town, mostly west of Route 495. These soils are generally favorable for development. Approximately 21 percent of the Town is covered with soils of the "Hollis-Paxton Association." Frequent outcrops and shallow bedrock constrain development in these areas.

The remaining 10 percent of the town is comprised of wet, mucky soils designated by the NRCS as the "Muck-Fresh Water Association." Wet, organically rich soils support wetland plants and often become important animal habitat areas. Human development in these areas is constrained by the physical properties of wet soils as well as the ecological and regulatory issues associated with developing in or near wetlands.

### AGRICULTURAL SOILS

In addition to supporting and constraining habitat and human development, soil characteristics also influence agricultural productivity. NRCS soils data also contain a useful classification system for evaluating agricultural soil productivity. This classification system identifies soils as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Unique Importance, and Farmland of Statewide Importance.

Prime Farmland is defined by the NRCS as "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for economically producing sustained high yields of food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods." Farmland of Unique Importance are defined as "land other than prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance that might be used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops." In Massachusetts, this classification is confined to mucks, peats and coarse sand and usually suitable primarily for commer-



## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

cial cranberry production. Farmland of Statewide Importance refers to "land, in addition to prime and unique farmlands, that is of statewide importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oil seed crops, as determined by the appropriate state agency or agencies."

The largest continuous, undeveloped area of Prime Farmland Soils and Farmland of Statewide Importance in Littleton exist along the north and south sides of Great Road, southeast of I-495. Another large area of Prime Farmland Soils and Farmland of Unique Importance lies to the west of I-495, just east of Spectacle Pond, Forge Pond and Gibson Brook. Much of this area is currently the site of residential development, especially south of Great Road. Two more large continuous areas of Prime Farmland Soils and Farmland of Statewide importance are located in the vicinity of Mill Pond, between Long Pond and Fort Pond.

### Water Resources

Littleton's physiography is characterized by floodplains and low rolling hills interwoven with a relatively dense network of streams, ponds, and wetlands. I-495 and an MBTA rail corridor, which bisect the Town, are also major topographic features. Elevations in Littleton range from a low of around 210' above sea level at Spectacle Pond to a high of about 500' above sea level at the top of Oak Hill (the highest hill in town).

### SURFACE HYDROLOGY AND FLOODPLAINS

In Littleton, open water and wetlands occupy over 1,000 acres. Large and small streams link together a number of large lakes in the area, including Mill Pond, Spectacle Pond and Forge Pond to the west of 495 and Long Pond, Fort Pond, and Nagog Pond to the east of 495.

A major watershed boundary, just east of and running parallel to 495 through Starr Hill, divides the town lands into the Merrimack River watershed to the northwest and the Concord River watershed (a tributary of the Merrimack) to the southeast. In the northwest, Beaver Brook and Bennets Brook drain toward the Merrimack River via Stony Brook. In the southeastern portion of Littleton runoff ultimately makes its way to the Concord River via the Assabet and Sudbury Rivers. The Concord River, in turn, flows to the Merrimack River. In addition to the major streams, additional intermittent streams and drainages exist in Littleton. For example, a relatively long reach of intermittent stream connects wetlands to in the vicinity of Bumble Bee Park to Beaver Brook. Another network of intermittent streams connects the wetlands to the north of Long Pond north to Nashoba Brook in Westford.



Map 7.1

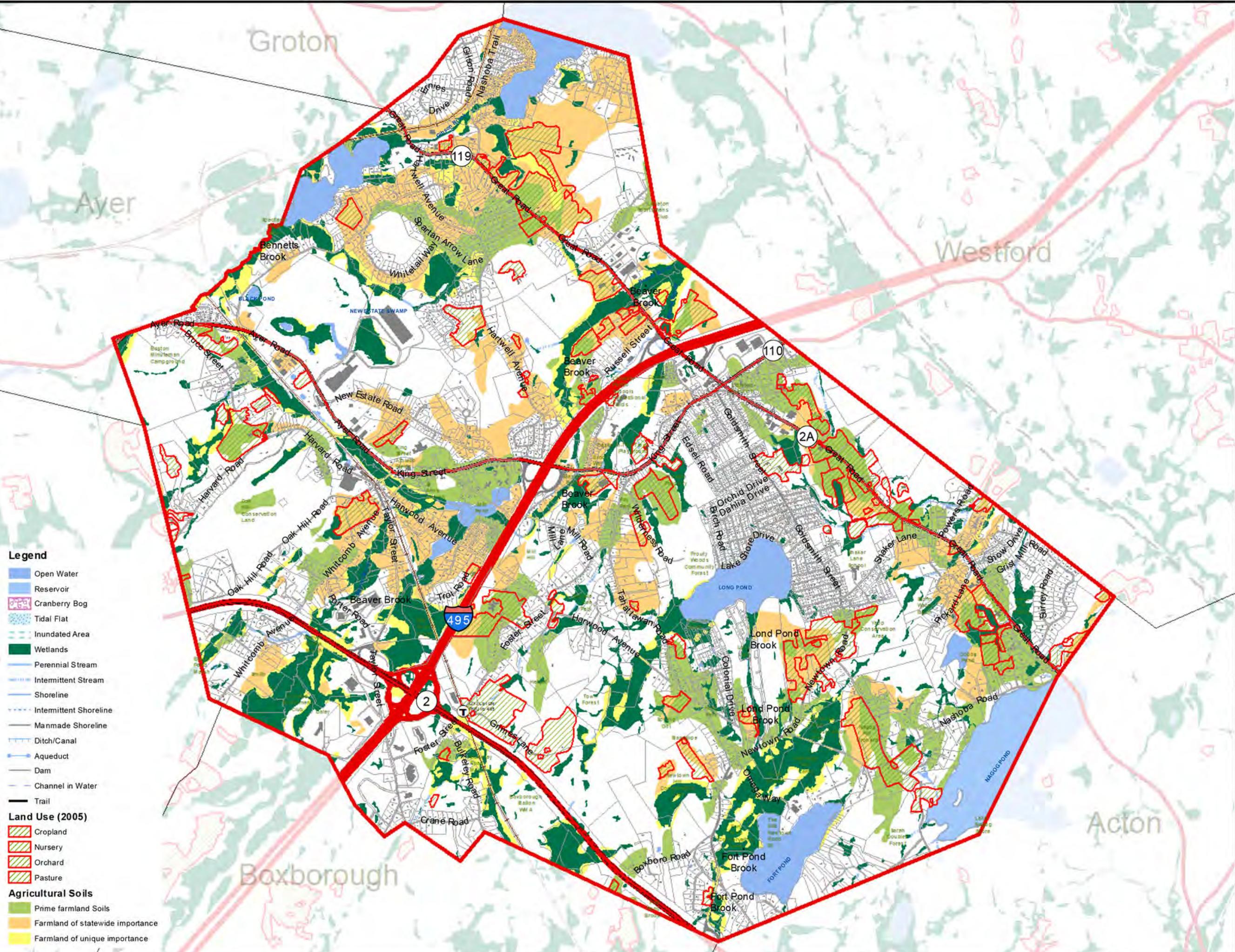
# Agricultural Resources

Littleton, Massachusetts

DODSON & FLINKER  
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Date: 7/21/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, Mass  
EOOE, USGS

This map is for general planning purposes only.  
The data used to create the map are not  
adequate for making legal or zoning boundary  
delineations or delineating natural resource  
areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the



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Miles



# Map 7.2

# Water Resources

Littleton, Massachusetts

DODSON & FLINKER  
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Date: 7/21/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, Mass  
EOOEAA, USGS

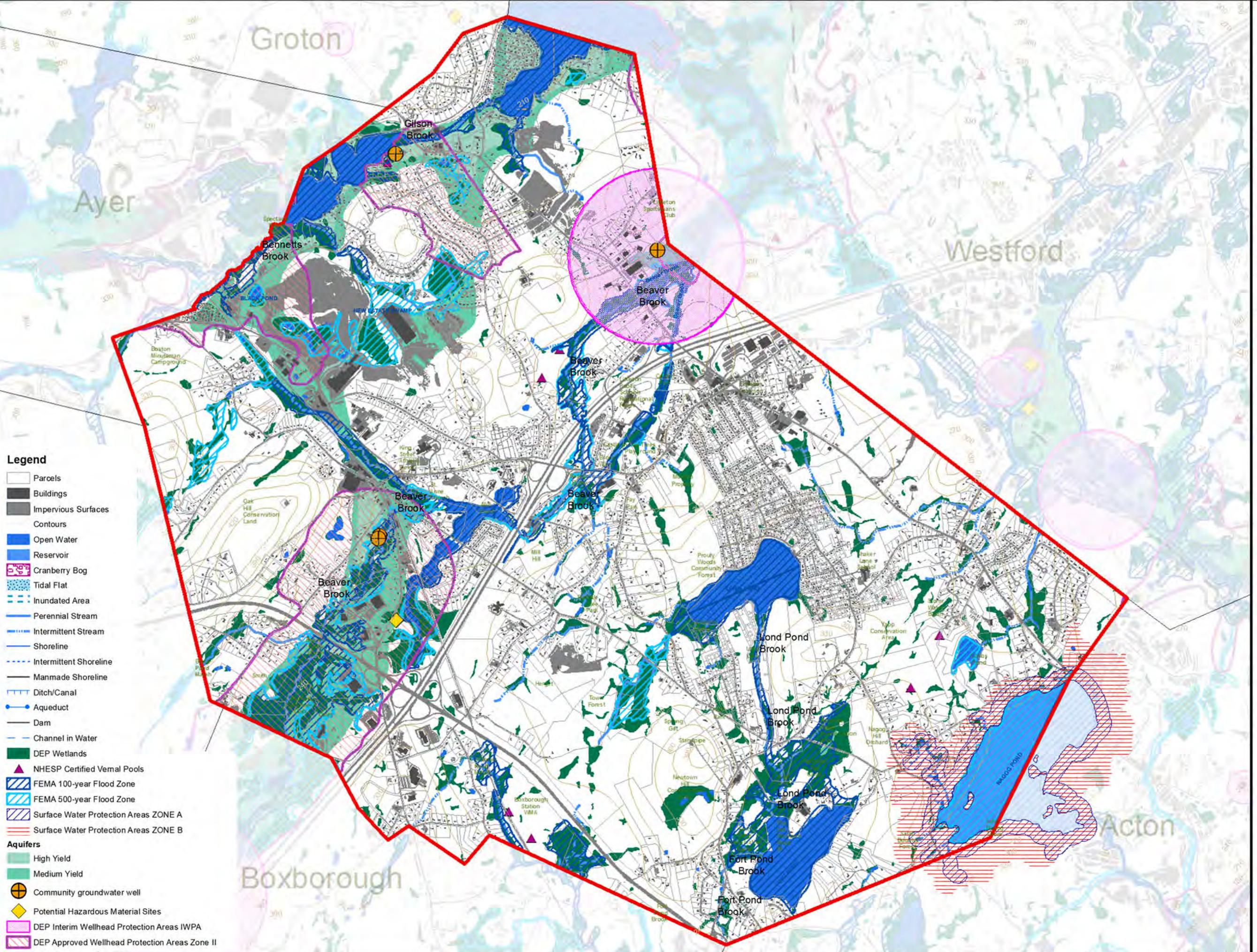
This map is for general planning purposes only.  
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adequate for making legal or zoning boundary  
delineations or delineating natural resource  
areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the  
map.

## Legend

- Parcels
- Buildings
- Impervious Surfaces
- Contours
- Open Water
- Reservoir
- Cranberry Bog
- Tidal Flat
- Inundated Area
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream
- Shoreline
- Intermittent Shoreline
- Manmade Shoreline
- Ditch/Canal
- Aqueduct
- Dam
- Channel in Water
- DEP Wetlands
- NHESP Certified Vernal Pools
- FEMA 100-year Flood Zone
- FEMA 500-year Flood Zone
- Surface Water Protection Areas ZONE A
- Surface Water Protection Areas ZONE B
- Aquifers
- High Yield
- Medium Yield
- Community groundwater well
- Potential Hazardous Material Sites
- DEP Interim Wellhead Protection Areas IWPA
- DEP Approved Wellhead Protection Areas Zone II



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As with most communities, floodplains have historically provided one of the most significant development constraints in Littleton. The 100 year and 500 year FEMA-mapped floodplains in Littleton predictably follow the major stream corridors and low wetlands areas. The largest areas of 100 year and 500 year floodplains coincide with the low wetland areas adjacent to Beaver Brook to the southwest of Mill Pond and to the north of Great Road.

An area of 100-year floodplain borders Benetts Brook and Gilson Brook in the northern part of town and Long Brook, Long Pond and Fort Pond in the southeast of Littleton. These 100 year floodplains become relatively narrow in some areas where the brooks are bounded by higher relief, such as the area to the northeast of Oak Hill or the reach of Long Pond Brook between Newton Hill and Nagog Hill.

A large area of 500-year floodplain surrounds the mapped wetlands of New Estate Swamp to the southwest of Spectacle Pond. Similarly, a large area of 500-year floodplain coincides with the mapped wetlands east of Tower Forest. Nagog Pond and Cobbs Pond are surrounded by FEMA 500-year floodplains.

### **WETLANDS AND VERNAL POOLS**

Continuous wetland areas border many of the major streams and ponds in Littleton. Most notably, Beaver Brook wetlands, flowing southwest to northeast, provide a continuous area of habitat and play a critical role in the subsurface hydrology of the town. Another large and continuous area of wetlands stretches between Fort Pond and Long Pond to the north and Cobbs Pond to the northwest. In addition to these larger continuous mapped wetland areas, a network of smaller distributed wetlands characterizes many areas of town, especially to the south and east of I-495. These are linked with perennial streams in some locations that drain to major ponds and streams in the vicinity.

In addition to mapped wetlands, seven Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) certified and dozens more NHESP-mapped potential vernal pools exist in Littleton. The NHESP defines

**Table 7.1. Littleton Ponds**

Pond Name	Description
Mill Pond	Small Pond located in the center of the Littleton and part of the Beaver Brook drainage, just west of I-495. Bordered by dense residential development and transportation land uses to the north, east, and west. To the south is a continuous area of wetland designated as a NHESP Core Habitat
Spectacle Pond	Large pond/lake in northwest corner of Littleton and extending beyond town line; Bordered by a large and continuous area of forested land and wetlands including a NHESP Core Habitat; Large impervious area nearby to the south
Forge Pond	Large pond/lake in northern tip of Littleton; Extends north beyond the town line; bordered on the west by dense residential development and on east side by wetlands and NHESP Core Habitat
Long Pond	Large pond east of I-495; Located entirely within Littleton; bordered to the north by dense residential development and to the south by forested lands and wetlands
Fort Pond	Large pond in southeast corner of town; located entirely within Littleton; bordered to the north by large continuous wetland associated with Long Pond Brook, including a NHESP Core Habitat
Nagog Pond	
Cobbs Pond	Small pond in eastern Littleton; bordered on western side by a large, continuous forested area designated as a NHESP Core Habitat

Source: Dodson & Flinker.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

vernal pools as "temporary bodies of fresh water that provide important habitat for many vertebrate and invertebrate species." These pools tend to be quite small, fish-free and may dry up at certain times of year.

One certified vernal pool and ten NHESP potential vernal pools border Spectacle Pond. The certified vernal pool is located just south of the community groundwater well on the northeast corner of Spectacle Pond. Two NHESP Certified Vernal Pools are located north of I-495 between Hartwell Avenue and Beaver Brook. Eight more potential vernal pools exist in the surrounding low-lying woodlands. Two more certified pools and six more potential vernal pools are located in the vicinity of Boxborough Station Wildlife Management Area and just north of the MBTA rail line. Finally, two certified vernal pools exist to the west of Cobbs Pond. One of these is just to the south of the end of Old Pickard Lane and another is located in the wooded area between Nagog Hill Road and Cobbs Pond. Eight more potential vernal pools exist in the vicinity of these two certified pools.

## AQUIFERS AND SURFACE WATER RESERVOIRS

Littleton drinking water aquifers and surface water reservoirs are vital natural resources to the town and regionally. Nagog Pond, located partially within Littleton on the Acton/Littleton town line is a significant regional public water supply, serving the Town of Concord. Accordingly, a Surface Water Protection Area is mapped around the edge of Nagog Pond.

Four active drinking water wells exist in Littleton. One of these community wells is located just northeast of Spectacle Pond. Two wells are located next to Whitcomb Ave, just west of Mill Pond. Another well is located west of Beaver Brook near the Littleton/Westford Town Line. DEP Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone I, II, and III) have been recognized on town maps for these wells. Additionally, several areas of open space near the Spectacle Pond and Whitcomb Ave wells have been purchased by the Town for aquifer protection. Finally, a water easement has been purchased by the Town around Cobbs Pond. This area is a potential future well site. Town Zoning requires a special permit for most projects with the Town's Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone.



## Ecological Resources and Biodiversity

The relatively undeveloped low-lying wetlands and stream corridors and adjacent slopes in Littleton are today home to a diverse collection of plant and animal species. These species, whether rare or endangered or not, contribute to the areas' landscape character and quality of life. Relatively continuous stretches of habitat adjacent to major streams, such as the area along Beaver Brook, act as important north-south corridors for wildlife migration associated with climate change. On the other hand, roads and rail corridors like I-495 and the MBTA rail line in Littleton act as significant barriers to migration and fragment habitats.

### VEGETATION

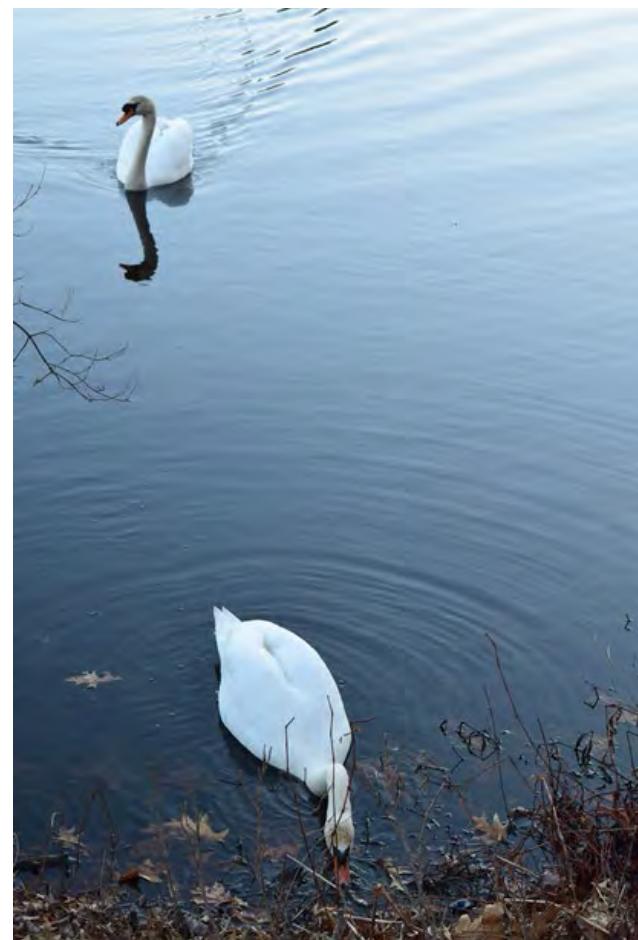
Vegetation in Littleton is largely characterized by second growth forests within areas historically cleared for agriculture. Red oak/white pine forests dominate the landscape, including trees such as red and sugar maple, black and yellow birch, hickory, American beech, ash and eastern hemlock. Wetland vegetation and agricultural crops also cover many areas of undeveloped land in Littleton. Shade trees, such as American elms, also line many roads in Littleton.

As with elsewhere in the state, non-native invasive species are problematic in Littleton, crowding out native species and negatively affecting animal communities that rely on these native plant species. Such species in Littleton include autumn olive, burning bush, buckthorn, bittersweet, phragmites, purple loosestrife, knotweed, multiflora rose and water chestnut. The Littleton Conservation Trust currently partners with the town to monitor and mitigate invasive species in town. In addition to non-native invasive plants, several invasive insects threaten plant communities in Littleton, most notably the Asian Longhorned Beetle.

### RARE SPECIES: ENDANGERED, THREATENED, AND SPECIAL CONCERN

The most comprehensive data on biodiversity and key habitat areas statewide is compiled and distributed by The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. NHESP offers several different assessment tools useful for understanding the key habitats and species within Littleton. For the last thirty years, the NHESP has been charged under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) with protecting Massachusetts rare species, including 176 animals and 256 native plants that are officially listed as Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern in Massachusetts. More recently, NHESP has also expanded their mission to protect priority and exemplary native plant and animal communities.

In Littleton, key animal species include one Endangered bird (Least Bittern, *Ixobrychus exilis*), one Threatened species (Blanding's Turtle), two species of Special Concern (Eastern Box Turtle and Blue-spotted Salamander), and one additional non-listed yet important species identified in Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (Four-toed



## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

Salamander). Barrens Buckmoth is a moth species of special conservation concern found in Littleton. Littleton Rare plant species include Purple Milkweed, which is endangered, and Green Rock Cress, which is threatened.

### KEY HABITAT AREAS

In 2010, the NHESP, with the support of the Nature Conservancy, built upon previous mapping initiatives to provide BioMap2—a critical tool for managing biodiversity statewide and a key source of information about Littleton’s habitat areas and threatened or rare species. The goal of the BioMap2 initiative is “to guide strategic biodiversity conservation in Massachusetts over the next decade by focusing land protection and stewardship on the areas that are most critical for ensuring the long-term persistence of rare and other native species and their habitats, exemplary natural communities, and a diversity of ecosystems”. As such, it focuses on the larger, more intact and more connected landscapes that are important to the whole state.

Biomap2 separates its habitat assessment into two complementary levels of importance. Core Habitat refers to those areas that are “critical for the long-term persistence of rare species...as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth.” Protection of these areas is particularly important for conservation of specific biodiversity elements. Critical Natural Landscape identifies large intact natural areas that are not significantly impacted by development. Protecting these areas will support ecological systems, maintain connectivity among habitats, and provide buffers around core habitats. The assessment recognizes that core habitats will need room to grow and change in response to long-term changes in climate as well as anthropogenic disturbances.

**Table 7.2. Rare, Endangered, Threatened Species**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Description
Least Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	Endangered	Heron-like birds; sensitive to disturbance; nest in cattail marshes
Blanding’s Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Threatened	Medium sized turtle; Lives in seasonal pools, marshes, shrub swamps, forest, and open uplands; Overwinters in wetlands; Feeds and mates in vernal pools and shrub swamps
Eastern Box Turtle	<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Special Concern	Terrestrial turtle; inhabits dry and moist woodlands
Blue Spotted Salamander	<i>Ambystoma laterale</i>	Special Concern	Inhabit upland forests in burrows; in late winter-early spring adults breed in vernal pools and fish free wetlands areas. Larvae metamorphose in late summer/early fall
Four-toed Salamander	<i>Hemidactylum scutatum</i>	non-listed SWAP	Inhabits forest areas near swamps, bogs, marshes, vernal pools and other fish-free waters used for breeding. Breeding sites include pit-and-mound topography with sphagnum moss cover
Barrens Buckmoth	<i>Hemileuca maia</i>	Special Concern	
Purple Milkweed	<i>Asclepias purpurascens</i>	Endangered	Milkweed plant characterized by its unusual purple flowers.
Green Rock Cress	<i>Arabis missouriensis</i>	Threatened	Member of the mustard family; inhabits ledges and rocky woodlands

Source: BioMap2: Littleton (2012) and NHESP Town List and Species Viewer

# Map 7.3

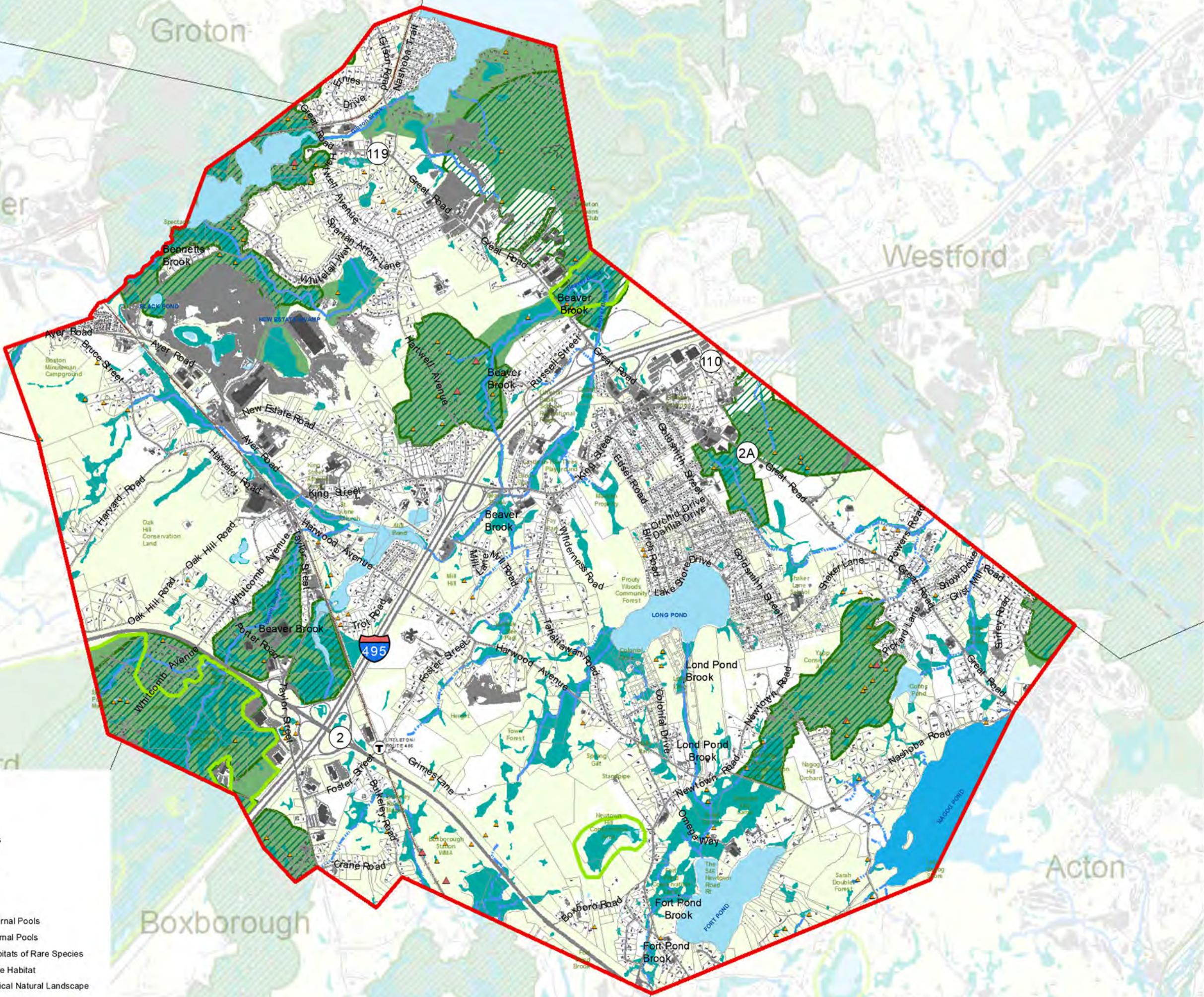
## Ecological Resources and Biodiversity

## *Littleton, Massachusetts*

# DODSON & FLINKER

Date: 7/21/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, Mass  
EOQEA, USGS

This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations or delineating natural resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the





BioMap 2 recognizes 23 percent of Littleton's total area as either a Core Habitat or Critical Natural Landscape. This includes 2,166 acres designated as Core Habitat and 396 acres designated as Critical Natural Landscape.

#### ● **Beaver Brook Habitat Areas**

The largest areas of Core Habitat in Littleton lie west of I-495 within the Beaver Brook drainage. These areas are characterized by vernal pools and wetlands with surrounding pit-and-mound topography and adjacent upland forests. Subsets of these Core Habitats areas are additionally recognized by NHESP as Critical Natural Landscapes because of their relatively limited development impacts.

In the southern reach of Beaver Brook, south of King Street, are two areas identified as core habitat areas: Core 2309 and 2262, bisected in Littleton by I-495. Core 2309, which extends beyond the Littleton border to the south, consists of 2,610 total acres of habitat for a number of species, including some of conservation concern such as adult and juvenile Blue-spotted salamanders, Four-toed Salamanders, Blanding's Turtle, and Eastern Box turtle.

A subset of Core 2309, south of Captain Isaac Davis Highway, is additionally recognized as a Critical Natural Landscape, CNL 1082. CNL 1082 is categorized as a "Landscape Block." Landscape blocks are defined by the NHESP as "large areas of intact predominantly natural vegetation, consisting of contiguous forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds, as well as coastal habitats such as barrier beaches and salt marshes." Core 2262, to the east of I-495 also extends beyond the town border to the south. This area of 338 total acres is home to a species of conservation concern: Blue-spotted salamanders.

To the north of King Street along Beaver Brook is a habitat area identified by NHESP as Core 2416. This habitat area extends beyond the Littleton town boundary to the north and northwest to Forge Pond. Core 2416 is home to all five species of conservation concern in Littleton: Blue-spotted salamander, Four-toed Salamander, Blanding's Turtle, American Bittern, and Least Bittern. A subset of this area is also designated as a Critical Natural Landscape, CNL 1152. CNL 1152 is described as an Aquatic Core Buffer—a protective upland buffer around wetlands and streams.

#### ● **Spectacle Pond Habitat Areas**

Another large area of Core Habitat, Core 2887, lies to the west of Beaver Brook, adjacent to Spectacle Pond and extending beyond the town boundary to the west. While only a small part of this Core Habitat exists in Littleton, the total continuous area of this Core Habitat is quite large: 50,459 acres.

This area is connected to the Nashua River and its tributaries the Nissitissit River, Squannacook River, Unkety Brook and is notable for its intact and development-free forests, wetlands, aquatic habitats, vernal pools, priority natural communities and species of conservation concern. Rare and uncommon species within this larger area include forty-one species of turtles, dragonflies, freshwater mussels, salamanders, plants and other species. The rare Blanding's Turtle inhabits almost all of this habitat area, including the area around Spectacle Pond. Within Littleton, this area includes 10 NHESP-mapped potential vernal pools and one certified vernal pool.

Unfortunately, this Core Habitat in Littleton also borders a large area of industrial land—the largest continuous area of impervious land in the town. Impervious areas are problematic for stream and wetland health because they increase the quantity and flashiness of storm-water runoff, which has the potential to incise stream channels and modify riparian water tables. These changes to watersheds associated with impervious surfaces can, in turn, negatively affect the plant and animal communities that rely on streams and riparian wetlands.

#### ● **Long Pond/Fort Pond/Cobbs Pond Habitat Area**

East of I-495 in Littleton in the vicinity of Fort Pond is another area of relatively continuous, undeveloped forestland and wetland. The northern half of this habitat area, extending to the shore of Cobbs pond, is designated by NHESP as a Core Habitat, Core 2298. This 220-acre area is home to adult and juvenile Blue-spotted Salamanders, which live in upland forests during most of the year and migrate during late winter or early spring to breed in vernal pools and fish-free areas within wetlands. To the northwest of Fort Pond, in the Newton Hill Conservation Area, is a small area designated as a Critical Natural Landscape, CNL 2064. CNL 2064, classified as a Wetland Core Buffer, represents an area of intact forest land surround several small ponds and wetland areas.

Further to the north, two smaller areas of Core Habitat in Littleton actually connect to one larger continuous area of Core Habitat, Core 2366. Core 2366 is a 2,371 total acre habitat area that features important wetland and aquatic habitats, as well as species of conservation concern. Species in this habitat area in Littleton include Adult, juvenile Blue-spotted Salamanders, Four-toed salamanders, Blanding's Turtle. Outside of Littleton this core is known to be home to Toothcup—a small wetland annual in the Loosestrife family and Eastern Ribbon Snakes. Core 2366 is related to and would be continuous with Core 2416, the continuous habitat area in the northern reach of Beaver Brook, except for I-495, which divides these habitat areas just to the north of the town line.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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### **Sustaining High Water Quality**

Protecting Littleton's lakes and streams and maintaining the quality and quantity of water supplies were among the top priorities for residents in a recent town-wide survey.<sup>1</sup> Management of surface waters relies primarily upon dedicated volunteers like the Clean Lakes Commission. There is wide recognition that the health of surface water bodies and subsurface aquifers depends on the health of the entire watershed, but most attention and oversight occurs literally at the downstream end of the system. The lack of complete and consistent data for many of these issues tends to focus attention on issues that are the most apparent, such as siltation and invasive species, even though these problems may be symptoms of larger watershed issues that are never addressed.

In addition to the historic issues of pollution from factories, runoff from streets, and nitrogen-leaching septic systems, water quality will likely be affected by climate change.<sup>2</sup> While the amount of annual precipitation in the northeast is projected to increase, it will be less consistent, with more intense storms driven by warmer temperatures and a higher atmospheric moisture content. Rising temperatures will also foster longer periods of drought in the summer months, which will be exacerbated by earlier spring warming and later fall cooling. Reduced snow cover will cause forests to dry out during those same seasons, leading to increased danger from forest fires. Short winters and less snow will also impact stream flows, with streams running higher in the winter and running dry in the summer. The increase in fires and floods will disturb vegetative cover, leaving soils more vulnerable to erosion.

All of these changes have already been documented, and are projected to continue, but because of the natural variability of weather it is impossible to predict when impacts to water supplies will be felt. What is clear, however, is that the watershed systems that provide drinking water and protect homes, businesses and infrastructure from flooding are going to have a harder time providing those critical services to communities.

<sup>1</sup> 2016 Littleton Open Space and Recreation Plan, Section 7, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Projections based on the Massachusetts Climate Change Adaptation Report. Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Adaptation Advisory Council, 2011.

## □ Habitat Fragmentation

In the last fifty years, development has spread from Littleton's historic centers across the countryside, lining many roads with house lots and separating open space areas from each other. Railroad tracks and roadways, especially Route 2 and Interstate 495, act as linear barriers that restrict movement and create hazardous crossings. This fragmentation process divides populations of native plants and animals and makes each part more vulnerable to the short-term impacts of floods, drought and disease, as well as long-term climate change. If a particular patch of habitat is large enough, it can sustain a successful breeding population of a particular plant or animal species, but if these populations are cut off they can become genetically isolated and become less resilient to disease or predation. If food or water supplies run short, it can be impossible for them to move in search of better habitat.

Fragmentation also affects the human use of the landscape. As farms get divided up and active agriculture gets hemmed in by development it can become harder to farm efficiently. Existing informal trails that people have used for generations suddenly get blocked by a row of houses in a new subdivision, reducing recreational opportunities. Views from the road are blocked by development of frontage lots, fragmenting the town's visual character.

## □ Invasive Species

Non-native invasive species such as purple loosestrife, knotweed and water chestnut have become ubiquitous across the state, crowding out native species and impacting the animal populations that rely on them for food and shelter. Many invasives are adapted to streams and wetlands, using these natural corridors to spread quickly throughout a watershed and hampering efforts at eradication. Invasive insect pests such as the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid and Asian Longhorned Beetle are not limited to terrestrial movement, able to fly short distances or piggybacking on birds (or truckloads of wood).

For these reasons, once invasive species become established across a large area it's harder to get rid of them. Mitigation measures need to be planned strategically and pursued with an understanding of how invasives grow, breed and spread across the landscape. The Littleton Conservation Trust already works with the town on the issue, but the scope of the problem may warrant a more intensive effort at survey and mitigation.

## □ Littleton Quarry

Aggregate Industries currently operates a rock quarry in Littleton off Ayer Road near Distribution Drive. While the quarry is still economically viable, and holds a fifty-year lease on the land and operations, there is always the possibility that change could occur sooner than expected. The Town has had a Quarry Committee in place since February 2010, and should consider re-energizing the Committee to request an update on the status of the mining operations at the quarry. It may also be worth having a discussion with residents to determine what should happen with the quarry property if and when mining operations are complete. This could pose as an opportunity for the Town to think about the quarry property as a possible natural resource amenity.

**The fragmentation of land from the development process divides populations of native plants and animals and makes each part more vulnerable to the short-term impacts of floods, drought and disease, as well as long-term climate change.**

## □ Community Resilience

- Protecting Littleton's natural resources contributes to the Town's resiliency in a number of ways including:
- Sustaining and improving water quality which is a benefit to the natural environment, wildlife, and residents who rely on safe, clean, and reliable drinking water.
- Minimizing disruption to natural ecosystems whenever possible helps to protect wildlife habitat, and promotes residents' wellness by increasing opportunities to experience nature.
- Controlling invasive species helps to maintain a balance in nature which can help to sustain the health of the ecosystem in the long term.
- Evaluating the potential impacts of climate change can help the Town better plan and adapt to changing climatic conditions and their effects on other natural and man-made systems. This evaluation and planning could lead to specific projects that Town may wish to undertake to adapt systems to future changes in conditions.
- Increasing awareness around best practices for reducing stormwater runoff and pollution will help to protect the natural environment.

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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**Natural Resource Goal: To maintain Littleton's small-town character as the town continues to develop through stewardship of its natural resources and open space, forests, working farms, and lakes.**

- 1. Develop specific criteria describing the town's priorities for acquiring open space, and look for opportunities to acquire land or conservation restrictions that help connect natural, cultural and recreational lands to form continuous open space corridors.**
  - While the conservation commission, water department and other town entities have clear mandates to protect and enhance open space, there is no shared list of criteria stating the town's goals for conservation. As a result, when properties come on the market the town loses critical time deciding whether they are worth protecting. Building on town-wide mapping and analysis prepared for the 2016 Opens Space and Recreation Plan and this Master Plan, the town should identify potential parcels of interest based on clearly-stated criteria. This should certainly include preservation of key natural resource systems, such as river and stream networks and their associated wetlands and uplands, as well as surface and subsurface water supplies.
  - Existing and potential agricultural lands should also be identified and evaluated for their resource value. The town should consider prioritizing key linking parcels that serve to connect these systems and maintain their functionality.
- 2. Prepare and implement a comprehensive strategy for protecting surface and subsurface water supplies and the watersheds that feed them.**
  - Protection of the town's surface and subsurface water bodies is pursued by several departments and commissions, including the Littleton Electric Light and Water Department, the Conservation Commission and the Clean Lakes Committee. These include features such as (but not limited to) lakes, ponds, streams, and aquifers. Several additional boards and departments have been involved in managing the town's responsibilities under the 2016 EPA Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems

(MS4) permitting requirements, which go into effect July 1, 2017. Currently the town has Aquifer and Water Resource Protection zoning districts with the purpose of protecting drinking water supplies, but the boundaries and standards required by the bylaw may need to be adjusted (see Land Use recommendations). The town should consider a more comprehensive, watershed-based approach to planning that would include all of these entities in a process of mapping and scientific assessment in order to establish a consensus-based approach to managing water resources.

**3. Explore opportunities to leverage CPA funds and other budget sources through an open space acquisition bond.**

- Use of the town's bonding authority could be an appropriate way to extend available funding for open space acquisition. This approach could help meet needs that arise suddenly as lands come on the market and/or are subject to the town's right-of-first-refusal under Chapter 61.

**4. Revise the Town's Open Space Development (OSD) bylaw to remove Special Permit requirements and provide incentives to landowners and developers.**

- The Littleton OSD bylaw allows developers to cluster the same number of homes allowed in a conventional subdivision on smaller lots, setting aside a portion of the property as protected open space. This has been used to guide the private development process at the Gray Farm, and elsewhere. More developers would be likely to take advantage of the bylaw if the Special Permit requirement were removed, levelling the playing field with the conventional development option. Removing the special permit should be considered a high priority because Littleton's OSD bylaw is similar to another community's zoning that was invalidated by the Massachusetts Appeals Court in 2008. The Town should also consider providing meaningful incentives to landowners and developers who help meet the town's open space goals through the OSD process.

**5. Partner with the school department to involve Littleton Public Schools in nature education, maintenance of trails and wildlife blinds, and educational programming in town conservation lands.**

Nature education was pioneered in Massachusetts, and continues to be a focus in the work of Mass Audubon and many local land trusts. Where a staffed local sanctuary or land trust property is not present, however, there's an opportunity for local schools to take the lead.

- Robust testing and curriculum requirements often leave little time or energy in teacher schedules to plan and implement nature education in the field – successful programs often provide mini-grants to teachers to conduct field trips or after school programs.
- Long-term relationship building is key to building programs that last – linking teachers to town board members and staff, as well as getting schools to adopt particular conservation areas or features within them.
- Teaching children to be the future stewards of the environment is an important investment that helps to ensure the future preservation of the Town's natural resources.

**6. Evaluate the impact on climate change on natural resources and water supplies and draw up appropriate mitigation policies and plans. Establish open space corridors and riparian buffers that anticipate future increases in temperature and precipitation.**

The warmer, wetter climate forecast for the region will require many plant and animal communities to either adapt in place, move, or die out. Enhancing the resilience of Littleton's ecosystems may require more active management of forests and other open space, as well as expansion of protected areas to provide more habitat and buffers for stressed populations of native species.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

- Adopting techniques to reduce stormwater runoff and protecting open space buffers along river and stream corridors can help the town reduce impacts from more intense storms and precipitation events.
- An approach pioneered by Nature Conservancy recognizes that as conditions change, many plant and animal species will need to move north to survive. Linking existing protected land into broad open space corridors can allow for these regional population shifts.
- Consider partnering with neighboring communities to develop a regional approach to address the impacts of climate change on the area's natural resources and bio-diversity.

## **7. Establish a training and education program for site contractors, landscapers, facilities managers, and others to learn about best practices for reducing stormwater runoff and pollution, dealing with invasive species, reducing the use of toxic pesticides and herbicides, and maintaining lands in a way that enhances protection of native species.**

Best practices for managing land and dealing with pollution and other threats are constantly changing and improving. Local contractors and facilities managers are on the front line of dealing with these issues, and collectively can have a much greater impact than town staff.

- An effective program will focus on real-world problems and solutions, demonstrated using local sites and case studies.

# 8 Open Space & Recreation

## OVERVIEW



### Relationship to Master Plan Goals

Similar to the discussion in the Natural Resources element of the Master Plan, open space and recreation amenities are extremely important to the residents of Littleton. Over the last ten to fifteen years the Town has experienced an increase in amount of development taking place on what was previously vacant land or agricultural land. Residents were accustomed to scenic views along many of the roadways leading in and out of town, which quickly began to evolve as properties changed hands and development occurred. These changes sparked discussions throughout the Master Plan process about how to protect and preserve the elements of Littleton people consider central to maintaining the character of the place. Open space and agricultural land ranked near the top. Going forward, the Town should determine a process for prioritizing land that should be protected and preserved should the opportunity arise and action is needed. This prioritization activity will provide a vehicle for the Town to determine if funds should be spent on acquisition/preservation, or save funding for a future acquisition that may be more important.

### Key Policy Recommendations for Open Space and Recreation

- The acquisition, protection, and management of open space resources in Littleton was one of the most heavily discussed topic areas throughout the Master Plan process. Residents value open space, and consider it to be a primary piece of protecting the Town's character. Going forward, the Town should engage in a process that looks at prioritizing open spaces that are not currently under protection. This will help with future decision making and financial resource allocation if and when parcels come up for purchase.
- The Town is currently undertaking a Comprehensive Analysis of Recreation Facilities and Fields which will highlight areas where investment is needed. The Town should consider the results of that analysis and make strategic investments to support the continued operation of recreation programs in Littleton.
- There are two key components to the protection and preservation of open space and agricultural lands in Littleton. The first is the acquisition and/or protection of the resource itself. Littleton, compared to many other communities, has had success acquiring and protecting land. The second component is maintaining, managing, and programming the land that is under Town control to ensure it continues to be a value added to the community. Throughout the process residents have noted that the Town could do a better job with the maintenance and management of town-owned open spaces. The Master Plan recommends that the Town creates individual management plans for town-owned open space and agricultural lands to determine the best use of these assets and to make sure these assets are maintained over time.

## Key Findings

- About 55 percent of Littleton's land area is in forest, agricultural or recreational land use.
- About 15 percent of Littleton's land area has been permanently protected.
- The Littleton Conservation Commission, Open Space and Recreation Plan Implementation Committee and non-profit Littleton Conservation Trust are the leaders in local conservation.

## INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

Littleton is blessed by an abundance of open space. Agricultural fields, woodlands, trails, parks, lakes and waterways all contribute to the town's rural features and visual appeal while protecting natural resources, including wildlife habitats, wetlands, and water supplies. Whether these lands remain in their natural state or are farmed and managed, protection of these spaces plays a vital role in preserving Littleton's rich quality of life.

While about 15 percent of Littleton's total acreage has been permanently protected and another 15 percent is made up of protected wetlands and waterbodies, at least 40 percent of the town remains in forest, farm, or recreational uses. These areas remain vulnerable to future development or other changes in use or management that may have negative impacts. Some of it is undevelopable due to steep slopes, soil conditions, or other factors. Some is part of larger properties that remain vacant for one reason or another, or have been partially developed. Some is in active use for agriculture or forestry, and will remain undeveloped as long as the owners are willing to forego the payday that comes with the "final crop" of house lots.

The purpose of this chapter is to build on the 2016 Open Space Plan, especially by exploring further the use and management of open space and recreational lands and exploring opportunities for additional conservation and recreational development. This element will also focus on strategies to link planning for open space and recreation to other elements of the plan, both in terms of how it contributes to growth and economic development and how to best manage its impact on town services and finances.

### Defining "Open Space"

The term "open space" is sometimes used to refer only to those parcels that are permanently protected, such as town conservation land or state forests and parks. For the purpose of this plan, "open space" will be used in the broader sense to include any "undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interest," whether or not it is protected.<sup>1</sup>

As described in Chapter 2 and summarized in Table 8.1, there are many kinds of open space in Littleton, which have been mapped over time as part of state GIS mapping of land use and land cover. Available on Mass GIS going back to 1971, these maps give us a snapshot of how much land is devoted to partic-

### In this Chapter

- Inventory the Town's open space and recreation resources, and the organizations responsible for their protection and upkeep.
- Describe the opportunities and challenges Littleton is facing in protecting open space resources and maintaining recreation fields and facilities.
- Recommend ways the Town could go about protecting and managing open space.
- Recommend ways to utilize public awareness and programming to increase the utilization of open space and recreation facilities across Littleton.

<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook, page 3. This is the approach favored by the Division of Conservation Services guidance for open space planning.

**Table 8.1. Land Use Change since 1971**

Land use	1971 (acres)	Present (acres)	% Change Since 1971
Forest	5401	5668.1	4.95
Non-Forested Wetland	564.4	520.66	-7.75
Open Land	271.9	165.03	-39.31
Transitional	78.9	132.63	68.13
Brushland/Successional	0	50.73	N/A
Water	581.7	587.37	0.98
Cropland	1532.7	516.97	-66.27
Pasture	197.1	144.39	-26.73
Orchard	257.2	92.59	-64
Nursery	0	38.9	N/A
Active Recreation	32.4	116.12	258.57
Lands developed for residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, and related use.	2,304.5	3168.1	37.47

Source: Mass GIS through 2005;  
2016 update estimated by Dodson & Flinker, Inc.

ular uses at a given point in time. Trends among the various open space uses can be thus be compared. Areas in forest, wetland, water bodies and other natural or transitional uses have increased by 227 acres, or 3.3%, since 1971. Areas in active agriculture had declined by almost 1200 acres, or about 60%, in the same time period. Areas used for active recreation, including ball fields, playgrounds, summer camps, equestrian centers, have increased by 250%, to a total of 116 acres. All developed land, meanwhile, including homes, businesses, industry, transportation, mining and related uses, has increased from 2305 acres to 3168 acres since 1971, a change of about 37.5%.

### Open Space Inventory

From a land use perspective, about 30 percent of Littleton's 11,200 acres has been developed, while about 70 percent remains as open space. Some of this land is in a natural state, comprised of undisturbed forest, wetlands and waterbodies, and some is actively managed for forestry, agriculture, active recreation or other human uses. As Littleton continues to grow and change, there will be continued conversion of open space to residential, commercial, industrial and other uses. This is most likely on privately-owned land that is not actively used for farming, recreation or productive open space use, but even public ownership does not assure that land will never be developed. A little more than 2000 acres is owned by the town, non-profit, or private entities and used primarily for conservation or recreational

**Table 8.2 Littleton Conservation and Recreation Facility Acreage**

Facility Type	Acres	Percent
Town-Owned Active Recreation Facilities	19.21	0.94%
School-Based Recreation Facilities	87.04	4.27%
Town-Owned Passive Recreation Areas	0.37	0.02%
Town-Owned Conservation Land	909.83	44.64%
Other Littleton Town-Owned Land	143.32	7.03%
Publicly Owned Parcels for Water Resource Protection	118.2	5.80%
State-Owned Lands	79.67	3.91%
Land Trust and Other Non-Profit Open Space Lands	390.07	19.14%
Private Owners of Open Space/Recreation Sites	143.34	7.03%
Other	140.94	6.91%
Potential	6.25	0.31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2038.24</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Littleton 2016 Conservation and Recreation Plan

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

purposes (Table 8.2). Of that, some 1600 acres is permanently protected (Table 8.3). This comprises about 15% of the town's entire area.

## Conservation Leadership

In order to plan effectively for future conservation and recreation enhancements, it is important to note that several public and private entities have been, and continue to be instrumental in protecting open space in Littleton. These groups will take the lead in implementing the strategies that come out of this plan:

- **Littleton Open Space and Recreation Plan Implementation Committee (OSRPIC).** The Committee was established in 2002 to develop and implement the 2003 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Since that time the Committee has played an active role in facilitating the acquisition and management of open space and recreation lands. They led the planning process and drafted much of the 2016 Little Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- **Littleton Conservation Commission.** The Conservation Commission was established by the 1961 Annual Town Meeting, following enactment of a 1957 Massachusetts law that gave cities and towns the authority to promote, develop and protect natural resources, including wetlands. Staffed by a conservation agent and made up of by seven regular members and one associate member, the Conservation Commission enforces the state wetland protection act. The Commission also manages Littleton's conservation lands and works closely with other town boards and commissions to plan and implement open space protection.
- **Littleton Conservation Trust.** Established in 1962, the Littleton Conservation Trust was formed by local residents in response to changes brought about by suburban growth and the opening of Route 495. Their mission is "to promote Littleton's rural character; to preserve its water, plant, and wildlife resources and its unique views; and to provide environmental education." (LCT website). They manage more than 300 acres of land with public trails, and help maintain trails on more than 800 acres of Town-owned conservation land.
- **New England Forestry Foundation.** Founded in 1946, the regional non-profit New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) owns and manages approximately 23,000 acres of land throughout New England. In 2003 they purchased the 111 acre Prouty property in Littleton, and the main house now serves as their headquarters. The Prouty Woods Community Forest has walking trails to Long Pond and the summit of Wilderness Hill which are maintained by the Littleton Conservation Trust and linked to the town-wide trail system. The property is also home to the 1.5 acre Littleton Community Farm, established in 2015. (NEFF website)

## Recreation Facilities & Programs

### Inventory of Recreation Facilities

- **Long Lake Beach.** The beach is open year round, however Lifeguards are only on duty from the end of June through mid-August, depending on staff availability. In the summer season the beach is open Monday through Fridays from 10am – 6pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 11am – 6pm. Parking passes are required in



# Map 8.1

## Open Space and Recreation Resources

Littleton, Massachusetts

DODSON & FLINKER  
Landscape Architecture and Planning

Date: 7/22/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, Mass  
EOOEAA, USGS

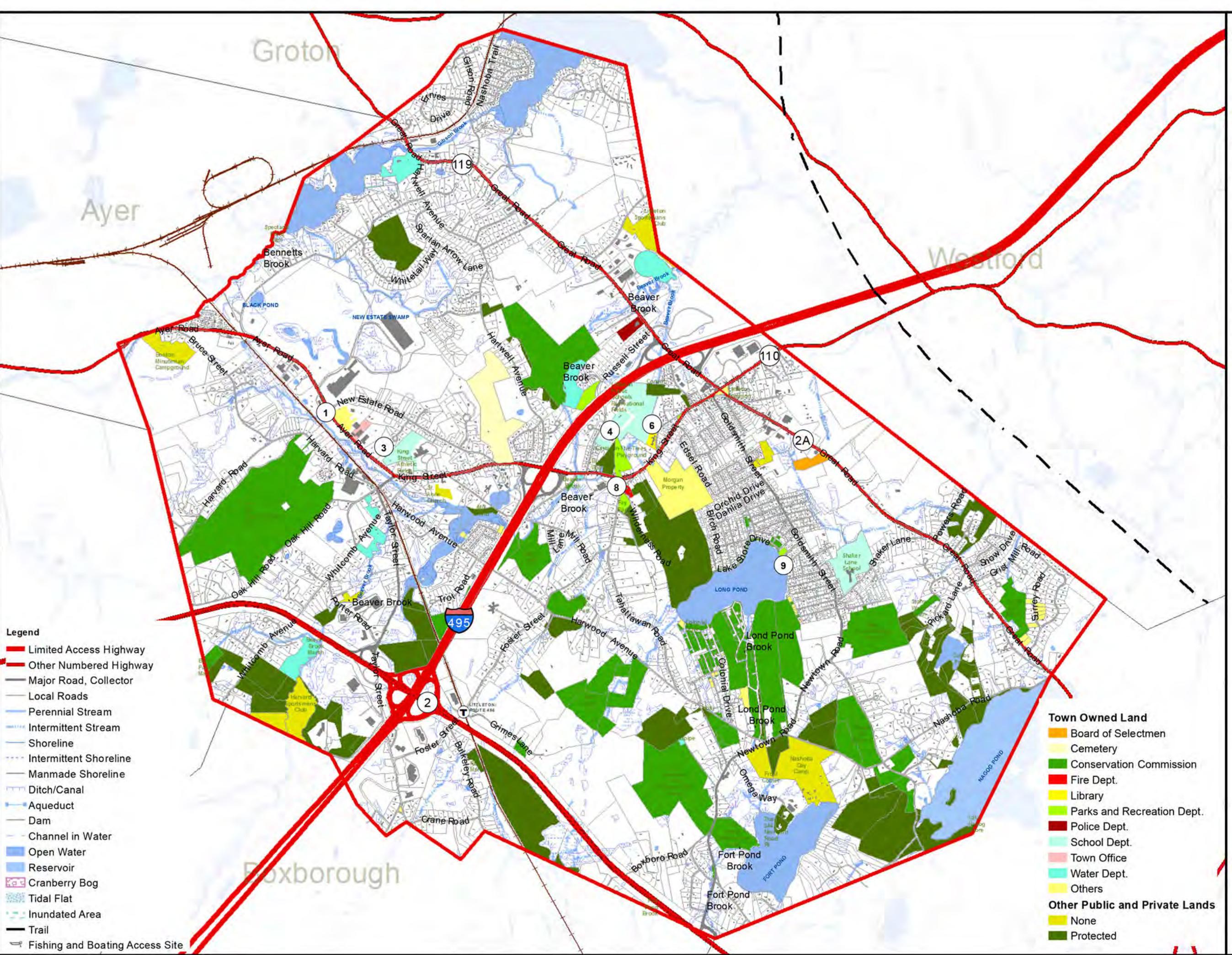
This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations or delineating natural resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the

### Recreation Sites

- 1 Koerper Field
- 2 St. Anne Field
- 3 High School Fields
- 4 Russell Street Fields
- 5 Shaker Lane Fields
- 6 Shattuck Street behind Town Hall
- 7 Castle in the Trees
- 8 Fay Park
- 9 Town Beach



0 1/2 1  
Miles





# Map 8.2

# Chapter 61

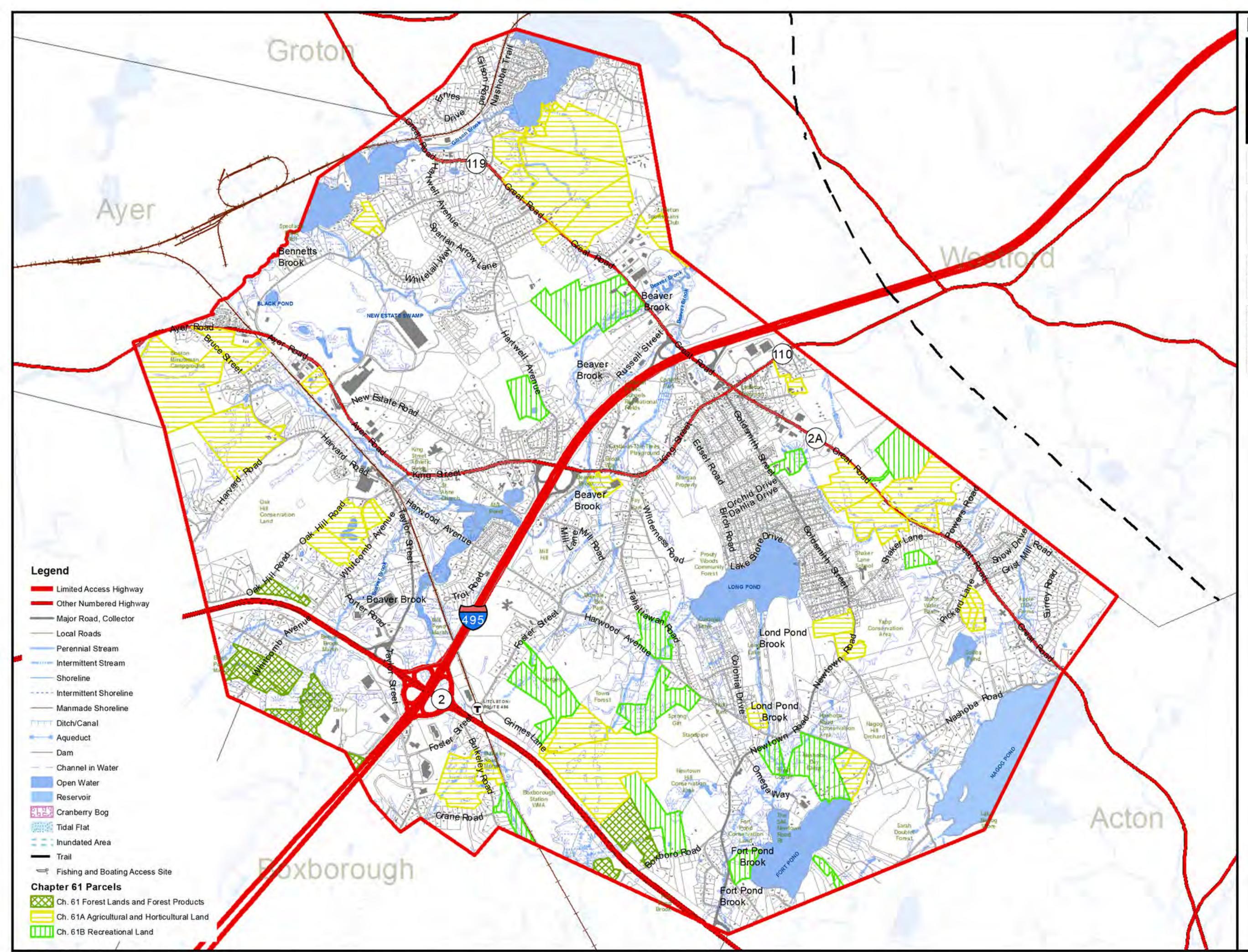
# Parcels

## *Littleton, Massachusetts*

# DODSON & FLINKER

Date: 7/21/2016  
Source: MassDOT, Town of Littleton, Mass  
EOOEA, USGS

This map is for general planning purposes only. The data used to create the map are not adequate for making legal or zoning boundary determinations or delineating natural resource areas. Exercise caution when interpreting the





the summer season. Daily, as well as season passes can be purchased by both residents and non-residents at the Parks, Recreation and Community Education office or at the Snack Hut at Long Lake Beach. There is a bath house with restrooms and an outdoor shower, picnic area, playground, swing set, seasonal access to canoe, kayak, paddle board, and sailboat rentals; swim and sail boat lessons, and a dock to separate the shallow swimming area. There is also a state boat ramp for boats that have engines with 20 horsepower or less to launch. Fishing is also permitted on the lake with a fishing license.

- **Fay Park.** Fay Park is under the care, custody, and control of the Parks and Recreation Commission, who can issue permits for public and private events. It is located on Foster Street next to the Fire station. It has a gazebo and grassy open space available for picnicking, concerts, and events, and a kid's play area with swings, seesaw, etc.
- **Park at 300 King Street.** Located at 300 King St., this park hosts the Castle in the Trees Playground, which was rebuilt in September, 2016 by The Littleton Children's Fund (LCF, formed by members of the community) and maintained by the town. It is a playground especially designed for children ages 5-12. Aidan's Playground was built next to the Castle Playground in memory of Aidan Mallio, who drowned in July 2012. Aidan's playground is for ages 2-5. There are three recently renovated basketball courts as well as a renovated asphalt walking trail.
- **Koerper Field.** Located on Ayer Road, this soccer field is strictly for youth organizations unless the PRCE Commission grants use.
- **St. Anne Field.** Leased from Saint Anne Parish (A Parish of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston) and located on 75 King St., with 2 soccer fields on the church's property.
- **High School Fields.** Located on King St., there are 2 tennis courts, 1 baseball field, 1 softball field, 1 soccer field, and 1 lacrosse field.
- **Russell Street Fields/Alumni Field.** Located by the Middle School on Russell Street, this space has 1 track, 1 football field, 1 softball field, 1 lacrosse field, and 1 baseball field. The outfield is also used to provide 6-multipurpose fields (often used for soccer). There is also a children's playground on this site.
- **Shaker Lane Fields.** Located by Shaker Lane Elementary School, there are 2 baseball fields and one softball field. There is also a children's playground on this site.
- **Shattuck Street.** Located directly behind Town Hall, there are 2 tennis courts and 1 baseball field for public use. Sledding is also a popular activity on this site.
- **Bumblebee Park.** Bumblebee Park is located on the corner of Foster St. and Harwood Ave. and has a wooded, hilly area for hiking. There is a small hill that generations of children have used for winter sledding, which is only a small part of the 15.5-acre town-owned conservation land. There are two trails; one is a newly renovated, 15 to 20-minute walk loop trail with some interesting features including Wild Thyme, ducks in a small pond, old drainage ditches near the pond, a very old slab culvert, deer trails, birds, a Bedford cliff, a red maple marsh, and some beautiful flowering



## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

dogwood trees in the spring. There is a parking area with a 10-acre grass and woodland area owned by the Littleton Conservation Trust. Bumblebee Park is maintained by Land Stewards of the Littleton Conservation Trust.

- **Cloverdale Conservation Area.** Located along Great Road between Grist Mill Road and Surrey Drive, the Cloverdale area offers a short 0.6 mile loop trail for a short walk, or to cross country ski amongst the woodlands. The trail eventually reaches an eleven-acre meadow providing scenic views.
- **Conant Park.** Located off White Street near Littleton Lumber Company, Conant Park is a 6.7-acre area offering walking and hiking trails in an otherwise busy location. The trail takes users through a mixture of forest land and swamp areas and connects into the Two Brothers Trail.
- **George and Lucy Yapp Conservation Land.** This 53.6-acre conservation area is located off Newtown Road, south of Shaker Lane. There are four interconnecting trails which provide hours of walking in the woodlands and connect to Sarah Doublet Forest. Along the way users will find Farm Pond, numerous bedrock and boulder outcrops, meadows, and vernal pools.
- **Hartwell Family Memorial Preserve.** The Hartwell Preserve is located off Hartwell Avenue approximately 0.6 miles from Route 2A. The preserve contains several marked trails, as well as unmarked trails providing a variety of walking options. Sites along the trails include Beaver Brook, the Old Stone Slab Bridge, fields, swamps, woodlands, and marshes.
- **Long Lake Park.** Located on the westerly side of Newtown Road near the intersection of Harwood Avenue, Long Lake Park is a 180 acre park offering over four miles of walking trails. The property abuts what was once a 500 acre Nashobah Indian Reserve. There are stone mounds in several places on the parcel which may have been related to previous Native American inhabitants.
- **Mary Shepherd Open Space.** This property located at the intersection of Snow Terrace and Woodridge Road has a one-mile trail looping around the Mary Shepherd Estates subdivision.
- **Mill Hill.** This 24.4-acre property located south of Mill Road near Parlee lumber mill contains several easy walking trails. One of the trails terminates atop the hill where there are three picnic tables.
- **Morgan Land.** On the south side of King Street opposite the Congregational Church, the Morgan Land is a 50-acre property with one linear trail. The trail traversing the Morgan Land is part of the larger Two Brothers Trail and connects to Long Lake.
- **Nagog Hill Orchard.** This eighty-three-acre orchard located off Nagog Hill Road includes several walking trails through the property, as well as connections to the Sarah Doublet Forest and the Cobb Memorial Forest.
- **Newtown Hill.** Located off Newtown Road, this ninety-eight-acre parcel contains two short walking trails. One leads from the field to the marsh and edge of the pond, while the second trail leads from the 36-inch beech tree to the water tower.



- **Oak Hill.** Oak Hill is located on Oak Hill Road and has a wooded area with 3 principal trails hiking trails that add up to approximately seven miles. Some features include Lookout Rock, Tophet Chasm, historical stagecoach roads, and an electronics laboratory.
- **Prouty Woods.** Located along Wilderness Road (off Foster Street) between Faye Park and the Fire Stations, this 107-acre property contains a piece of the Two Brothers Trail that connects to Long Lake.
- **Robert and Emily Cobb Memorial Forest.** Located on Nashoba Road, Cobb Memorial Forest is a forty-seven-acre linear property with a variety of natural features within a small area. The 0.7-mile Cobb Memorial Trail runs north to south and connects to the Blue Dot Trail leading westerly to Nagog Hill Road.
- **Sarah Doublet Forest.** This forest and nature preserve is the largest property of the Littleton Conservation Trust at ninety-eight acres. Accessible by way of Charter Road off Nashoba Road, the Sarah Doublet Forest includes four different trail paths for walking. Users can see old pastures, pine forest, an old quarry, and vernal ponds.
- **Two Brothers Trail.** Beginning at Conant Park and ending at Prouty Woods, this 1.5-mile trail traverses Town-owned land and streets in Littleton.
- **Whitetail Woods.** This mature oak woodland property is located off Spectacle Pond Road and includes two walking trail options. The first is a longer outer loop option of 0.8 miles, the other is a shorter inner loop option of 0.4 miles.

### Inventory of Recreation Programs

- **Swimming.** Swimming lessons are offered at Long Lake Beach by the Parks and Recreation Department over the summer months at different levels for ages 2-5 (Preschool: Learning to Swim), 5-8 (Level 1: Introduction to Water Skills), 5+ (Level 2: Fundamental Aquatic Skills), 6+ (Level 3: Stroke Development), 7+ (Level 4: Stroke Improvement), 8+ (Level 5: Stroke Refinement), and 13+ (Junior Guard Program).
- **Boating.** The Parks, Recreation and Community Education Department rents out kayaks, canoes and paddleboards Monday through Sunday during the summer season. Sailboats are also available for rental on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10AM-4PM (for intermediate sailors with previous experience). They also host six week-long sailing camp session in the summer for children ages 8-10 and 11-15. Private and semi-private sailing lessons are also available for adults and youth, with a minimum age of 8 years old.
- **Hiking.** There are over 20 different conservation areas in Littleton, many of which include trails for hiking, walking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, biking, horseback riding (on Town-owned properties only), fishing, sledding, and studying nature.



## Athletic Programs

- **Littleton Youth Soccer Club.** The Littleton Youth Soccer Club, a division of Littleton Park and Recreation, is staffed completely by volunteers and provides youth soccer for over 500 players in each of the fall and spring seasons. The in-town programs include the Pee-Wee Academy for four-year-olds (entry level) on Saturday mornings, the U6 Academy for 5-year-olds with a weeknight and Saturday morning clinic followed by a game, and the U8 girls and boys soccer which includes goalkeepers and larger playing fields. Their travel teams include boys and girls teams for grades 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, and high school. In their In-town Program (PeeWee, U6 and U8) they "strive to provide a balance of recreation and competitive teams via like age groups, abilities (from coach input, when available). All U10 and older players play in a Travel Program. Once players move to travel, more emphasis is placed on coach inputs, player assessment results and placement at proper developmental and competitive levels." They place their teams in the Nashoba Valley Youth Soccer League. Games are played on the 8 Russell Street Fields.
- **Littleton Youth Wrestling.** Littleton Youth Wrestling's (LYW's) mission is to develop and execute a wrestling program for the Town of Littleton and to teach the children of the community the sport of wrestling, instilling the ideals of good sportsmanship, honesty, loyalty, courage and respect for authority. This will be accomplished through programs of organized competitive and recreational wrestling and programs designed to educate and develop wrestlers, coaches and referees. Their program consists of 2 levels: "Recreational," for kids who are trying the sport as an activity but are uncertain about participating in competition (meets once a week, optional tournaments), and "Competitive," for kids who want to compete in wrestling (meets twice a week, meets are mandatory). No experience is necessary for either program. Parents can volunteer to help even without experience. They meet in the Shaker Lane Gym at the Shaker Lane Elementary School during the winter season (November – February).
- **Littleton Youth Lacrosse Association.** The Littleton Youth Lacrosse Association (LYLA) offers the boys and girls in Grades 1 through 8 in Littleton, MA and surrounding towns the opportunity to learn and play the game of lacrosse. Their purpose is to develop a strong and vibrant non-profit organization led by volunteers committed to creating a positive and meaningful experience for all involved. LYLA is a cooperative, nonprofit, nonsectarian and nonpartisan organization. They have a spring season and practice at a variety of locations, including the Alumni Field (Football), the Littleton Middle School, and the Littleton High School.
- **Littleton Youth Basketball Association.** The Littleton Youth Basketball Association (LYBA) provides recreational and competitive basketball programs. Introductory and instructional programs are offered for grades 1-4. For grades 4-8, LYBA participates in the North Central Mass Youth Basketball League (NCMYBL) competitive league. For grades 5-8 LYBA participates in the Nashoba Valley Youth Basketball League (NavyBL) recreational league. They use both the Littleton Middle School and High School courts during the winter season.
- **Littleton Youth Football and Cheer.** Littleton Tigers Youth Football and Cheer (LYTFC), is an all-volunteer youth football and cheer organization established to promote the wholesome development of youth and enjoyment in participation in related games and events through their association with adult leaders in the sport of American Tackle Football, Cheer, and Flag Football. LYTFC



serves residents of Littleton, Massachusetts and surrounding communities. They have two football divisions, a recreational division for ages 8 and under, and a competitive division (2 teams) for ages 9-15. They have a variety of summer tackle football clinics and a fall Flag Football program (for ages 6-8 and 9-11 at Littleton High School). They also provide football conditioning for middle and high school students in the summer at Crossfit Woodshed Littleton. The Cheer teams perform at the games and compete in a fun, local, and potentially regional competition. All cheer teams practice outside at the Littleton Middle School during August and will move indoors during the second week of school at the High School, Middle School or Shaker Lane gyms.

- **Littleton Youth Baseball and Softball Association.** The Littleton Youth Baseball & Softball Association (LYBS) has a variety of spring leagues and divisions and provides summer baseball camps for ages 7-12 and 11-14, and summer softball camps for ages 7-11 and 12-15, both at the Littleton High School baseball field. There are many baseball fields, including Couper Field, Jet, Ken White, Littleton High School, Russell Street, Shaker Lane, Shattuck, and Whitcomb Field/Batting Cage.
- **Littleton Bromfield Boys and Girls Middle School Hockey Association.** The Littleton Bromfield Boys and Girls Middle School Hockey Association (LBMSHA) is a non-profit, bipartisan association and a sub-committee of Littleton MA Parks and Recreation established to provide an opportunity for the boys and girls of Harvard and Littleton MA to play Middle School Level hockey in area leagues. There are 6th grade, 7th grade, and 8th grade boys teams and a 6th-8th grade girls team. There are also Littleton/Bromfield High School Varsity and Junior Varsity teams. They often practice at the Groton School Rink in the winter.
- **Adult Sports Leagues.** There are a variety of adult sports leagues that compete outside of Littleton, but may practice in Littleton recreational area. These leagues include a softball league that has games at Shaker Lane School Fields on Sundays, a Co-Ed Volleyball league (fall), Men's Basketball league (fall), Women's Basketball league (fall), and an adult indoor soccer league (fall).

### **Parks, Recreation and Community Education Programs**

- **School Vacation Programs.** During the February and April school vacation week, students grades K – 6th can participate in this Parks and Recreation and Community Education-organized program where fun daily field trips are organized to locations like Boda Boga, Jump Nation, Sky Zone, Chunky's Theater and Plaster Funtime. Parents can choose to send their kids the whole week or pick and choose a few days. Morning and after care are also available.
- **Camp Tahattawan.** Camp Tahattawan is a distinctive experience for boys and girls entering grades K-6 starting the last week in June through the second week in August. It is located at Shaker Lane School, within walking distance to Long Lake Beach. The camp is staffed by a professionally trained group of men and women. Camp Tahattawan is also home to a counselor in training program for youth entering grades 8, 9 and 10.
- **Teen Recreation Adventure Crew (T.R.A.C.).** T.R.A.C. is a teen program that gives students entering grades 6, 7, 8, & 9 an opportunity to experience the fun of traveling, all summer long. Each week, teens go on 4 different field trips, starting at Long Lake with boating, swimming, and more. Field trips change every summer, but might include Boda Borg, Metro Rock, Water Country, Jay Gee's Fun Center, Chunky's Theater, Wingaersheek Beach, Canobie Lake Park, Sky Zone, Southwick Zoo, Lowell Spinners, Lazer Craze, and many more fun locations.
- **Adult Classes.** The Parks, Recreation and Community Education Department offers a variety of summer classes, including AdventuRides (a weekly recreational or fitness bike-exploration of "scenic country roads and occasional off-road routes to keep things interesting"), various leagues/tournaments on the 300 King Street outdoor courts, various boot camps (Russell Street Elementary School Gym/Outside), various workouts/yoga (Town Hall), youth spring tennis lessons (ages 8-14, Shattuck Street Tennis Courts), adult volleyball and Zumba (Littleton Middle School Gym), and

morning yoga at Long Lake Beach. There are also a variety of continuing educational classes in the areas of arts & crafts, business & career, computer education, fun & leisure, home & hearth, personal law & finance, and world languages.

- **Youth Enrichment Classes.** The Parks, Recreation and Community Education Department offers a variety of youth summer classes, including African Drumming (Shaker Lane Elementary School, grades K-3), Spring Youth Track and Field (Littleton Track, Russell Street Elementary school, grades K-6), Kick and Play (Town Hall, ages 12-24 months, pre-soccer program), Super Soccer Stars (Shaker Lane School, grades K-2, Indoor Tennis (Shaker Lane School Gym, ages 5-12), Karate (Shaker Lane School Gym, grades K-5), Tiger Field Hockey Clinic (Field Hockey Field, Littleton High School, grades 4-8), Thundercat Dodgeball and Sports (High School Fields, ages 7-12), Thunder Sports Kiddie Kat Jam (High School Fields, soccer and other sports, ages 4-6), Jr. Olympic Archery (Littleton Middle School Fields, ages 8+), Challenger British Soccer (Littleton High School Fields, ages 3-6, 7+, 9+), AtBats Baseball/Softball Camp (High School Softball Field, ages 8-12, 12-14), Adam Nelson Basketball (Littleton High School Gym, ages 8+, 12-18), PrimeTime Lacrosse (Littleton High School Fields, boys ages 7-15), BEST Soccer (Russell Street Fields, ages 3-5, 5-14), Thundercat Sports Flag Football (High School Fields, ages 7-12), Thundercat Sports Jam (High School Fields, ages 7-12), Tiger Cheerleading Clinic (Littleton Middle School, ages 5-14), and a Tennis Clinic (Town Hall Tennis Courts, ages 8-12). There are also a variety of craft/educational classes available as well.
- **Special Events.** There are many special events hosted by the Parks, Recreation and Community Education Department, including Halloween Parade and Trick or Treat, Turkey Trot 5K, Holiday Helpers, Father/Daughter Dance, Snow Sculpture Contest, Fire and Ice, Touch a Truck Day (33 Shattuck Street), Movie at Fay Park, Third Thursdays (local businesses host booths in the town common or Fay Park), and the Littleton Colonial Faire (Fay Park).

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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### **□ Expanding and Improving Recreational Opportunities**

The growth of youth sports has increased use of existing playing fields throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons, resulting in soil compaction, erosion and general deterioration of playing surfaces. Other than restricting access and cutting programming, the options are creating a comprehensive field maintenance plan or building more fields, so some can be allowed to rest and recover, or converting some of the natural grass fields to artificial turf. Littleton also has many off-street trails where on-going maintenance is critical. These trails provide recreation opportunities for walking, running, or cross-country skiing.

A similar growth in use and programming has increased wear and tear at the Town Beach on Long Lake, where the town runs a summer day camp, swimming lessons and boating programs. The fifty-year-old bathhouse was renovated for ADA compliance almost nineteen years ago, and in addition to general renovation needs to be expanded and improved to meet current demand.

With the recent updates to the park at 300 King there has been an unprecedented increase in use of the active recreation opportunities at this location. This activity should be researched to see if there is a need for more active recreation opportunities in the Town. There was a third phase of the 300 King Street park that included extending the walking path and included a fit-course that would be focused on equipment for seniors and those with disabilities. This phase was not completed due to lack of funding.

## □ Maintaining and Connecting Conservation and Recreation Areas

Respondents to the 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) survey supported better maintenance of open space properties and improvements to make them more accessible and useful, including parking areas, trails, benches and picnic areas. Residents also support efforts to fill in the gaps between parcels, both within the town and linking up with parcels in Westford, Harvard, Acton, Groton and Boxborough. A strategy of connecting parcels into larger blocks and greenway corridors would ameliorate the fragmentation of wildlife habitat, while also opening up opportunities for continuous trails crossing Littleton and linking up with trails in neighboring towns.

## □ Proactive Planning for Conservation

Recent development of several prime open space parcels reportedly happened not because of a lack of public support for conservation but because the town was outmaneuvered by developers. While the Community Preservation Fund provides a source of cash, the town needs to be prepared with clear priorities and implementation strategies when opportunities present themselves. Using the 2016 OSRP and the Master Plan as a base, the Town should engage in a prioritization effort of open space parcels that have the possibility of being developed in the future. The criteria used to rank the parcels should be comprehensive, and consider natural resource benefits, wildlife corridors, view sheds, scenic roads, transportation connections, continuance of farming activities, and more.

## □ Preserving Littleton's Agricultural Heritage

Active farms play a key role in maintaining Littleton's quality of life, providing local food, beautiful views, and connecting residents to the land. Yet the recent loss to development of the Couper, Fletcher, Durkee, and Sanderson properties demonstrates that current economic trends support continued conversion of farms to house lots. On the positive side, many of the remaining farm families are committed to carrying on the tradition, and there are plenty of young farmers ready to take over the reins – assuming they can make a living doing it. Supporting the economic viability of farming will be key to the future success of farms in Littleton. Understanding and connecting to the regional food system will become increasingly important as farms continue to move beyond wholesale growing, becoming diverse businesses with needs in storage, processing, transportation and marketing of farm products.

**Active farms play a key role in maintaining Littleton's quality of life, providing local food and a source of employment, beautiful views, and connecting residents to the land.**

## □ Community Resilience

Actively protecting open space and providing opportunities for recreation are important ways to contribute to the resilience of Littleton. They do so by:

- Protecting natural features.
- Providing opportunities for residents to exercise which promotes physical activity and improves health outcomes. This also provides opportunities to interact with others by participating in physical activities that have been shown to promote mental health and help to build community.
- Supporting the economic viability of farming helps to diversify the town's economy and promotes local food production.

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Open Space & Recreation Goals:

- **To maintain Littleton's small-town character as the town continues to develop through stewardship of its natural resources and open space, forests, working farms, and lakes.**
- **To improve the safety and ease of getting around town and better connect the "pieces" of Littleton with safe and pleasant bike and walking paths, and public transportation.**
- **To continue to provide excellent town services, schools, and community facilities.**

#### 1. Examine the recommendations of the Comprehensive Analysis of Recreation Facilities and Fields, and determine next steps.

- Funding for a comprehensive study of recreation facilities was approved by the Fall, 2016 Town Meeting, and the process is proceeding. Coordinating the recreation facilities plan with other recommendations of this master plan will identify shared opportunities and build public support for continued investment in recreation facilities.
- Work with Elder and Human Services to expand recreational opportunities to include more activities oriented toward the senior population.
- Provide rest stops (benches and water stations) where possible along trails to support their use by seniors, athletes, parents with young children, and others.

#### 2. Prepare individual management plans for town conservation areas and recreational facilities.

The 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan provides an inventory of Littleton's Conservation and Recreation Facilities that includes a summary of size, location, owner, degree of protection, level of public access and current uses. Management of these areas would be greatly enhanced by more detailed planning for individual properties, including an analysis of existing conditions, and assessment of current and potential future uses, and an action strategy outlining steps for implementation.

#### 3. Undertake a Food Systems Plan to inform town efforts to support local food production, processing, distribution and sales as a way to help sustain Littleton's remaining family farms.

While many of Littleton's farms are doing well, several farm properties have recently been lost to development. Other lands, including several town conservation parcels, could potentially be brought back into active production. While the Littleton Agricultural Commission (established in 2006) has done a great job instituting the Right-to-Farm bylaw, they do not have the resources to prepare a comprehensive inventory of agricultural land uses, soils, ownership, and other factors that could contribute to a clearer understanding of agriculture and its potential role in the town's future. A food systems plan could also position local farms to take advantage of the evolving market for local food and other agricultural products.

#### 4. Expand availability of community garden plots through town-supported programming and provision of land within existing conservation areas and/or using private lands secured through temporary agreements with the town.

The conservation commission has provided garden plots in the past but is not focused on administering a community gardening program.

- An independent partner focused on gardening can better administer the program and work with volunteers to coordinate access, parking, water, tools, storage, fencing and other needs. By definition a summer program, staffing can easily be enhanced with student interns.

## **5. Pursue a targeted program of outreach and information to enhance public use of conservation lands and recreational facilities.**

The Littleton Conservation Trust provides an on-line guide to town conservation areas, including maps from a variety of sources. This is a great foundation for cataloging the features and recreational resources at each site, and should be supported to take advantage of mobile apps for trail mapping and interpretation.

- Information about individual sites provided by LCT should be expanded to include the rest of the town's recreation facilities, as well as information on existing and potential links in the growing town-wide trail network.
- Physical improvements to conservation lands should be part of the annual work program, including trail head parking areas, kiosks, benches, dog waste management, trash and recycling, and comfort facilities.
- An enhanced wayfinding program with signage in key locations and links to on-line resources.

## **6. Pursue public education on agriculture, including potential farm education programs such as Mass Audubon's Drumlin Farm in Lincoln.**

Littleton values its farms and rural character, but most kids don't have the ability to learn about farms directly. Littleton Community Farm, established in 2012, is already offering education programming and could be expanded in partnership with local schools, the Parks, Recreation and Community Education Department, as well as other local farmers.

## **7. Work with the historic commission, planning board and other groups to establish a Heritage Landscape conservation program, with particular emphasis on identifying and protecting the landscape elements that contribute to Littleton's rural character, including scenic vistas.**

A reconnaissance report was prepared for Littleton in 2006 as part of the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program.<sup>2</sup> The report identified nine key sites or areas, as well as raising more general concerns about the impact of change on scenic roads and stone walls.

- A Heritage Landscape conservation program would build on the earlier effort with a focus on mapping out the location of specific resource, describing how they contribute to Littleton's rural character, and working with landowners to institute a plan for their protection and enhancement.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/stewardship/histland/recon-reports/littleton-with-map.pdf>





# 9 Town Government: Organization, Services, Facilities

## OVERVIEW

### Relationship to Master Plan Goals

The provision of municipal services and the upkeep of municipal facilities is one of the most basic functions of town government. Knowing that the Town's population is projected to continue to increase, and the make-up of the population is likely to change, town services and facilities will also need to change. This may mean facilities will need to be upgraded or enlarged, and the types of services currently offered may need to change or increase. If the Town can work toward concentrating new development in specific locations, it could help with a more efficient delivery of services and provision of public infrastructure.

#### Key Policy Recommendations for Facilities and Services

- The projected increase of older residents will have impacts across many elements of the Master Plan, including a substantial impact on the provision of public services. As was pointed out in the transportation and housing sections, there are needs that are not being met today which will be exacerbated as that population grows. The Town will likely need to increase funding for services provided by Elder and Human Services, and consider options for providing an improved facility for senior programs. Transportation services provided by the Council on Aging are oversubscribed and will need to keep pace with growing demand.
- As older Littleton residents leave their single-family homes, new residents will move in. It is anticipated that those new residents will include younger families looking for quality schools, amenities,



access to jobs, and a more affordable housing stock. Littleton has these attributes, and more, making it an attractive location for younger families. As demographics change, the Town should continue to monitor school enrollment to ensure that class sizes remain at an acceptable level. The Town should also consider how to strategically invest limited capital dollars in priority projects to improve the quality and quantity of recreational facilities.

## Key Findings

- Littleton has a traditional small-town government with an open town meeting, an elected five-member Board of Selectmen, and a professional town administrator.
- Littleton has many boards and committees, and therefore many opportunities for residents to participate.
- Littleton provides the same basic services found in other small towns, such as public safety, public works, schools, a public library, and administration and finance. Some services have been regionalized.
- Littleton's total revenue from all sources is approximately \$46.5 million. Residential property accounts for 78 percent of the town's total assessed valuation and 69 percent of the tax levy.
- The Town has a triple-A bond rating.

### In this Chapter

- Inventory the Town's municipal facilities and the services offered.
- Understand and document the needs identified by local officials, residents, and town staff.
- Recommend strategic investments the Town may need in the face of a growing and changing population and employment base.

## INVENTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

A community's approach to **governance** largely determines how well it can resolve conflicts, set policy, and manage its affairs. On one level, "governance" consists of tangible components: the institutions that a community creates and arranges to conduct the work of local government, such as legislation, taxation, regulation, enforcement, and delivery of public services. On another level, it is a set of intangibles: an expression of a community's political culture, including the beliefs, values and principles that shape policy and guide local decision-making.

**Community facilities** are places that house municipal programs and services and provide vital space for the administration of local government. **Community services** represent what a unit of local government does to meet the needs of its residents and businesses. These concepts – the organization of government, what it does, and how and where – are virtually inseparable. Over time, the duties of town governments everywhere have changed due to changes in federal and state laws and public expectations. In some towns, local governments form partnerships to provide services or carry out special projects that would be too costly for one community to carry out on its own. There are at least two good examples of such partnerships in Littleton: CrossTown Connect, a transportation management association (TMA) that includes five towns and several large regional employers, and Littleton's long-standing participation in the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health.

## Municipal Facilities & Services

Littleton has a partially centralized government with a town administrator, many elected and appointed boards and committees, and open town meeting. Most town departments have some staff to carry out the duties and directives of the elected or appointed boards they serve. However, town departments in Littleton are quite small, often with one full- or part-time person handling a volume of work that may not be obvious to the community at large. Since Littleton is so small, it lacks the economies of scale that sometimes present advantages to larger towns. The Town depends heavily on civic-minded volunteers, and while this means Littleton can stretch some of its resources, it also creates needs for space to accommodate many boards and committees, and in Littleton meeting space can be difficult to come by.

Littleton is responsible for municipally owned buildings and structures with a combined value of about \$90 million.<sup>1</sup> These facilities support the operations of all traditional municipal functions: general government, public safety, public works, culture and recreation, and health and human services. As a state-designated Green Community, Littleton has made a commitment to sustainability by reducing energy consumption by 20 percent over the next five years (by 2021).

- **Town Offices and Public Library, Shattuck Street.** The Town Office Building on Shattuck Street has been Littleton's primary government office building since 1989. This three-story building was originally constructed in 1922 as the home of the Shattuck Street School, and expanded in 1938. A new wing was added in 1952, which was then renovated in 1989 when the Reuben Hoar Library was relocated to this building from the Houghton Building at 4 Rogers Street. The Shattuck Street facility now doubles as government offices, Parks and Recreation offices, the School Department, the public library, and space for the Council on Aging. Virtually all of Littleton's general government functions are housed on Shattuck Street, where basement-level facilities provide a meeting room for town boards and a means of access for people with disabilities. As of 2016, the following departments and programs were located at the Town Offices.
- **Administration and Finance.** The administration and finance functions in Littleton are led by the elected five-member Board of Selectmen and a full-time professional Town Administrator whom they appoint. Littleton established the position of Town Administrator in the early 1980s, and over time, its responsibilities have increased. The Town Administrator has authority to appoint several department heads, with approval from the Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen recently renamed the position of Assistant Town Administrator for Finance and Budget to Director of Finance and Budget. This position oversees all of Littleton's financial operations – accounting, tax collection, treasurer, and assessor – in a consolidated municipal finance department. The personnel in these departments often interact with and provide support to volunteer boards and commissions, such as the Finance Committee (appointed) or the Board of Assessors (elected). The Board of Selectmen also recently created and filled a new Assistant Town Administrator position.
- **Elections and Public Records.** The Town Clerk in Littleton is an elected position with a three-year term. In Massachusetts towns, the town clerk is the official keeper of public documents, the chief elections officer, vital records registrar, and the issuer of some state and local licenses, e.g., marriage licenses and dog licenses. For many residents, the Town Clerk is the most well-recognized official at Town Hall due to the number of functions handled by the Town Clerk's office. The Littleton Town Clerk has one part-time assistant town clerk.
- **Planning and Development.** Several departments in the Town Offices have professional and administrative staff assisting the land use regulatory boards (Planning Board, elected; and the Zoning Board of Appeals and Conservation Commission, both appointed). The full-time Planning Administrator who works for the Littleton Planning Board is also the Town's Permit Coordinator, a role created in Littleton when the Town adopted G.L. c. 43D (Chapter 43D) and designated several Priority Development Sites.<sup>2</sup> Part-time administrative assistants provide clerical support to the Littleton Conservation Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- **Conservation Department.** The Conservation Department is responsible for staffing the Conservation Commission, a seven-member board appointed by the Board of Selectmen to a three-year term. The Commission is staffed by a full-time professional conservation coordinator. The Commission and department are responsible for administering and enforcing the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Littleton Wetlands Bylaw, and maintaining the Town's conservation lands.

<sup>1</sup> MIIA Property Group, Statement of Values, Littleton, Massachusetts (May 23, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Note: this position became full-time in 2014.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

- **Inspectional Services.** In Littleton, inspectional services functions are handled primarily by the Building Department and Board of Health. The Building Department employs a full-time Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer, two administrative assistants (one of whom serves as staff to the Building Department, Board of Health, and Zoning Board of Appeals), and part-time wiring, plumbing, and gas inspectors. It is a very busy department that issues approximately 500 permits each year, including over fifty new residential construction permits.<sup>3</sup> The Board of Health (elected) has the same responsibilities as boards of health in other Massachusetts towns, but an important difference in Littleton is that the Board's permitting, inspections, and enforcement functions are carried out under the Board's direction by a multi-town collaborative, the Nashoba Boards of Health.
- **Health and Human Services.** The Town Offices provide a base of operations for Littleton's Department of Elder and Human Services (EHS), an agency that delivers senior services (for people 60 years and older). Littleton does not have a senior center, but EHS and its advisory board, the Council on Aging (CoA), organize and provide many services that are typically associated with a senior center or community center, such as senior transportation services, advocacy, information and referral, basic health and wellness checks, meals on wheels (delivery of meals to homebound seniors), and fitness and leisure programs. Program statistics maintained by EHS indicate that senior transportation usage has jumped dramatically, from 1,925 riders in 2012 to 5,357 in 2015.<sup>4</sup> Anticipating continued growth in demand for senior services, the EHS completed a comprehensive needs assessment of Littleton's over-50 population in 2015.
- **Information.** Littleton has two departments specializing in information delivery, both located in the Town Offices: Information Technology (IT), headed by an Information Systems Manager, and Littleton Community Television (LCTV), which has an executive director, part-time staff, and an advisory committee. The IT department is funded almost entirely with a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) from the LELWD. Although Littleton is a small town, LCTV supports an unusually diverse collection of locally produced programming, and both live and "on demand" access to government meetings.
- **Littleton Library.** The Reuben Hoar Library shares its campus with the Town Offices. It operates six days a week and employs a full-time library director, six full- and part-time librarians, and several library assistants. An elected board of five trustees provides policy support, library advocacy, and strategic planning. Littleton's public library is a busy organization. In 2015, the library owned approximately 250,000 books (print and eBook) and had over 150,000 materials in circulation.<sup>5</sup>

In the past few years, the Library Trustees have been planning for the library's longer-term space needs. The Reuben Hoar Library has been co-located with the Town Offices since 1989. With a \$40,000 state grant and matching funds from the Town, the library worked with the Permanent Municipal Buildings Committee to commission a feasibility study in 2015. A conceptual plan has been drawn for a 22,880 sq. ft. facility to be located on the "Slope Site" behind the Town Offices.<sup>6</sup> A preliminary timeline for the project places Littleton in competition for a state library construction grant in 2017.<sup>7</sup>

- **Parks, Recreation, and Community Education.** The administrative offices of the Parks, Recreation, and Community Education (PRCE) Department are located on the first floor of the Town Offices, but programming occurs in multiple locations throughout Littleton (see Chapter 8 for additional information). Overseen by five elected Park and Recreation Commissioners, the PRCE employs

<sup>3</sup> Littleton Annual Town Reports, 2014, 2015; Report of the Building Commissioner.

<sup>4</sup> Pamela Campbell, EHS Executive Director, to RKG Associates, Inc., June 22, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Littleton Annual Town Report 2015,

<sup>6</sup> Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program. Grant application for Reuben Hoar Library. January 26, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Reuben Hoar Library at < [www.littletonma.org/](http://www.littletonma.org/) > and Littleton Library Project < [littletonlibraryproject.org/](http://littletonlibraryproject.org/) >

a full-time director, five full- or part-time professional program directors and instructors, and about forty part-time and seasonal staff as teachers, camp counselors, after-school program employees, lifeguards, and so forth. With an annual operating budget of just under \$1 million, the Parks, Recreation, and Community Education Department has been operating on an enterprise basis, i.e., primarily as a self-funded organization, since July 1, 2014.<sup>8</sup> In 2016, the Town provides approximately \$114,000 toward the department's personnel expenses.<sup>9</sup>

- **Community Preservation.** In addition to the staffed departments with administrative and programmatic responsibilities and the elected boards they support, Littleton has about twenty-five appointed town committees that carry out their charge with limited (if any) assistance from staff simply because there are so few town employees.<sup>10</sup> Some committees have a statutory charge or set of responsibilities, such as the Community Preservation Committee. Littleton is one of over 160 communities receiving special revenue under the Community Preservation Act (CPA), a local option statute enacted by the legislature in September 2000. CPA helps cities and towns address four core growth management concerns: open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, and recreation. Littleton's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) supports town services by considering applications for proposed CPA funding for projects that would be difficult, if not impossible, for the town to carry out with general fund revenue. Composed of nine members appointed by the Board of Selectmen, the CPC chooses worthy projects to recommend for Town Meeting approval.<sup>11</sup>
- **Public Works, Ayer Road.** Littleton's Electric Light and Water Departments (LELWD) and Highway Department share space in a combined public works facility on Ayer Road. Built ca. 1988, the one-story LEWLD/Highway facility consists of about 17,300 sq. ft.
  - **Highway.** The Highway Department in Littleton has responsibilities that in many towns would fall under the direction of a Department of Public Works. Littleton's Highway Superintendent and eleven full-time employees maintain the town's sixty-two miles of public roads (excluding state roads), associated drainage, and trees in the public right-of-way; the grounds associated with public buildings; and outdoor recreation facilities (playing fields and parks). This department also operates the Littleton Transfer Station with two part-time employees. Recognizing the Highway Department's long-standing need for more staff, the Town recently hired a Director of Public Works.

While grounds maintenance is largely centralized, there is no central facilities management in Littleton. Though discussed in the past as a need the Town should address, facilities management remains challenging for the Town. Departments are generally responsible for the buildings they occupy.

  - **Littleton Electric Light and Water Department (LELWD).** Established and activated by a series of town meeting votes in 1911-1912, share administrative and operations personnel at the facility on Ayer Road. The Light Department sells competitively priced electricity to customers in Littleton and Boxborough and typically generates positive cash flow for the Town. It is a well-resourced municipal enterprise that has enabled Littleton to keep pace with advancements in technology substantially ahead of many other small towns in Massachusetts. The Light Department employs approximately thirty-four people, including managers, linemen, business office staff, and Geographic Information System (GIS) technicians.

<sup>8</sup> Littleton Annual Town Report 2015, 93.

<sup>9</sup> Littleton Finance Department, FY 2017 Budget Projection Sheet.

<sup>10</sup> A complete list of elected and appointed volunteer boards and commissions can be found in Appendix X [not included in this draft].

<sup>11</sup> Members include one member of the Historical Commission as designated by said Commission; one member of the Planning Board as designated by said Board; one member of the Park and Recreation Commissioners, as designated by said Commissioners; one member of the Littleton Housing Authority as designated by said Authority; and four individuals to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

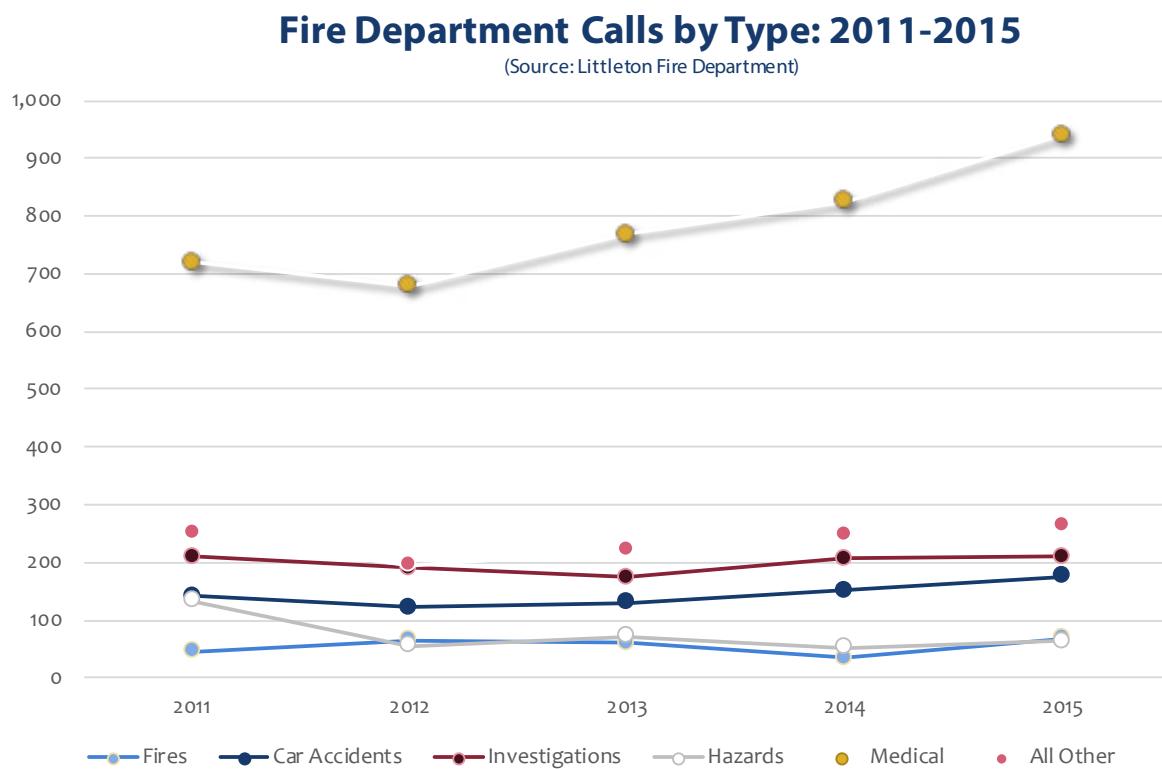
The Water Department employs twelve people and serves approximately 3,000 customers (8,500 people) in Littleton. It delivers drinking water from four groundwater wells through a distribution system comprised of 78 miles of water mains and three standpipes. Over 90 percent of the Water Department's customers are residential. On average, Littleton residents consume 62 gallons of water per person per day, a statistic the Water Department is required to track under the state's Water Management Act. There are two treatment plants in Littleton as well, mainly working to remove iron and manganese from drinking water.<sup>12</sup> This is a common problem in Eastern Massachusetts groundwater supplies.

- **Cemetery, New Estate Road.** The Littleton Cemetery Department manages two public cemeteries in Littleton, only one of which (Westlawn) is currently in use. Westlawn was established in 1812 and is managed by a full-time cemetery superintendent, groundskeeper, and three elected cemetery commissioners. The facility on New Estate Road/King Street includes the cemetery proper and a small one-story building for staff and equipment (approximately 580 sq. ft.). The second cemetery, the Old Burial Ground, is historically significant and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (See Chapter 6, Historic Resource Areas.)
- **Police Station, Great Road.** The Littleton Police Station at 500 Great Road is a recent addition to Littleton's inventory of public facilities. It opened in 2009, replacing an obsolete, deficient building the Police Department previously occupied on Foster Street. The new 14,100 sq. ft. Police Station occupies a site the Town acquired in 2002 for the eventual construction of a new police facility. Between site acquisition, design, and building construction, the total project cost to the Town was approximately \$6.4 million, which voters agreed to fund as a debt exclusion under Proposition 2 ½ (which means the debt service is above and beyond the levy limit cap). The new facility is energy efficient, accessible to people with disabilities, equipped with a community room, and designed to accommodate departmental growth. The Police Department currently employs a full-time chief, fifteen officers (sergeants, detectives, and patrol), and several reserve officers as well.
- **Fire Station, Foster Street.** The Littleton Fire Department's headquarters are located at 20 Foster Street in a facility that once served as Littleton Town Hall. Like other municipal buildings in Littleton, the Fire Station is no longer adequate in size, layout, facilities, or technology to meet the Fire Department's current and near-term future needs. For this reason, residents were asked in November 2016 whether to fund a renovations and expansion project at the Foster Street station. Residents ultimately decided to fund those renovations and expansion.

Over the past decade, Littleton has transitioned from a predominantly "on call" fire department to one that relies far more on full-time professional staff. The Fire Department currently employs twelve full-time people: the chief, deputy chief, and ten firefighters who are also certified as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). There is also a part-time administrative assistant and twenty-eight on-call personnel. To carry out its duties, the Fire Department operates and maintains several apparatus, including four engines, a 110' ladder truck, two Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances, four vehicles, a rescue boat, and a hazardous materials trailer. Like most fire departments that provide emergency medical service, Littleton's call volume is increasingly comprised of medical emergencies. Between 2011 and 2015, medical calls increased 30 percent in Littleton.



<sup>12</sup> Littleton Water Department, Public Water Supply Annual Statistical Reports, 2013-2015.

**Figure 9.1 - Fire Department Calls**

- **Pine Tree Park, 19 Shattuck Street.** The Littleton Housing Authority (elected) maintains administrative offices at the Town's only subsidized housing for the elderly. Pine Tree Park is a forty-eight-unit public housing development for seniors and people with disabilities. The Housing Authority also manages twelve units of family housing, most of which are co-located with Pine Tree Park on the same tract of land.

## Schools

The Littleton Public Schools is a local K-12 school district serving approximately 1,620 students. Overseen by an elected School Committee and the School Superintendent who reports to them, the school department operates four school buildings, most of which are new or recently upgraded and/or expanded.<sup>13</sup> Littleton residents generally hold the schools in high regard, and the school department has an excellent reputation outside of town, too. Littleton High School is an award-winning school, and the entire district is a federally designated "Green Ribbon" school district because of Littleton's commitment to sustainability.

The Town's school facilities include:

- **Shaker Lane School (PK-2), 35 Shaker Lane.** The Shaker Lane School was built in 1961 and renovated in 1998. It is a 66,000 sq. ft. facility with an enrollment of 442 students. The Shaker Lane School provides half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten for an additional charge (at parents' expense), and full- and half-day programs for three- and four-year olds, including an integrated preschool.
- **Russell Street School (Grades 3-5), 57 Russell Street.** The Russell Street elementary school was built in 1968 and renovated in 2010. It current enrollment is 370 students.

<sup>13</sup> Unless otherwise noted, school building profiles are based on data from the Massachusetts School Building Assistance Authority and reports from the Littleton Public Schools in the Annual Town Report.

- **Littleton Middle School (Grades 6-8)**, 55 Russell Street. The new 75,000 sq. ft. Littleton Middle School opened in 2007. Enrollment includes 364 students.
- **Littleton High School (Grades 9-12)**, 56 King Street. The present Littleton High School opened in 2001. It is a 125,000 sq. ft. facility with an enrollment of approximately 410 students.

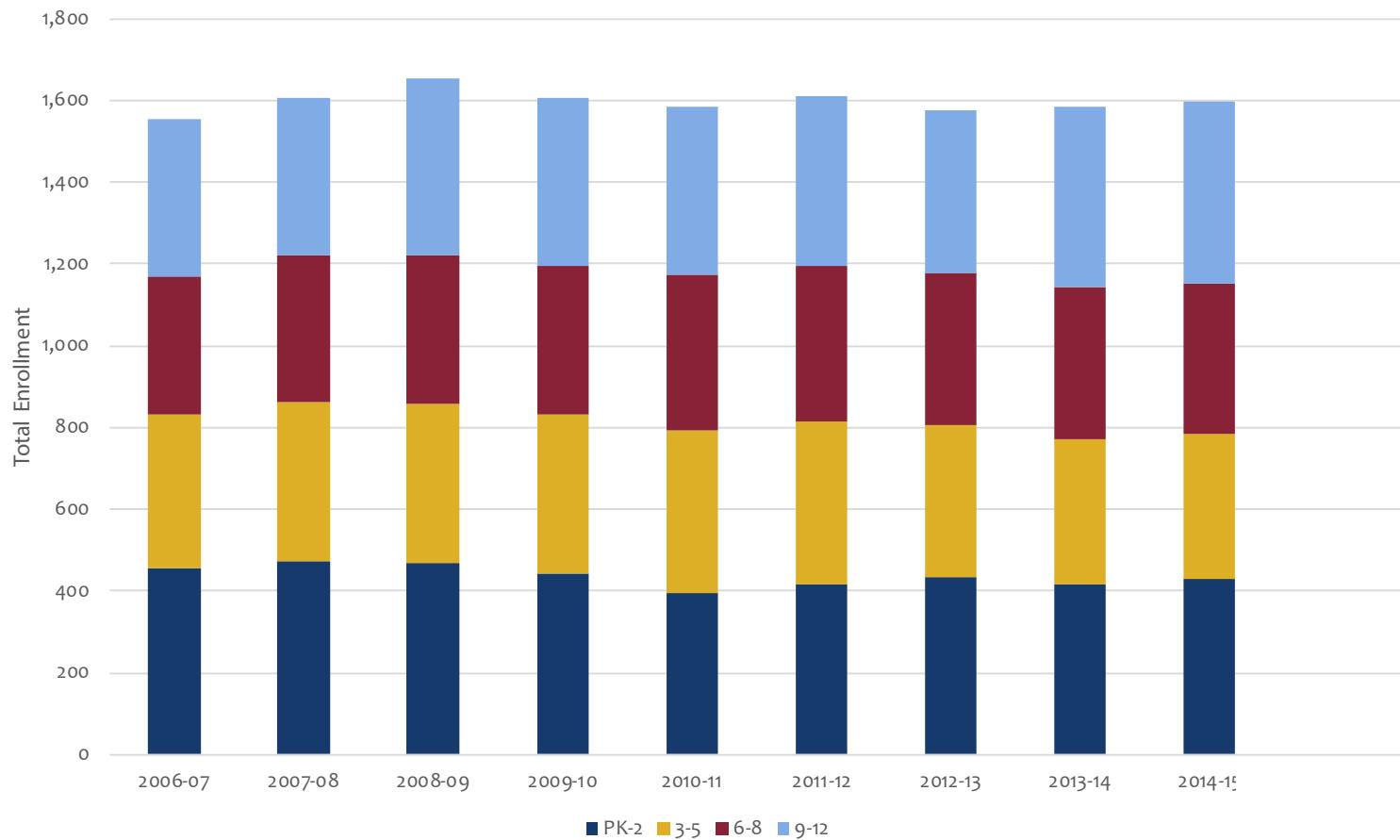
Littleton also participates in at least two regional school programs: the Nashoba Valley Technical High School and the CASE Collaborative for special education.

In the past ten years, Littleton's K-12 enrollment has been remarkably stable, as shown in the chart below. Overall, enrollment is up 4 percent since the mid-2000s, but the district-wide statistic masks noteworthy changes that have occurred in particular schools. For example, the number of students attending the Middle School increased 6 percent over ten years, and the high school experienced a 16 percent increase in the same period.

**Figure 9.2 - Enrollment Trends**

### Littleton Public Schools K-12 Enrollment Trends

(Source: Mass. Department of Elementary & Secondary Education)



## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### □ Services for Current and Future Needs

Despite the challenges presented by Littleton's decentralized government and the diseconomies of scale in a small town, Littleton's public services seem to be quite effective at meeting many local needs today. However, it is not clear that the Town is well equipped to handle the aging of its population in terms of public facilities for senior services, housing, or health care. Needs also exist in the Highway Department and Parks, Recreation, and Community Education. Some form of consolidation of senior services and recreation/leisure programs – perhaps through a community center or multiple age group facility – may help Littleton approach service delivery for its small but growing population in an efficient way.

### □ Budgeting for Growth and Change

Littleton is in the enviable position of earning – and keeping thus far – a triple A bond rating. The Town is well managed, yet Littleton has clearly been "discovered," and with discovery comes demand for housing and jobs, and eventually public services – and the inevitability of tension about the costs and benefits of growth. It is not always clear that Littleton is poised to respond well to change. Towns provide municipal services in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents and support and enhance their quality of life. In Littleton, many services provided by the town instill and reinforce a sense of community and reflect shared values such as excellent schools and land conservation. Nevertheless, Littleton may need to be open to fresh ideas about government's responsibility for community services, the costs and benefits of those services, and ways to increase revenues without compromising its small-town character.



### □ Facilities Management

Littleton is a small town with finite resources, so funding the services that residents and businesses expect every year can be a real challenge. The educational, recreational, cultural, and human services that Littleton offers enhance the quality of life for local residents, but these and other public services are increasingly expensive. In addition, some of Littleton's public facilities need capital improvements, and some may need to be retired, rebuilt, or rededicated to other purposes. Since there is no central oversight of the town's public facilities, Littleton does not have capacity to plan for and schedule regular preventive maintenance or to create and implement a strategic asset plan. It is difficult for small towns like Littleton to address these needs because its infrastructure and utilities also need to be updated and maintained.

While town buildings, public lands, and recreational facilities have generally been maintained, Littleton does not have a structure in place to coordinate or centralize facilities management. Facilities planning and management should encompass all town-owned buildings, including the schools. While the Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC) has done an exceptional job helping the Town plan for and execute facility replacement and maintenance projects, the Committee should have a full-time dedicated facilities staff person to assist in their work. This task will become even more critical when the

results of the upcoming space needs study are available. Equally important are elements of the town's infrastructure, such as recreation facilities – including playgrounds and athletic fields – as well as the public water system.

## □ **Changing Needs, Changing Demographics**

The changing demographics of Littleton have been well-documented in the demographics section of the Master Plan, particularly as it pertains to the aging of the Town's population. At the same time, there have been, and will continue to be, increases in the number of young professionals and young families who move to Littleton for jobs, transportation access, parks and amenities, more affordable single-family homes, and a great school system.

At the beginning of the 2016/2017 school year, enrollment reached a six-year high of 1,651 students (a 2 percent increase over the 2011/12 school year).<sup>14</sup> As older Littleton residents move out of their single-family homes, opening opportunities for younger residents to move in, the Town may see a continued increase in school enrollment across grade levels. With education expenditures making up about two-thirds of the Town's FY 2016 operational budget, there will likely be difficult discussions forthcoming at future Town Meetings. These discussions may involve technology, supplies, staff, and built space.

The other growing population in Littleton (and in most communities in Massachusetts) are residents over the age of sixty-five. As Boomers continue to age out of the workforce and look to retire, many will remain in their homes where cost and maintenance will become a growing challenge. By providing more housing options Littleton's seniors will have more choices, increasing their ability to stay in the community. With that choice comes additional demands on public safety services, the Highway Department, Elder and Human Affairs, the Library, Parks and Recreation, and more. The role of family as the caretaker is changing, therefore the Town needs to begin planning for the accommodations older residents will require.

## □ **Professional Development and Capacity Building**

Littleton will need to continue to professionalize its town government, train staff, and ensure that boards and commissions understand their roles, responsibilities, and authority. The fact that Littleton (like many towns) has several employees and volunteers approaching retirement age means the Town should be planning for succession, knowledge transfer, and training new people to assume government responsibilities. This is true not only at the departmental staff level, but also the work performed by civic-minded residents.

## □ **Managing Infrastructure Needs and On-Going Maintenance**

As Littleton grows and changes, new residents moving to town may have different expectations for community facilities and services depending on where they came from. Those who are moving to Littleton from more suburban and urban communities will want to maintain the Town's "rural characteristics", but will anticipate having access to sidewalks, trash pick-up, and sewer service which are available in many other larger communities. The Town will need to think strategically about investments in infrastructure that are consistent with the vision and goals of the Master Plan. It will also be important

<sup>14</sup> Kelly Clenchy, LPS Superintendent. "October 1 Enrollment Summary", October, 2016. The 1,651 students account for both Littleton residents and school choice students.

**Enrollment for the 2016/17 school year reached a six-year high of 1,651 students. This trend is likely to continue as more young families move to Littleton for the quality of services, schools, access to jobs and transportation, and community character.**

to understand the long-term maintenance/replacement costs and the possibility of having to hire staff who have experience managing new services the Town never offered in the past.

## **□ Master Plan Maintenance**

Similar to a building or a car, a Master Plan needs to be maintained or it will break down and eventually fall apart. A Master Plan is designed to be a forward-looking document and evolve over time as recommendations are implemented and conditions change in the Town. In order for this to occur, there must be ownership and maintenance over the document. Boards, committees, staff, and residents should promote the Master Plan and refer to it when decisions are being made. The Town should also promote the successful implementation of Master Plan recommendations when they occur.

## **□ Community Resilience**

Community services and facilities, and the responsiveness of town government play an important role in Littleton's ability to adapt and change over the course of time.

- The siting of future town-owned facilities can play a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, particularly if they are located in walkable areas where visitors do not have to rely on a car to get there.
- Community facilities can be retrofitted with energy efficient lighting, appliances, heating and cooling systems, windows and doors, and much more to reduce power consumption.
- Community facilities can also be used to generate power. This includes solar canopies over parking lots, or solar installations on flat roofs.
- The Town could incorporate healthy community policies around transportation, energy, and healthy eating as a way to set an example to residents and increase awareness.
- Town-owned vehicle fleets could be converted to compressed natural gas or electric to save money on fuel and reduce vehicle emissions benefitting air quality and the environment.
- Inclusiveness, transparency, and encouraging involvement in town government helps to build trust and common bonds across residents.

## **GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **Government, Facilities and Services Goal: To continue to provide excellent town services, schools, and community facilities.**

#### **1. Hire a full-time facilities manager who would be responsible for the maintenance of town and school buildings, as well as the development of long-term maintenance and replacement plans.**

A full-time facilities manager would fulfill the role of a centralized point of contact for all town-owned facilities (including schools) in Littleton. Currently, this job is done by several different staff members across town and school departments, some of whom are not facilities experts. While the PMBC fulfills an important role and has done a great job over time, it would be more efficient and productive to have a full-time staff person work with department heads and the PMBC to coordinate the maintenance and construction of facilities in town. The hiring of a facility manager is a trend seen in many communities across Massachusetts.

## **LITTLETON MASTER PLAN**

The facilities manager position would also be responsible for developing short- and long-term facility needs studies, pulling together plans for capital expenditures, and developing a capital budget for maintenance and replacement projects.

The Town may also wish to consider creating a position called "Land Facilities Manager" who would be in charge of the Town's open space, parks, recreation fields, and off-street trail network. This position could also work directly with Highway Department staff to maintain trees in public rights of way.

### **2. Evaluate the recommendations of the upcoming Town Hall Space Needs Study and determine next steps.**

The Town is actively pursuing a Consultant to help with the evaluation of space in the current Town Hall building to determine whether there is a need for additional space or a reconfiguration of space to meet facility and service needs. This study will be looking at each department and function housed within Town Hall complex and making recommendations for space renovations or additions to accommodate current and future needs. This study should be evaluated by the Board of Selectmen to determine what, if any, changes are required to continue providing quality services to the residents of Littleton.

### **3. Provide for the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of a library facility in Littleton.**

- As the Town works its way through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) grant eligibility program, Town Meeting will decide whether to appropriate matching funds for an improved library facility. If a construction grant is not secured through the MBLC, the Town will need to determine whether or not an improved library facility is still a financially viable option. There are critical maintenance, space, and accessibility needs that are not being met in the current facility. It has been noted during the process that ADA accessibility is a major challenge for patrons who wish to utilize the facility. Any upgrades or new facility designs must make this a priority.

The Town may also wish to consider the opportunity to work with adjacent municipalities and regionalize library services. A regional library facility could be located in Littleton, or in an adjoining municipality but would still be designed to meet the needs of area residents. While this is not a common solution to library needs, it is an option the Town may want to consider.

- Provide funding for an increase in programming at the improved library facility that will serve children, adults, and seniors. Funding geared toward summer reading, and programs that promote inter-generational learning would help serve the greatest immediate needs.

### **4. Evaluate the feasibility of constructing a multi-purpose, intergenerational community center that meets the needs of all residents in Littleton.**

The growing cohorts in Littleton are children, younger families with children, and seniors over the age of sixty-five. Programmed spaces in Town are tapped out and are making due with the limited space and resources available. The Town will need to look at options to accommodate future growth, particularly in these three age groups. Options for accommodating space needs include:

- Provide a community center/multiple age group center that includes spaces and programs for residents of all ages and abilities.
- Provide a new senior center that serves the increasing needs of senior residents in Littleton.
- Provide a youth center that serves the recreation and programming needs of children and teens in Littleton.
- Speak with neighboring towns to determine if a regional center is a viable option which would help spread costs, and could result in a larger facility that could meet a wide range of needs.

## **5. Continue to evaluate enrollment trends, school capacity, and space needs for students within the Littleton Public School District.**

As Littleton's population changes, it is important that the School Committee and LPS staff continue to work together to develop baseline figures for evaluating space needs. Reviewing enrollment trends and understanding school capacity will help inform future decisions around the expansion or contraction of school facilities. Working from a common baseline will allow the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen to make decisions using shared data and assumptions.

## **6. Upgrade and modernize the Shaker Lane School.**

The Shaker Lane Elementary School is the oldest school building currently in operation in Littleton. In 2013 a facility needs study was completed for the school which identified over three million dollars in maintenance and renovation work. In the near term, the Town should appropriate funding to address the following issues:

- Upgrade interior lighting.
- Install a sprinkler system in the school.
- Upgrade the phone system.
- Remove and replace all ceiling tiles.
- Replace all exterior doors.

## **7. Provide the Elder and Human Services department with increased resources to serve seniors, residents with disabilities, and those in need of assistance.**

- Increase funding for transportation services offered by Elder and Human Services that serve seniors and residents with disabilities (see Transportation Recommendations for more detail).
- Provide a new senior center to meet the space needs of programs that serve the Town's senior population, ideally as part of a multi-purpose community center designed to accommodate and serve residents of all ages.
- Hire a social worker/mental health professional that can be shared between Elder and Human Services and the Littleton Police Department. The Town has seen an increased demand in assistance calls that involve those with mental illness that could be handled by a social worker.
- Work with Elder and Human Services to implement the key findings and recommendations made in the 2015 needs assessment as part of addressing the issues of the continued increase in the elderly population.
- Work with the Parks and Recreation Department to provide more recreational activities geared toward seniors.
- Work with Littleton Public Schools and the Parks and Recreation Department to promote inter-generational activities.

## **8. Create a Transportation Advisory Team to coordinate on transportation issues across departments and across modes of transportation.**

The Town should consider developing a team of staff members across departments that would work together to solve transportation challenges in Littleton. This internal team may comprise staff from the Highway Department, Planning, Elder and Human Services, Conservation, Police, Fire, and LELWD. The team would meet to discuss priority projects, coordination with upcoming development proposals, funding needs, public safety issues, and more.

**9. Invest in technology upgrades that will help the Town accommodate the growing demand for information and transparency, secure lines of communication, and redundancy across systems.**

- Begin to wean the Town's reliance on the Littleton Electric Light and Water Department (LELWD) for technology and IT staff. The Town currently relies on LELWD for a majority of the technology needs. As demand for information, particularly web-based information, grows, the Town should invest in their own staff capacity.
- The Town should purchase new software, and potentially redesign their website and the LCTV website, to make information more readily available, easier to find, and increase the bandwidth to provide information through an online platform.
- Invest in redundant communication and data lines for both the Littleton Police Department and Littleton Fire Department. The current system relies on LELWD, and in the case of a power outage or catastrophe lines of data and communication breakdown.
- Continue to fund, promote, and utilize all the services available to the Town through the Littleton Community Television (LCTV) network. LCTV can serve as a conduit for information in a visual, and more personalized format that can be used to explore challenging topics in Town.
- Explore the use of apps for residents to use to report when repairs to public facilities or infrastructure are needed.

**10. Evaluate the recommendations of the upcoming Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan, and determine next steps.**

A critical component to realizing a revitalized Littleton Common is getting some form of wastewater treatment implemented. The upcoming Strategic Plan will lay out options for the Town to consider. In the end, the Town should implement a wastewater treatment system that helps property owners and businesses succeed, while staying true to what residents want to see in the Common. A treatment system would likely help in attracting new investment to the Common, but the Town should be sure to leverage public money proactively where a return on investment is ensured through private sector development.

**11. Institute a process for evaluating the need for existing volunteer boards and committees. Where possible, consolidate committees with overlapping jurisdiction and eliminate committees whose services are no longer needed.**

Littleton has a large number of volunteer boards and committees that are appointed, not elected, and communication among boards is not a strength. It is common in small towns for committees to be formed to work on a specific issue or project, yet carry on past their useful lifespan. The Town should implement a process by which boards and committees are evaluated to determine whether they have served their purpose, need to be disbanded, or should shift their focus to new or more pressing needs. Options for addressing this recommendation include:

- Evaluate boards and committees every year.
- Evaluate boards and committees every two years.
- Evaluate boards and committees every five years.

**12. Ensure public safety officials have enough staff and equipment to handle today's needs, as well as the needs of a growing and changing resident population.**

- Ensure adequate staffing levels to provide critical life safety services to Littleton residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Work with the Police and Fire Departments to help them implement their recently approved Strategic Plans.
- Continue to invest in training and professional development for Littleton Fire Department staff.
- Support the Littleton Fire Department's transition to providing Advanced Life Support (ALS) services.

**13. Establish mechanisms and policies that link the implementation of the Master Plan to annual work plans, budgets, and capital projects.**

- Sunset the Master Plan Update Steering Committee, replacing it with a Master Plan Implementation Committee reporting to the Board of Selectmen.
- Use the Master Plan recommendations and the implementation table as a guide for financial decisions recommended by the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen, that ultimately go before Town Meeting.
- Time departmental goal setting with goal setting efforts of the Board of Selectmen to first ensure those align. Then, cross reference those goal setting efforts with the implementation section of the Master Plan to ensure decision makers and staff are moving together toward achieving the Town's overarching vision.
- Convene an annual all Town Boards, Committees and Commissions Summit meeting where representatives from each share progress on the master plan goals, obstacles to achieving them, any changes in priorities, plans for the future, etc.

**14. Take measures to ensure the community's resilience.**

- Develop a plan to transition to low and zero impact energy sources in Town-owned buildings.
- Consider Town policy changes that encourage the use of renewable energy sources.
- Develop a public awareness campaign to focus attention on the need to transition to renewable energy sources and other measures regarding protecting the environment (work with School Department).
- Develop policies that lessen the impacts of the built environment on natural resources. Examples include:
- Protect the Town's critical open spaces, agricultural lands, forests and wildlife corridors from development.
- Maximize parking efficiency by exploring shared parking opportunities.
- Consider offering incentives (e.g. reduce taxes for decreasing impervious paving).
- Support and promote alternative means of transportation, especially walking and biking.
- Explore alternative and additional recycling options.
- Improve the Transfer Station, especially circulation.

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- Encourage businesses to consider eco-friendly choices in their procedures and the goods and services they use and sell.
- Work with the Elder and Human Services and other departments in town to develop a Healthy Littleton program promoting health and wellness for residents of all ages.
- Support and encourage the provision of a range of housing options so as to provide choices to seniors and empty nesters wanting affordable options to downsize, young families, and people who work in Littleton and need housing that aligns with their income.
- Consider conducting a study to evaluate the potential impacts of climate change on Littleton and to identify mitigating measures.

# 10 Implementation

## INTRODUCTION

At the outset of the Master Plan process, Littleton residents said they hoped this plan would be more useful than a report that "sits on a shelf." Ultimately, the success of any plan depends on its feasibility and a town's ability to balance near-term interests with long-term needs. The role of an implementation program is to provide balance by bringing all of the key recommendations into focus and organizing them into a plan of action. The schedule can be altered if Littleton needs to respond to unforeseen opportunities, but the overall sequence of actions implies that some steps have a higher priority than others, and some steps need to occur sooner rather than later.

Several of the major Master Plan recommendations call for additional planning (mainly "area" plans that focus on particular parts of town, or infrastructure plans), and zoning amendments that can help local officials exert more control over Littleton's physical evolution. As some areas may be ripe for change more than others, it will be important for the Town to focus resources first where change is likely to occur in the near term. The goal is not to reduce or take away a land owner's private property rights. Rather, it should be to arrive at a plan that protects (if not enhances) those rights while getting the best possible outcome for Littleton.

Littleton will contend with a number of master plan implementation challenges because the town is small and growing and changing quickly. The Town has great department heads and staff, but not enough staff, volunteers, or financial resources to juggle lots of initiatives all at once – at least not without the potential for tension. As a result, implementation will most likely require several years, patience, and periodic reassessments of the implementation schedule as local priorities change over time. In addition, Littleton found it difficult to implement the last master plan, yet some of the earlier recommendations remain relevant today. Like other small towns, Littleton has a history of tension about how far local government should go to manage growth and change. Many residents would like the town to stay just as it is, yet Littleton has already changed in ways that are obvious from a review of historic maps, photographs, and reports.

On one level, Littleton has so much going for it that public disdain for growth is easy to understand. On another level, Littleton has needs that have been deferred for financial, policy, or other reasons. It also has physical characteristics that contribute to its beauty and simultaneously constrain its choices. Finally, master plan implementation in Massachusetts is difficult because planning has such an ambiguous legal position. Here more than in most states, the propensity of master plans to "sit on a shelf" can be attributed, at least in part, to the limited, obsolete tools that local governments have to control their destiny.

Despite these challenges, Littleton has many resources to bring to the process of master plan implementation. Its residents clearly love their town, too, and this seems to apply equally to long-time residents and newcomers. They value the schools and the services they receive from town government, and they appreciate the traditions that make Littleton a pleasant place to live. The Town also has talented officials and staff, so even though Littleton's fairly small local government limits how much can be done



in any given year, the capacity for competent master plan implementation is very strong. In fact, Littleton's will to address issues identified during the master plan process could be seen long before the plan was completed, for some actions identified in the Implementation Program are already underway. This bodes well for the Master Plan, and for Littleton's ability to achieve its goals.

## STEPS TO KEEP AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN ALIVE

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- Appoint an Master Plan Implementation Committee and provide it with reliable staff support.
- Develop a master plan evaluation plan. One of the first steps the Implementation Committee should take is to develop a plan to evaluate and periodically update or modify the Implementation Plan. An annual review often works best, first because it can take a full year to complete seemingly simple steps, and second, a systematic review will institutionalize a process for affirming or revisiting Master Plan recommendations. Some communities have used an annual "retreat" process to involve town officials and interested residents in evaluating and adjusting the plan with the Implementation Committee.
- Have the Board of Selectmen make at least one master plan goal, and/or strategy, a priority in the fiscal year goal setting process. This is a discussion that should take place during the annual goal setting session, which could be informed by the priorities of the Master Plan Implementation Committee. By having the Selectmen make at least one goal and/or strategy a high priority, it ensures that the Master Plan continues to live on, evolve, change over time.
- Engage town departments in annual goal-setting that calls on staff to focus on at least one master plan goal, and/or strategy, as they plan their new year's operations and programs. Similar to the process the Board of Selectmen could undertake each year, the Town Administrator should facilitate a discussion among department heads and staff to determine a subset of the Master Plan's recommendations that are to be worked on in a given year. A discussion that involves all department heads in the same room at the same time could help determine which strategies have overlap across different town departments. Decisions about funding, staff time, and roles and responsibilities should be discussed in this meeting as well.
- Have the Planning Board make an annual report **to** Town Meeting – **at** town meeting – about the progress toward implementing this Master Plan, any changes that have been or need to be made to the Implementation Program, any needs that have changed since 2017, and any new needs that have arisen. **Keep Town Meeting informed.**
- Remember that the Master Plan is not an inflexible planning tool. **This is a plan, not a book.** Use it to plan.
- Plan **now** – in 2017 – for launching a full update of the Master Plan in 2027. What resources will the Town need, and how what does it need to do **every year** between now and 2027 to ensure that Littleton will be ready to update this Plan?

## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM DETAILS

#	Key Theme	Recommendation	Related Elements	Local Government Leadership	Local Government Partners	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Estimated Cost	Priority
1	Littleton Common	Prepare a detailed master plan for the Littleton Common and Beaver Brook area to guide redevelopment.	LU, H, ED, T, TG	PB, PA	HC, BOS, HWY	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Consultant (\$50k)	High
2	Littleton Common	Change zoning for the Littleton Common and the Beaver Brook area to encourage redevelopment according to the area master plan.	LU, H	PB, PA		1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$30k)	Medium
3	Littleton Common	Invest in infrastructure to enhance walking, biking, signage, and parking in the Littleton Common area to make it easier and more convenient for customers and residents to visit local businesses.	ED, T	HWY	EDC, BOS, BPAC	4-6 Years	Moderate	\$\$\$\$	Medium
4	Littleton Common	Make transportation improvements in and around Littleton Common.	T, ED	HWY	EDC, BOS, BPAC	7-10 Years	Moderate	\$\$\$\$	Medium
5	Littleton Common	Use CPA funds to support redevelopment and reuse of historic properties around the Common.	CH, LU	CPC, HIST	EDC	7-10 Years	Moderate	\$\$\$	Low
6	Littleton Common	Determine an appropriate pathway forward for modifying transportation infrastructure on state-owned roadways around Littleton Common.	T, ED	TA, BOS, HWY	BPAC	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium
7	Littleton Common	Underground overhead utility lines along portions of Great Road and King Street to increase the reliability of delivering power and improve aesthetics around the Common.	ED	LELWD, BOS	HWY, EDC	7-10 Years	Difficult	\$\$\$\$	Low
8	Littleton Common	Evaluate the recommendations from the upcoming Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan, and determine next steps.	TG, LU, ED, H	BOS	FC, HWY, TA, EDC	1-3 Years	Difficult	\$\$\$\$	High
9	Planned Growth	Conduct an audit of Littleton's Zoning Bylaw (zoning diagnostic) and recodify and update it, as necessary, before adopting new land use policy initiatives to implement the Master Plan.	LU	PB, PA	FC, ZBA	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Consultant (\$30-50k)	Medium
10	Planned Growth	Conduct a corridor study for Great Road to plan for future land uses, open space and natural resource preservation, transportation improvements, and modify zoning to implement the plan	LU, H, T, OSR, NR	PB, PA, BOS	HWY, EDC, AC, CC	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$50-75k)	High
11	Planned Growth	Prepare an area plan for parcels in the vicinity of the Taylor/Foster Street intersection and modify zoning to implement the plan.	LU, H, ED	PB, PA	EDC	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$75k)	Medium
12	Planned Growth	Plan for and promote commercial activity nodes, particularly in the area around Taylor and Foster Streets.	ED	PB, PA	EDC	4-6 Years	Moderate		Medium
13	Planned Growth	Allow greater density in recognized activity areas, near the train station, around the Common, and in older industrial or commercial areas where redevelopment opportunities exist.	LU, H, ED	PB, PA	BOS, EDC	4-6 Years	Difficult		Medium
14	Thriving Town	Develop and institute business-friendly practices in Town Hall.	ED	TA, PA	EDC, BOS, PB	7-10 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Low

**(Footnotes)**

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IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM DETAILS									
Index	Category	Description	Related Elements	Acronyms	Lead Agency	Timeline	Difficulty	Cost	Impact
15	Thriving Town	Improve transportation connections between area businesses and Littleton's MBTA commuter rail station.	T, ED	TA, BPAC, HWY	EDC	4-6 Years	Difficult	\$\$\$	Medium
16	Thriving Town	Ensure new development, and redevelopment, is sited and designed in such a way that is consistent with the character of the zoning district and location within Littleton.	ED, LU	PB, PA	EDC	4-6 Years	Moderate		Medium
17	Thriving Town	Continue to support The Point and look for opportunities to encourage the expansion of uses at that site, which could include the integration of housing.	ED	EDC	PB, PA, BOS, HC	Ongoing	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Low
18	Thriving Town	Promote and increase support for local farms in order to maintain agriculture as a vital component of Littleton's economy.	ED, OSR, NR	BOS, AC, CC	EDC, PB, PA	Ongoing	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	High
19	Thriving Town	Reexamine the value of utilizing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to attract new businesses to Littleton.	ED	BOS, TA, FC	EDC, PB	Ongoing	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Low
20	Community Health & Well Being	Update the Aquifer and Water Resource Protection District bylaw.	LU, NR, ED	PB, PA	LELWD, CC	4-6 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$10-15k)	Low
21	Community Health & Well Being	Prepare a comprehensive trails plan to identify and prioritize opportunities to connect existing trails and open spaces to form a network of off-street trails for pedestrians and cyclists.	T, NR	BPAC, HWY	CC, OSRP	4-6 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$20-30k)	Medium
22	Community Health & Well Being	Evaluate and institute policies to improve transportation connections to/from the schools.	T, TG	HWY, LPS, SC	SUSC, BPAC	4-6 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium
23	Community Health & Well Being	Develop specific criteria to describe the Town's priorities for acquiring open space.	NR, OSR, TG	CPC, CC, AC	BOS, CT, OSRP	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$10-15K)	High
24	Community Health & Well Being	Undertake a Food Systems Plan to inform town efforts to support local food production, processing, distribution, and sales as a way to help sustain Littleton's remaining family farms.	OSR	AC	PA	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time, Possible Consultant (\$20-25K)	Medium
25	Community Health & Well Being	Partner with the school department to involve Littleton Public Schools in nature education, maintenance of trails and wildlife blinds, and educational programming in town conservation lands.	NR	PNR	LPS, CC	1-3 Years	Moderate	Staff Time	Medium
26	Community Health & Well Being	Prepare, monitor, evaluate, and periodically update a community resilience plan, tailored to Littleton, to ensure that the town's infrastructure and social and economy systems can withstand the impact of climate change and other twenty-first century hazards; and incorporate the recommendations of the resilience plan into this Master Plan as needed.	TG, LU, ED, H, OSR, NR	BOS	All boards, committees, staff	4-6 Years	Difficult	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium
27	Community Health & Well Being	Establish a local funding source for walking and cycling improvements across Town.	T	BOS, FC	TA, HWY, BPAC	4-6 Years	Minimal	\$\$\$	Medium
28	Community Health & Well Being	Ensure public safety officials have enough staff and equipment to handle today's needs, as well as the needs of a growing and changing resident population.	TG	BOS, TA	P, F, FC	4-6 Years	Moderate	\$\$\$	Medium

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IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM DETAILS									
29	Community Health & Well Being	Establish a coordinated effort to identify and remediate invasive species on public land. Work to educate private landowners on removal of invasives, with a focus on large commercial and industrial properties.	NR	CC	CT	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$20-30K)	Medium
30	Community Health & Well Being	Evaluate the impact of climate change on natural resources and water supplies and draw up appropriate mitigation policies and plans. Establish open space corridors and riparian buffers that anticipate future increases in temperature and precipitation.	NR, OSR, TG	CC	PA, CT, LELWD, OSRP, SUSC	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium
31	Community Health & Well Being	Establish a training and education program for site contractors, landscapers, facilities managers, and others to learn about best practices for reducing stormwater runoff and pollution, dealing with invasive species, reducing the use of toxic pesticides and herbicides, and maintaining lands in a way that enhances protection of native species.	NR	CC, SUSC	PA, HD	4-6 Years	Moderate	Staff Time or Consultant (\$10-15K)	Medium
32	Community Health & Well Being	Prepare individual management plans for town conservation areas and recreational facilities.	OSR	PNR	CC, PA	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	High
33	Community Health & Well Being	Provide public education on agriculture, including potential farm education programs such as Mass Audubon's Drumlin Farm in Lincoln.	OSR	AC	PNR, PA	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Low
34	Community Health & Well Being	Improve transportation options for Littleton's seniors and residents with disabilities.	T	EHS, BOS	COA	1-3 Years	Difficult	\$\$\$	High
35	Community Health & Well Being	Evaluate the feasibility of constructing a multi-purpose, intergenerational community center that meets the needs of all residents in Littleton.	TG, OSR	BOS	EHS, FC, PNR, PMBC	1-3 Years	Difficult	\$\$\$\$	High
36	Community Health & Well Being	Examine the recommendations of the Comprehensive Analysis of Recreation Facilities and Fields, and determine next steps.	OSR, TG	PNR	PA	Ongoing	Minimal	Staff Time	Medium
37	Community Health & Well Being	Continue to update the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and align the recommendations with the Town's Capital Improvement Plan and this Master Plan.	T, TG	HWY	TA, BPAC	Ongoing	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$10-15k)	Medium
38	Community Health & Well Being	Continue to improve a comprehensive strategy to protect surface waters and aquifers and the watersheds that feed them.	NR, OSR, TG	PB, PA, CC	HWY, CLC, LELWD	Ongoing	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$20-30K)	Medium
39	Equitable Development	Overhaul and update the over-55 housing bylaw to make it more effective for creating senior housing options.	H, LU	PB, PA	HC, EHS	1-3 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	High
40	Equitable Development	Encourage small accessory apartments on owner-occupied residential lots.	H, LU	PB, PA	HC	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium
41	Equitable Development	Adopt an inclusionary housing bylaw to require affordable housing in new residential or mixed-use developments.	H, LU	PB, PA	HC	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$10-15K)	Medium
42	Equitable Development	Revise the Town's Open Space Development (OSD) bylaw to remove Special Permit requirements and provide incentives to landowners and developers. Allow greater density while protecting woodlands and farms, and loosen restrictions placed on open space so as to protect against reducing the value of farmland.	NR, LU	PB, PA	AC, CC	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$20-25K)	Low

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IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM DETAILS									
43	Building Local Capacity	Make town funds available to support LHC members wishing to attend statewide preservation conferences.	CH, TG	HIST, CPC		4-6 Years	Minimal	\$	Low
44	Building Local Capacity	Create a Transportation Advisory Team to coordinate on transportation issues across departments and across modes of transportation.	TG, T	TA	PA, HWY, P, F, EHS	1-3 Years	Minimal	Staff Time	Medium
45	Building Local Capacity	Hire a full-time facilities manager who would be responsible for the maintenance of town and school buildings, as well as the development of long-term maintenance and replacement plans.	TG	BOS, TA		1-3 Years	Moderate	\$70,000 - \$90,000	High
46	Building Local Capacity	Establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee to promote and implementation of this plan, to evaluate the Town's implementation progress, and to recommend plan amendments as needed to the Littleton Planning Board.	All	BOS, PB, TA		1-3 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	High
47	Building Local Capacity	Evaluate the current functions of the Planning Department to determine whether the Town would benefit from having an economic development coordinator or director.	ED, TG	BOS, TA	PB, EDC, PA	7-10 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Low
48	Building Local Capacity	Establish a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust in order to build local capacity for housing advocacy, housing finance, and housing development.	H	BOS, HC	PA	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium
49	Legacy	Reconsider the current allocation of the annual CPA funds dedicated to historic preservation.	CH, TG	CPC, HIST		4-6 Years	Moderate	\$\$\$	Medium
50	Legacy	Update the Demolition Delay bylaw by extending the demolition period beyond one year.	CH, LU	PB, PA	HIST	4-6 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time; Possible Consultant (\$5-10K)	Medium
51	Legacy	Expand availability of community garden plots through town-supported programming and provision of land within existing conservation areas and/or using private lands secured through temporary agreements with the town.	OSR	CC	PNR, PA	7-10 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Low
52	Legacy	Consider leveraging CPA funds and other budget sources through an open space acquisition bond.	NR, TG	CPC	BOS, PNR, CT	7-10 Years	Moderate	Staff Time or Consultant (\$1-3K)	Medium
53	Legacy	Complete an inventory of historic structures and heritage landscapes in Littleton, including photo documentation of present-day conditions, and update the Town's historic resources inventory and forms.	CH	HIST		4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	High
54	Legacy	Undertake an effort to determine whether the current list of scenic roads should be added to or subtracted from based on changes that have occurred since the adoption of the bylaw in 1974. Develop a photographic inventory of the most critical scenic roads.	CH, T, LU	HIST		7-10 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium
55	Legacy	Work with the LHC, PB, and other groups to establish a Heritage Landscape conservation program.	OSR, TG	HIST	CC, PA, AC	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time, Possible Consultant (\$20-25K)	Medium
56	Legacy	Pursue one or more local historic districts to include properties in areas such as Foster Street/Unitarian Church/Fire Station/Historical Society, as well as the area around Littleton Common.	CH	HIST		7-10 Years	Difficult	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium
57	Legacy	Adopt a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) bylaw and consider designating areas such as Littleton's mid-twentieth century neighborhoods, e.g., those located around the Town's waterbodies.	CH	HIST, PB, PA		7-10 Years	Difficult	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium

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## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM DETAILS

58	Legacy	Encourage committees engaged in historical preservation, environmental protection, open space, planning, and economic development to meet periodically to explore opportunities to collaborate on historic and cultural preservation priorities.	CH, TG	HIST	PB, ZBA, OSRP, EDC CC	Ongoing	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium	
59	Active Government	Establish mechanisms and policies that link the implementation of the Master Plan to annual work plans, budgets, and capital projects.	TG	BOS, TA	Department Heads, FC	1-3 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium	
60	Active Government	Evaluate the recommendations of the upcoming Town Hall Space Needs Study and determine next steps.	TG	BOS, TA	Department Heads, FC, PMBC	1-3 Years	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	High	
61	Active Government	Provide for the 21st century needs of a library facility in Littleton.	TG	BOS, L	FC, PMBC	4-6 Years	Difficult	\$\$\$\$	High	
62	Active Government	Invest in technology upgrades that will help the Town accommodate the growing demand for information, secure lines of communication, and redundancy across systems.	TG	BOS, TA	P, F, LPS, LELWD	4-6 Years	Difficult	\$\$\$	High	
63	Active Government	Pursue a targeted program of outreach and information to enhance public use of conservation lands and recreational facilities.	OSR	PNR	CT	4-6 Years	Moderate	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium	
64	Active Government	Upgrade and modernize the Shaker Lane School.	TG	BOS, LPS	PMBC	4-6 Years	Moderate	\$\$\$	Medium	
65	Active Government	Provide the Elder and Human Services department with increased resources to serve seniors, residents with disabilities, and those in need of assistance.	TG, T, H	BOS, EHS		4-6 Years	Moderate	\$\$\$	Medium	
66	Active Government	Periodically evaluate the need for existing volunteer boards and committees. Where possible, consolidate committees with overlapping jurisdiction and eliminate committees whose services are no longer needed.	TG	BOS, TA		Ongoing	Difficult	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Low	
67	Active Government	Continue to evaluate enrollment trends, school capacity, and space needs in the Littleton Public Schools.	TG, H, LU	SC, LPS	BOS	Ongoing	Minimal	Volunteer Board and Staff Time	Medium	

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# Support Materials



# Glossary

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** – A national law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and government activities.

**Affordable Housing** – For the purposes of Massachusetts Chapter 40B, affordable housing is defined as a unit which could be purchased or rented by a household making up to 80% of the median income of the area. Such housing must be subject to affordable housing restrictions to preserve affordability in the long term.

**Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR)** - A voluntary program which is intended to offer a non-development alternative to farmers and other owners of "prime" and "state important" agricultural land who are faced with a decision regarding future use and disposition of their farms. Towards this end, the program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability.

**American Community Survey (ACS)** – A year-over-year data source run by the US Census Bureau to supplement the ten-year decennial census. ACS data is based on a sample size, unlike the decennial census which is based on a full count of the country's population.

**Approval-Not-Required (ANR)** - Development where lots meet the dimensional requirements of the current zoning as it applies to frontage requirements and approval is not required under the Subdivision Control Law.

**Aquifer and Water Resource Protection District** – This district provides additional protections and restrictions on the land it encompasses in order to maintain the quality of Littleton's water supply.

**Average Daily Traffic (ADT)** – The amount of vehicular traffic traveling along a roadway in a twenty-four-hour period.

**Boston Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** – The organization responsible for conducting federally-required regional transportation planning processes. The Boston MPO covers 101 cities and towns, including Littleton.

**Business Improvement District (BID)** – A public/private partnership group that is formed to help pay for streetscape improvements, signage, promotional material, and infrastructure projects. This can also help to achieve a more cohesive sense of place as efforts to improve and beautify are coordinated.

**Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)** - A short-range plan, usually four to ten years, which identifies capital projects and equipment purchases, provides a planning schedule and identifies options for financing the plan.

**Charrette** - An intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers.

**Chapter 40B** - A state statute, which enables local Zoning Boards of Appeals to approve affordable housing developments under flexible rules if at least 20-25% of the units have long-term affordability restrictions.

**Chapter 90 Funding** – Massachusetts state transportation aid that is provided to municipalities on an annual basis for building and maintaining transportation-related infrastructure.

## LITTLETON MASTER PLAN

**Community Facilities** – Places that house municipal programs and services and provide vital space for the administration of local government.

**Community Preservation Act (CPA)** – A local funding mechanism that Massachusetts communities can adopt that helps pay for costs associated with the preserve open space and historic sites, creation of affordable housing, and development of outdoor recreational facilities

**Community Sponsored Agriculture Program (CSA)** - A system in which a farm operation is supported by shareholders within the community who share both the benefits and risks of food production.

**Complete Streets** – Roadways that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

**Council on Aging (COA)** – A local volunteer council whose mission is to link (elder) needs and resources by developing and/or coordinating services, community education and advocacy.

**CrossTown Connect (CTC)** - CrossTown Connect (CTC) is comprised of five towns (Acton, Boxborough, Littleton, Maynard, and Westford) and eight private businesses (Mill and Main, Guterrez Company, IBM, Juniper, Red Hat, West Acton Villageworks, Potpourri, and Associate Environmental Systems). CTC is focused on increasing mobility and providing more transportation options for residents and employees of these partner organizations. The primary focus is on coordinating shuttle van service to increase efficiency and utilization.

**Demolition Delay** – A zoning mechanism available to cities and towns to delay the demolition of a historically-significant structure in hopes the delay will cause the owner/developer to rethink the demolition of the structure.

**Elements** – Topic areas prescribed in state law G.L. c. 41, § 81D that are required content in master plans. Land use, Housing, Economic development, Natural and cultural resources, Open space and recreation, Services and facilities, and Circulation.

**Floodplain** - An area of low-lying ground adjacent to a river, formed mainly of river sediments and subject to flooding.

**Foods Systems Plan** - A comprehensive assessment that identifies the current strengths of the municipality's food system and opportunities for improvement. The plan should look at all components of the food system including production, processing, distribution, retail, access, and waste management.

**Goals** – There are eight goals in the Master Plan, seven of which align with the seven Elements required by state law plus one additional for Town Governance added by Littleton.

**Household** – One or more people living in the same housing unit as their principal place of residence.

**Last Mile** – The connection between a transit stop and a destination. This typically is used in situations where getting from a transit stop to an end destination is particularly long and/or unsafe.

**MBTA** - Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

**MassDOT** – Massachusetts Department of Transportation

**MassGIS** - Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information

**Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)** – The regional planning agency covering the 101 cities and towns that make up the Boston Region, including Littleton.

**Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) Subregion** – The MAPC region is divided into eight separate subregions, or grouping of municipalities with similar characteristics. The MAGIC

subregion is a grouping of thirteen municipalities that lie between Route 128 and Interstate 495, including Littleton.

**Mixed Use** – A combination of residential and commercial development that can be either constructed vertically in a multi-story building, or horizontally with uses adjacent to another in one more buildings on a lot.

**Municipal Housing Trust** – A local housing trust allows municipalities to collect funds for affordable housing, segregate them out of the general municipal budget into a trust fund, and use the funds for local initiatives to create and preserve affordable housing.

**Open Space Development (OSD)** – A zoning bylaw that was adopted by the Town to promote saving open space and agricultural lands by encouraging a clustering of residential development on a parcel of land instead of having large lots spread across the parcel.

**Overlay District** - A regulatory tool that creates a special zoning district, placed over an existing base zone(s), which identifies special provisions in addition to those in the underlying base zone.

**Recommendations** – There are sixty-seven recommendations resulting from all the work in the Master Plan.

**Resiliency** – The ability of someone or something to return back to the original form or position. To recover from adversity.

**Safe Routes to School (SRTS)** – A national transportation funding program investing in infrastructure to help students access schools safely by walking and biking.

**Strategies and Themes** – There are eight strategies and themes in the Master Plan to guide growth and change, and provide a framework for the sixty-seven recommendations

**Stormwater Runoff** – Water from rain or snowmelt that flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces such as pavement, driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent stormwater from naturally permeating the ground.

**Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)** – A measurement of a community's stock of low- or moderate-income housing administered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** – An exemption from property taxation on all or part of the increased value of real estate as a result of new development.

**Town Services** – The suite of services provided by a municipality to the people who live and work in that city or town. Examples include schools, police, fire, trash collection, etc.

**Vernal Pool** - Temporary pools of water that provide habitat for distinctive plants and animals.

**Watershed** – An area or ridge of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers, basins, or seas.

**Wetland** – Land consisting of marshes or swamps, saturated land.

**Zoning Bylaw (ZBL)** – The Zoning Bylaw is the written form of zoning regulations for a town in Massachusetts. Zoning is the principal way a town regulates the use of land within its borders. Zoning may be use-based (regulating the many uses to which land may be put), it may regulate building height, lot coverage, and similar characteristics, or more often, some combination of these.



# References

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## Sources of Data

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- Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS)
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2010-2014
- Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
- MassDOT Roadway Inventory
- MassDOT Crash Data
- Chapter 90 Apportionments
- Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (Boston MPO), Traffic Count Logs
- Littleton Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, Green International
- MBTA Annual Ridership, Blue Book
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- Cycling and Walking Map
- Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- CrossTown Connect TMA
- Massachusetts Department of Revenue
- Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
- Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
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- Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System
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## Documents

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- MAPC Complete Streets Policy for Littleton
- Littleton Roadway Improvement Plan, FY 2011-FY 2017
- Town of Littleton Economic Development Committee Recommendations Memo
- 495/MetroWest Development Compact Report, 2012
- Town of Littleton Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool Report, 2016
- Commonwealth Collaborative. Project Completion Report: Survey of Historic Resources Town of Littleton. 1997-1998.
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- Town of Littleton. Open Space and Recreation Plans, 2003, 2009 and 2016.
- MAGIC Comprehensive Agricultural Planning Program, 2014.

## Interviews

### APRIL 1-5, 2016 (INITIAL MASTER PLAN INTERVIEWS)

#### ● **Town Staff (Individuals or their designees)**

- Town Administrator
- Assistant Town Administrator
- Library
- Maintenance
- Building
- Highway
- Treasurer
- Clerk
- Assessor
- Elder and Human Services
- Police
- Fire
- Parks and Recreation
- Conservation
- School Superintendent

- Littleton Electric Light and Water Departments (LELWD)
- Littleton Housing Authority
- **Boards and Committees** (individual members, not entire comm
  - Finance Committee
  - Zoning Board of Appeals
  - Trails Committee
  - Conservation Commission
  - Open Space Committee
  - Trust Fund Committee
  - Historical Commission
  - Economic Development Committee
  - Sustainability Committee
  - Shade Tree Committee
  - Master Plan Update Steering Committee
  - Planning Board
  - Board of Selectmen
  - Beautification of the Common Committee
  - Sewer Committee
  - School Committee
  - Clean Lakes Committee
  - Bike and Pedestrian Committee
  - Housing Committee
  - Community Preservation Committee
- **Other Participants**
  - Local developers
  - Littleton Business Association
  - Littleton Conservation Trust
  - Friends of the Council on Aging
  - Nashoba Associated Boards of Health
  - Local attorneys
  - Local residents

## **OTHER INTERVIEWS**

- **Core Assessment Meetings** (June -July 2016).
- Jim Clyde, Operations Manager, Littleton Highway Department, June 22, 2016



# Community Participation

## Introduction

Citizen participation is critical to the development of any town plan. In addition to the local knowledge that residents bring to the plan, providing multiple venues for participation is the only way to ensure that both majority and minority perspectives will be heard, evaluated, and accounted for as the plan evolves. Providing a variety of venues where residents can talk to one another also provide an opportunity to express a range of points of view, hear a variety of priorities, and even the potential to convince one another, in an effort to come to relative consensus. While the plan can to a large degree be developed based on an analysis of existing data and best practice, involving residents, business owners and town officials in a dialogue results in critical elements necessary to build a strong foundation of the plan. These include:

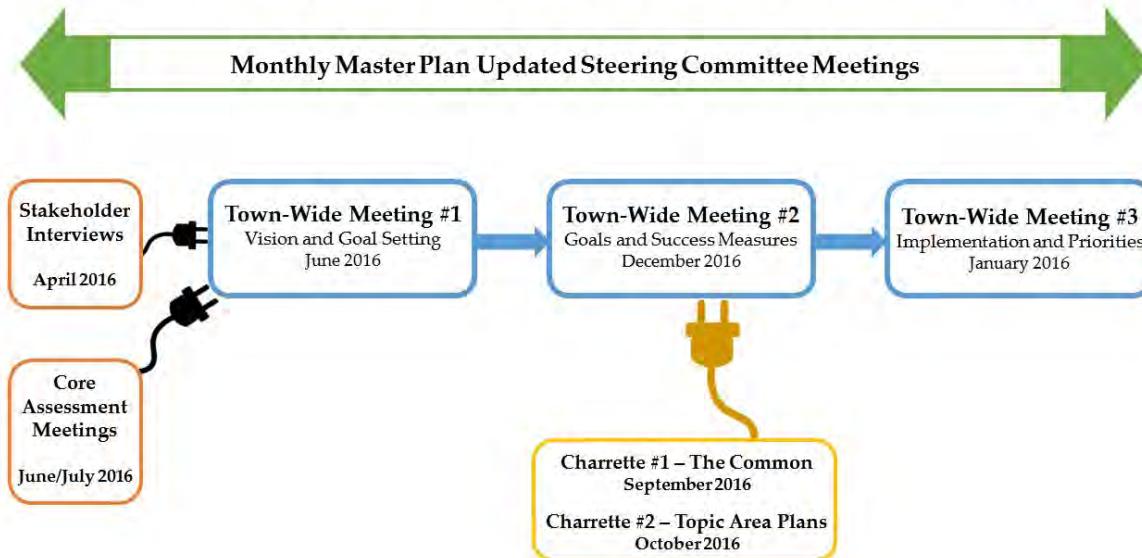
- Identification of shared values and a common vision for the future;
- Developing a shared understanding of concerns and desires as well as the fact that there may be competing interests and priorities;
- Improved working relationships between the various constituents;
- Community building as a result of working towards common goals;
- Momentum for action, and;
- Support, enthusiasm, and a stake in the implementation of the plan.

The Littleton Master Plan Steering Committee as well as Town Staff leading the Plan set the goal of making a concerted effort to attract attention to the planning process so that all who wished to participate would know when and how they could do so. An outreach plan outlined the ways in which the community would be informed of opportunities to participate, and listed the specific forums. The Consultant Team, Steering Committee and Staff dedicated time and effort to advertise and host these venues.

A logo and tagline were developed to help to create an identity for the planning process and to help to distinguish it from other processes going on in Town at the same time.

**Figure A.1 - Public Process Diagram**

### LITTLETON MASTER PLAN UPDATE: PUBLIC PROCESS DIAGRAM



## Opportunities to Participate

### Meetings with the Master Plan Update Steering Committee (MPUSC)

A twelve-member Steering Committee was created to help steer the process. The RKG Team met with the Committee monthly from March 2016 through May 2017 to discuss process, public participation opportunities, and to help craft the various components that made up the Master Plan. The Committee was comprised of board and committee members and representatives of the community-at-large. Committee members who represented boards and committees included those from the Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Sustainability Committee, Housing Authority, Community Preservation Committee, and Finance Committee.

The Steering Committee expended a great deal of time to help with public outreach, shaping the public process, and reviewing the content of the Plan. Committee members attended all of the public forums and carefully listened to the public's input. They also very systematically reviewed the Consultant's recommendations, asking many questions and in some cases, requesting alternative solutions. They contributed significantly to the development of the Master Plan.

### Community Meetings

Littleton held three town-wide meetings and two charrettes<sup>1</sup> in order to provide ample opportunity for a broad-based community conversation. These meetings were well attended and participants were very engaged in constructive dialogue with their neighbors.

#### TOWN-WIDE MEETING #1: VISIONING AND GOAL SETTING (JUNE 13, 2016)

The purpose of the meeting was to identify shared values regarding the future development of Littleton; these were then used to develop a vision and set of goals. The Master Plan was developed based on these.

Approximately 220 residents joined the Master Plan Steering Committee for a sit down community dinner, followed by an opportunity to provide input at four interactive stations located on the back wall of the cafeteria. The Consultants then gave a brief presentation regarding the purpose of master planning, a progress report of work completed to date, and instructions on how to participate. Participants were divided into fourteen (14) smaller discussion groups facilitated by members of the Steering Committee and the Consultant Team. Conversation was lively and participants ranged in age from approximately 30 to over 70 years old. The number of years people have lived in town varied widely from 6 months to multiple generations of living in Littleton.

Childcare was provided for approximately 25 children, many of whom also gave their ideas regarding the future of Littleton in the form of drawings. All participants were eligible for a free raffle. Several residents won prizes at the end of the evening when the raffle was drawn.

During the small group discussions, participants were asked the following questions:



<sup>1</sup> A charrette is an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the planners/designers. Additionally, it allows everyone who participates to work together and to provide direct input into the plan.

- What are your favorite things about Littleton (that you would want to ensure be preserved in the future)?
- What are your least favorite things about Littleton (that you feel are important to change in the future)?
- What are your thoughts regarding additional development in Littleton? What kind of development (housing, commercial, industrial) would you consider to be desirable? Where should it occur? Any specific desires or concerns?
- If you could do one thing to improve Littleton, what would it be?
- Participants were also asked to respond to the following question in writing: What makes Littleton unique?

#### **CORE ASSESSMENT MEETINGS (FOCUSED ON MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS) (JULY – AUGUST 2016)**

Local “experts,” that is individuals with specific knowledge regarding the subject matter covered by Master Plan elements were invited to participate in eight (8) “core assessment meetings” to discuss existing conditions as well as future trends and possibilities. Discussions were organized around the following master plan elements:

- Land Use and Zoning
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Natural Resources and Open Space
- Cultural/Historic Resources
- Community Facilities and Services
- Governance

#### **CHARRETTE #1: FOCUS ON LITTLETON COMMON AREA (SEPT. 30 AND OCT. 1, 2016)**

Residents were invited to participate in a two-day planning and design exercise to develop a vision for the future of Littleton Common. The charrette began on Friday afternoon with a walking tour of the area. Approximately 35 people participated in the walking meeting pointing out features, positive and

### **Most Frequent Responses from Town-Wide Visioning Meeting (June 13, 2016)**

#### **FAVORITE THINGS:**

- Small town feeling
- Rural character
- Good and improving schools
- Open space

#### **ALSO:**

- Lakes
- Library
- Natural Features
- History/Historic buildings
- Recreation
- LELWD
- Walking/hiking trails

#### **LEAST FAVORITE THINGS:**

- Lack of walkability /bikeability
- Poor management of development
- Traffic and road conditions
- Need for improved town governance
- Condition of Town Common area
- Lack of senior housing and adequate senior center

#### **ALSO:**

- Taxes
- Lack of commercial vitality
- Need for additional recreation
- Need to improve schools (esp. class size)

negative, and sharing thoughts with one another regarding potential improvements. This was followed by a workshop at the Littleton Middle School (from 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM) where participants, who were joined by other residents, continued to discuss what they wished to preserve and what they wished to change about the Town Common area. The next morning residents were invited to continue to work on developing a vision for the future of this critical area of town. They worked together on developing a physical model of their visions, including ideas for extending sidewalks, bike paths, gathering spaces, parking and redevelopment opportunities.

Ideas from three different groups at the Littleton Common Charette



## **CHARRETTE #2: FOCUS ON FOUR ELEMENTS (OCT. 14-15, 2016)**

Residents were invited to participate in a two-day planning and design exercise to think more deeply about four key areas:

- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Agriculture and Food Systems
- Open Space and Recreation

The purpose of the charrette which began on Friday afternoon and continued on Saturday morning, was for participants to:

- explore challenges and opportunities for the major elements of the Master Plan;
- help develop a preliminary set of goals and objectives for each element;
- explore the meaning of sustainability for each theme, and;
- Saturday morning participants identified physical planning ideas and explored these using maps, photos and lists of issues developed the previous evening.

## **TOWN-WIDE MEETING #2: DETERMINING AND MEASURING SUCCESS (DEC. 7, 2016)**

The purpose of this meeting, held on December 7, 2016, was to review and confirm the Vision and set of goals developed with the public's input, and to define and identify ways that we can use to measure and determine that we have successfully achieved these goals.

Approximately 90 residents joined the Master Plan Steering Committee for a sit down dinner followed by an opportunity to provide input at eight interactive stations. The evening began with a brief presentation by the Consultant Team. Afterwards residents were invited to visit stations which were organized around the master plan goals. At each station residents were asked the following questions:

- How would you know that the Town has met this goal?
- What do you think it would take to do this?
- What existing resources exist?
- Who should be involved in making it happen?

## **TOWN-WIDE MEETING #3: PRESENTING THE PLAN (JAN. 25, 2016)**

The third Town-wide meeting was held to present the Plan's key recommendations to the public. A series of stations were set up to both present the recommendations and to ask the public for their input. For each recommendations participants were asked to indicate whether or not they agree, somewhat agree, need more information, are willing to have the Town spend more money to get more information or disagree. They were also asked to explain if they agreed with a specific recommendation, the reason for their agreement.

Participants were also given \$100 "Littleton dollars" in \$5 Community Preservation dollar bills to "spend" as they would like the Town to spend by allocating this money in the Community Preservation "buckets," namely affordable housing, open space, recreation, and historic preservation.

## Interviews, Focus Groups

### INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

On April 1st and April 5<sup>th</sup> members of the Consultant Team held almost 50 interviews with a wide range of stakeholders representing Town Departments, Boards, Committees, local developers, business owners, local attorneys and residents. Interviews were held in small groups as one way of obtaining information from people who are knowledgeable about local conditions. Groups were formed based on availability, that is, individuals signed up for a time slot and were grouped with others who had signed up for the same time. The discussions were guided by beginning the conversation with the following questions:

- What attracts people to Littleton?
- What has changed in Littleton during the time you have lived or worked here?
- What issues do you think we are likely to hear about during the Master Plan process?
- What opportunities do you see for Littleton in the future?
- What challenges do you see for Littleton in the future?
- Can you identify key accomplishments that the Town or your department has been able to accomplish over the past three to five years?
- Are there any unmet needs that can't go unaddressed without diminishing the quality of public services in town?

### DEPARTMENT HEADS MEETING

In January 2017, members of the Consultant Team met with department heads and the Town Administrator to review and discuss the draft set of recommendations for the Master Plan. Since many of the department heads and their staff will be responsible for elements of implementing the Master Plan, it was critical to get their feedback and buy-in. Recommendations were added and refined as a result of their input into the process.

### MEETING WITH AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Members of the Consultant Team met with the Agricultural Commission in February 2017 to better understand issues faced by farmers and large land owners, and to explore mutually beneficial recommendations that could help them as well as the Town. The discussion focused on agriculture as an economic development tool, ways to increase patronage at area farms and markets, and land use and zoning tools that could be implemented to help farmers and land owners. This discussion helped inform several areas of the Master Plan and many recommendations.

## Presence at Town-wide Events

Members of the MPUSC staffed a booth at the Town's Third Thursday event increasing awareness and providing information regarding the Plan, giving out handouts with the website address for those who wanted more information. MPUSC members also staffed a booth at the Littleton Country Fair, and attended a Littleton High School football game to promote the Master Plan and hand out t-shirts. LCTV staff worked closely with MPUSC members to create a series of public service announcements at critical points in the process to inform the public about the Master Plan and upcoming participatory events.

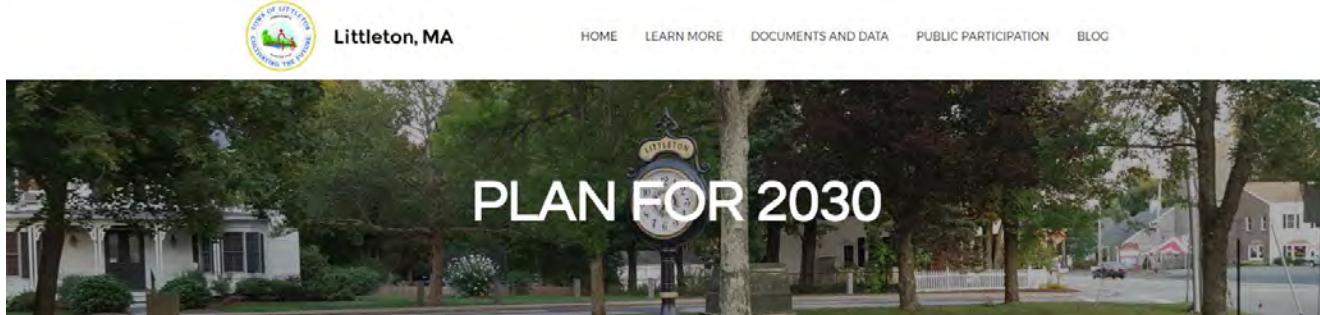


## Online Presence

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### Web

A project website provided an on-line “place” where all documents and data were concentrated, where information regarding public forums and the summaries of input were posted. The website also hosted a master plan blog populated by members of the Town, the Steering Committee and the Consultant Team.



### Social Media

Members on the Master Plan Update Steering Committee made frequent updates to a dedicated Facebook page<sup>2</sup> for the Master Plan throughout the process. This was coordinated with website updates and new blog postings to ensure maximum visibility in the community. The Facebook page also included posts regarding the release of draft documents and deliverables, as well as invitations to public forums and events.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/LittletonMAMasterPlan/>



# **Technical Appendix**

## **MEETING SUMMARIES**



**April 1 and 5, 2016**  
**Littleton Master Plan Update**  
*Summary of Initial Interviews*

On April 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, staff from RKG Associates and Community Circle held stakeholder interviews at Littleton Town Hall to begin to understand the perspectives of town staff, board and committee members, and residents regarding the positive attributes and challenges the Town faces today and looking forward to the future. Interviews were held in groups of three to five and were arranged and coordinated by the Town's Planning Administrator/Permit Coordinator. The following is a list of departments, boards, committees, and other stakeholders represented during the two days of interviews:

- Town Departments (individual staff members, not entire department)
  - Town Administrator
  - Assistant Town Administrator
  - Library
  - Maintenance
  - Building
  - Highway
  - Treasurer
  - Clerk
  - Assessor
  - Elder and Human Services
  - Police
  - Fire
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Conservation
  - School Superintendent
  - Littleton Electric Light and Water Departments (LELWD)
  - Littleton Housing Authority
- Boards and Committees (individual members, not entire committee)
  - Board of Health
  - Finance Committee
  - Zoning Board of Appeals

- Trails Committee
- Conservation Commission
- Open Space Committee
- Trust Fund Committee
- Historical Commission
- Economic Development Committee
- Sustainability Committee
- Shade Tree Committee
- Master Plan Update Steering Committee
- Planning Board
- Board of Selectmen
- Beautification of the Common Committee
- Sewer Committee
- School Committee
- Clean Lakes Committee
- Bike and Pedestrian Committee
- Housing Committee
- Community Preservation Committee

- Other Stakeholders
  - Local developers
  - Littleton Business Association
  - Littleton Conservation Trust
  - Friends of the Council on Aging
  - Nashoba Associated Boards of Health
  - Local attorneys
  - Local residents

The following is a summary of the main themes and comments the consultant team heard during the two days of interviews.

**What attracts people to Littleton?**

- Small town rural character, country roads.
- Open spaces and water bodies.
- Schools (including special needs program and services)
- Transportation access (highway, commuter rail)
- More affordable than many surrounding towns ("an affordable Acton")
- Littleton has everything you need – shopping, housing, open space, waterways, supermarkets, and good schools.
- Littleton is the "best of both worlds" with rural character and open spaces, as well as more modern shopping centers and amenities.

*"What can we do as a Town to mitigate and control the process, channeling the increasing development pressure and still retain the features we all moved here for?"*

- A very safe community.
- A growing node between many communities along I-495.
- Center of the “thinkbelt” with many high-tech companies nearby.
- Family-oriented.

**What has changed in Littleton during the time that you've lived or worked here?**

- More development has taken place and brought addition housing units and residents to town.
- Traffic has increased significantly.
- Property taxes have increased substantially.
- Housing costs have increased substantially. The price point is too high for many young families.
- The quality of the lakes in Littleton have diminished.
- The small town feel and character are slowly diminishing.
- Families are more fragmented now, parents and adult children live further away from each other.
- Community organizations that played the role of welcoming new residents to town have disappeared.
- The Town has changed from a more rural/farming community to a bedroom community.
- Large businesses have taken away from the small town feel of Littleton.
- Schools have improved considerably.
- The population has doubled.
- The population is more diverse (used to be “a closed WASP old-fashioned New England town”).

**What issues do you think we are likely to hear about during the Master Plan process?**

- There seems to be a division in town between people who would like to see more land preserved for open space versus people who would like to see more development occur in strategically located areas in town.
- Property taxes are very high and residents question the level of service they are getting for the taxes they pay.
- Housing costs are increasing which makes it harder for lower-income residents and seniors to stay in town.
- There are limited locations where seniors can downsize to and still remain in Littleton.
- Building sewers to serve portions of town.
- Residents who want sidewalks versus those that do not. Some people believe sidewalks represent an urban lifestyle. Additionally, in some cases the construction of sidewalks has been perceived as the removal of trees. There is a need to prioritize locations.
- Traffic has gotten worse in town because of new development and vehicles that cut through Littleton coming off I-495 and other state routes that bisect the town.

- Need more parking at the commuter rail station.
- Clarifying the role of The Common versus the role of The Point. Who is served by these two areas and can they benefit one another? How can the Common differentiate itself from the Point enough to flourish?
  - Parking is limited around the Town Common.
  - Light fixtures are reportedly ugly
  - The need for sewer to support more businesses and the related fiscal and environmental impacts
- General sense that the recommendations from the prior Master Plan have gone unfulfilled.
- There was an attempt to create an historic district in town, but it did not pass.
- There is a lack of streetscape, street lighting, and a brand that could go along with the Town Common.
- There are mixed feelings regarding The Point, some appreciate the amenities it offers, while others feel it is out of character and doesn't fit with Littleton's small town/rural feel and look.
- That regulatory boards and permitting can be difficult.

**What opportunities do you see for Littleton in the future?**

- Having a separate town electric and water district is attractive to residents and businesses, it also provides the Town with local in-house experts that can deal with these issues.
- There are opportunities to attract new businesses to the distribution park and the Very Fine plant. "Economic development that is consistent with community character".
- There are opportunities to address the growing housing affordability concerns, and to find ways to accommodate housing for seniors in Littleton.
- Utilizing the train station as a way to get people to jobs in Littleton, in nearby communities, and serve the traditional commuter pattern into Boston.
- Expand upon the CrossTown Connect transportation system to create a multi-town transit system that connects people to jobs, shopping, medical facilities, and housing.
- Take a more thorough look at the Town Common and determine what the community wants for this area.
- Is there an opportunity for an assisted living and independent living facility in town?
- Would love to see a community center built in town that could support the needs of elder and human services, parks and rec, afterschool programs, veteran's agent, and other users who need space.
- Indian Hill offers an opportunity to create a community center.
- Opportunities to create trail networks in Littleton that connect to destinations in the town, as well as connecting to adjacent communities.

*"Littleton can still be a small town and not be rural."*

- Redeveloping the area around Taylor Street/495/Route 2 as a location for mixed use with residences, retail, and office.
- Try to rehabilitate the old Digital office buildings near 495 and make them available for new businesses to take advantage of the reverse commute and commuter rail.
- There is a large daytime population from large area employment centers that could support additional retail.
- When the new library is built, the space currently being used by the library (at the Municipal Complex) will become available.
- Consider regionalizing schools, senior center and library
- Conant Mill could become more of an attraction that could help to anchor energy in the Town Common.

**What challenges do you see for Littleton in the future?**

- The Town will need to comply with pending storm water regulations coming down from the US EPA.
- Housing costs are rising, and there are limited options for smaller, more affordable housing.
- After the recent tax vote that adjusted the split tax rate, more seniors are having a difficult time remaining in their homes.
- Maintaining the level of service expected in the face of new growth. Littleton is still a growing community and new residents require services.
- Can the Town continue to grow without taking on the sewer issue?
- How does the Town address the growing needs of the senior population with the current level of service provided?
- The Town has had difficulty looking forward and planning for the future it wants. Decisions recently have been reactionary and focused on the issue of the day.
- High end retailers are not ready to come to this area yet. They don't fully understand the purchasing power of Littleton and surrounding communities.
- Retail spending is not being captured by Littleton's market and is being spent in Nashua (Rockingham Mall).

*"There are two camps in Town (the sustainability, environmentally-oriented versus those who would like to develop in a strategic way). The master plan will need to address these two ideals and provide a forum for discussion and consensus building that will outlive the master planning process. It will need to help the Town identify common priorities."*

*"The need for a higher level vision and plan that is easy to follow that helps preserve the town's character and also discusses ways to pay for what the community wants and needs."*

- Schools are getting close to capacity, and the ELL program is seeing greater demand. Also as more people come to Town for the schools, there will be increasing class sizes and there is already a waiting list for School Choice students. The Town may have to take fewer of these students which would result in a loss of revenue.
- The shortage, and use, of recreational field space is a major challenge for both the schools and the recreation department. There needs to be an identification of locations for more fields and the budget to support it.
- Developing nicer commercial buildings is challenging because the rents may not be able to support the cost of construction, particularly in the Common area.
- Open space that is not under permanent protection is slowly being purchased by developers for housing.
- Understanding the many priorities in Town and figuring out a way to assess what the Town can do with the finances available.
- Most commercial property owners don't live in Town.
- As the Town attracts larger businesses, what will the impact be on the smaller businesses in Town (e.g. Market Basket on Donelan's Supermarket)
- Funding will be needed to clean the lakes. Communication/messaging will be difficult, especially to the "silent majority" who is too busy to pay attention to Town issues and also do not vote.
- Communication among Committees and Boards needs improvement.

**Can you identify key accomplishments that the Town or your department has been able to accomplish over the past three to five years?**

- The library assisted over 50,000 users last year and circulated 150,000 items. In addition the library hosts numerous community groups, and hosts computer programming classes for kids.
- Town wide, the interdepartmental collaboration is excellent. Department heads and staff help each other out with projects and data requests. They reach consensus regarding an issue and then write a Memorandum of Agreement between the different entities involved.
- The Building Committee recently completed a Facilities Study (3 years old) that is web-based and integrated with labor and cost data. Also a Capital Improvement Plan was recently developed and is connected to the Facilities Study so that a preventive maintenance plan can be followed.
- The Open Space and Recreation Plan is about to be completed.
- Adopted a Complete Streets Policy (voted #1 by Smart Growth America).
- Littleton recently became a Green Community which was driven by the Sustainability Committee and supported by a dedicated group of Town staff who pulled together to help achieve this goal.
- Zero Waste Day which is put on by the Sustainability Committee each year.
- The promotion of the residential solar program, in partnership with Boxborough, achieved their highest goal of adoption thereby enabling inexpensive rates.

- Adoption of CPA and expanding its program for maximum benefit.
- Completion of the Needs Assessment for Littleton Elder and Human Services and the Council on Aging in 2015.

**Are there any unmet needs that can't go unaddressed without diminishing the quality of public services in town?**

- The current library space is overcapacity, but plans are in the works for constructing a new library next to Town Hall.
- Funding for the maintenance and expansion of the transportation network (roads, sidewalks, bike facilities, trails, etc.) is not enough to keep up with demand. (where there are no sidewalks, people use trails to get around)
- There is no Safe Routes to School program.
- There is a need for a larger space for seniors to gather for socialization, classes, exercise, and meals.
- There is a need to expand transportation options for seniors who can no longer drive.
- As new growth occurs, there will be an increased strain on inspectional services in the building department.
- The Town already has a dearth of active recreation spaces for residents, particularly playing fields that can be used for multiple sports. As the population continues to grow, this challenge will be compounded.
- New development is leading to more police, fire, and EMS calls and each department is starting to feel the pressure. The increase in the elderly population has also added to the increase in calls for service.
- Human services department is providing social service not only to seniors, but also to new residents who are lower-income or to individuals whose first language is not English. The demands on these services has increased over time.
- There is a need for affordable housing for seniors (the waiting list in existing housing is currently at 2 years).
- What is the total build out under current zoning?



## SUMMARY OF CORE ASSESSMENT MEETINGS

During the months of June and July 2016, the RKG Team completed eight core assessment meetings to help inform each topic area covered by the Master Plan. Each core assessment meeting was populated by a group of local experts, town staff, board and committee members, and engaged citizens who had specific knowledge of the topic area at hand. The core assessment meetings offered an opportunity for members of the RKG Team to engage in an in-depth discussion about the topic area with people who are knowledgeable about the subject area, and understand how it is applied and addressed in the context of Littleton. The information gleaned from the core assessment meetings helped inform the corresponding chapter of the existing conditions section of the Master Plan.

Core assessment meetings were conducted for each topic area listed below:

- Historical and Cultural Resources – June 1, 2016
- Transportation – June 10, 2016
- Housing – June 16, 2016
- Open Space and Natural Resources – June 22, 2016
- Facilities and Services – June 22, 2016
- Land Use – June 23, 2016
- Economic Development – July 13, 2016
- Governance – July 18, 2016

The following is a brief summary highlighting some of the topics, ideas, and opinions shared during each of the core assessment meetings. These summaries are not meant to be an extensive recap of each meeting.

### **Historical and Cultural Resources Meeting – June 1, 2016**

- Littleton has a strong and active Historical Commission and Historical Society, but both volunteer-based groups find that operating without staff support is challenging.
- Littleton has many historic and architecturally significant assets but little regulatory authority in place to protect these assets from inappropriate alterations or demolition and to ensure that new development enhances the town's historic character.
- The areas of Littleton Common, Long Lake, Great Road/ Rt 119, the Depot Area and Foster Street near the train station are the most problematic areas in relation to historic and cultural resource objectives.



- While the town has not approved the designation of historic districts in the past, public sentiment seems to be changing and the community may now be more supportive of these regulations.
- Communication and collaboration between local officials, town personnel, and planning, conservation and historic boards is critical to building support for historic preservation goals.
- Need to firmly define the town's historic areas and cultural assets and foster public appreciation and understanding of the benefits of historic preservation.

### Transportation Meeting - June 10, 2016

- Littleton is making progress addressing the transportation needs for all modes in town (driving, walking, biking, and transit).
- Strong desire and need to link the Commuter Rail station to other parts of town.
- Off-street trails are very popular in Littleton and are viewed as a way to connect parts of town.
- The sidewalk network needs to be improved, but there are challenges such as funding, the removal of trees, narrow roadways, stone walls, and encroachment on private property.
- Chapter 90 transportation funds are not keeping pace with infrastructure needs in town.
- The CrossTown Connect shared public transportation system is a great model of communities working together to try to solve mobility challenges. The communities continue to work on shared dispatch, shared vehicles, and shared rides to improve service.
- Green International is currently working on a Complete Streets prioritization plan for the Town that can be incorporated into the Master Plan Update.

### Housing Meeting - June 16, 2016

- Littleton seniors have very few options to "downsize" from single-family homes or move into more affordable/suitable housing as they age.
- Seniors need housing options with services.
- Littleton is over the 10 percent minimum under Chapter 40B, but the town still has needs for affordable housing.
- Littleton used to be affordable to young families, but this is no longer the case. People should not focus on elderly housing needs alone. There are families in need, too.
- There is very limited variety of housing in Littleton. Getting people to agree about an approach to creating more types of housing (other than single-family homes) will be a challenge for the master plan.
- Overall, the quality of housing in Littleton is very good. There are very few examples of substandard/"tear-down" housing in the town.



- The Housing Production Plan that MAPC prepared for the Town is well done and is a good resource about housing needs in Littleton (not just affordable housing).

### Open Space and Natural Resource Meeting – June 22, 2016

- Several town boards and commissions work to preserve open space, but they are sometimes outflanked by well-financed, fast-moving developers.
- The sheer cost of land makes it impossible for the town to compete with development interests – one project can use up the capacity of the Community Preservation fund for several years.
- Conservation efforts in Littleton tend to be reactionary rather than proactive. Town boards and commissions need to have a clear set of priorities and work together to manage limited funds for implementation of projects.
- The Rt. 119/2A Great Road corridor is critical to Littleton's identity. The town should work to preserve these agricultural corridors – maintaining farms while preserving rural character.
- Sustaining the quality and quantity of water supplies is an important issue that can only be effectively managed at a watershed level. Groundwater withdrawals may already outstrip sustainable yields.
- Public access to lakes and ponds is another critical issue. A number of ponds have primarily private access and there is limited connectivity between public parcels.
- Many of the ponds are threatened by contaminated runoff and invasive species. The Clean Lakes Commission can play an important role, but lacks professional back-up.
- Biodiversity can only be preserved by thinking at a town-wide scale and protecting large areas of habitat as well as connecting corridors.
- Better connectivity is needed for bike routes and walking paths.
- More information needed about the latest zoning techniques and other available tools for open space conservation.

### Facilities and Services Meeting - June 22, 2016

- Overall, town services are well-run and for the most part meet the needs of the citizens and businesses.
- There is a lot of longevity across the current Town staff, but there are a number of employees who are getting close to retirement. The Town needs to think about succession planning and bringing in new employees.
- The town does not have one dedicated staff member in charge of facilities. The duty is currently handled by several people, spearheaded by the Assistant Town Administrator.



- The town has been handling issues with facilities in a reactive manner, and not a proactive manner. This has led to some deferred maintenance and not planning ahead for scheduled maintenance in some cases.
- There is a need in town for new and/or upgraded facilities. The Town has invested recently in new schools and in a new police station. A new fire station is in the design process, and a new or upgraded library is needed. Fields, and field maintenance, are also needed.
- The growing senior population is putting strains on transportation, staffing, and space to host events and programs.
- There is not enough indoor recreation space in Littleton. Speaks to the need for more space, maybe a recreation center.

### Land Use Meeting - June 23, 2016

- The quality of the school system seems to be one of the primary drivers of residential development and demand in Littleton.
- Houses, once put up for sale, remain on the market for a very short period of time and typically sell at or above the asking price.
- There is a feeling that Littleton is becoming more like Westford and Chelmsford, which is not viewed as a positive.
- Participants noted they would like to preserve the sense of place, character, and feel of the Common but see it redeveloped in a similar style. Many recognize this is a challenge without the incorporation of sewers.
- In parts of town it is challenging to support commercial/industrial development because of a lack of land area, lot sizes, the water overlay district, and underlying soil conditions.
- Participants felt the Common also has traffic and parking challenges. There is generally a lack of parking areas, and sidewalks and crosswalks are lacking in the Common to make the area more walkable.
- The Aquifer and Water Resource District limits lot coverage and septic flows and creates issues for new development and redevelopment. Littleton should incorporate new Low-Impact Development standards, maybe modeled closer to MassDEP's.
- Some farms want to stay in business, but there are several where family members are likely not going to continue farming. Large land owners are looking for the Town to provide other development opportunities besides single-family homes.

### Economic Development Meeting – July 13, 2016

- Littleton's location is very attractive to businesses, especially access to the highways and Commuter Rail station.
- The town has very low water and electric rates.



- Although rates are low, it would be better if the electric grid was more reliable. Undergrounding utilities would help ensure that brownouts and blackouts do not occur for companies that rely on a steady supply of power.
- The employment base and skill sets in Littleton are unusually high and attractive to companies.
- Small, specialty businesses have been successful in Littleton, particularly around the Common. It would be nice if customers could walk around more and have other things to do while they are visiting the area.
- Larger businesses would like additional amenities, particularly food options in Littleton. The Point is serving some of that needed, but there is a desire for higher end restaurants too.
- Businesses are very interested in figuring out the transportation connections to make it easier to get from the train station or from the Common to their businesses.
- Housing costs are rising which will make it more challenging for employers to attract younger talent and families to live and work in Littleton.
- Participants noted the importance of sewers to the successful redevelopment of the Common. This needs to be addressed if it's going to work.

### **Governance Meeting – July 18, 2016**

- There is a need to continue to professionalize and train staff as the Town continues to grow and change. This is also true for boards and committees in Town. They also need to training and clarity on roles and responsibilities.
- Communication between boards and committees is occurring. There are some issues in Town that require multiple boards and committees to get together during the decision making process. The Town should seek out more of these opportunities to enhance coordination and idea generation.
- There is a desire among some boards and committees to create multi-year plans as a way to think longer-term, particularly when priorities include high-cost solutions. One example provided during the discussion was the acquisition of open space.
- There are some residents who feel input provided to boards and committees by the public is not taken seriously or into account when decisions are being made. They would like the process to be more open and transparent.
- The Town has a lot of boards and committees. Should there be a movement to consolidate some that share similar functions? One example discussed was the Clean Lakes Committee and the Conservation Commission.
- Littleton is in good financial health, and overall the delivery of public services is working well. The group did note that there are some resources needed, particularly the Highway Department, Parks and Recreation, the Library, and Council on Aging.

## **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT FROM THE JUNE 13, 2016 TOWN-WIDE PUBLIC FORUM**



### **Meeting Purpose and Process**

#### **Purpose**

A town-wide public forum was held on Monday, June 13, 2016 from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM at the Littleton Middle School. The purpose of the meeting was to identify shared values regarding the future of Littleton; these will be used to develop a vision and set of goals. The Master Plan, the document which will guide future decision-making, will be based on these.

#### **Process**

Approximately 220 residents joined the Master Plan Update Steering Committee for a sit down dinner, followed by an opportunity to provide input at four interactive stations. The Consultant Team, led by RKG Associates, then gave a brief presentation regarding the purpose of master planning, a progress report of work completed to date, and instructions on how to participate. Participants were divided into fourteen (14) smaller discussion groups facilitated by members of the Steering Committee, Town staff, and the Consultant Team. Conversation was lively and participants ranged in age from approximately 30 to over 70 years old. Residents who participated varied widely in how long they have lived in Town, with some as few as six months to those who are fourth or fifth generation families.

Childcare was provided for approximately 25 children, many of whom shared their ideas for the future of Littleton. All participants were eligible for a free raffle. Several residents won prizes at the end of the evening when the raffle was drawn.

## Small Group Facilitated Discussions

### Purpose

A small group exercise was developed by the Consultant Team to help guide the vision and goals for Littleton's future, and solicit input from the many residents who joined us at the forum. Over the course of an hour, fourteen groups discussed, answered, and prioritized responses to four questions about Littleton. At the end of the discussion session, each group was asked to share their top three responses for a subset of the questions.

### Questions

During the small group discussions, participants were asked the following questions:

- 1. What are your favorite things about Littleton (that you would want to ensure be preserved in the future)?**
- 2. What are your least favorite things about Littleton (that you feel are important to change in the future)?**
- 3. What are your thoughts regarding additional development in Littleton? What kind of development (housing, commercial, industrial) would you consider to be desirable? Where should it occur? Any specific desires or concerns?**
- 4. If you could do one thing to improve Littleton, what would it be?**

## A Summary of Participant Responses Organized by Question

This summary provides a subset of the responses for each question organized by the responses that were mentioned the most during the group discussions.

### Question 1: Favorite things about Littleton

- Small town feeling
- Rural character
- Good and improving schools
- Open space

Question 2: Least favorite things about Littleton

- Lack of walkability / bikeability
- Poor management of development
- Traffic and road conditions
- Need for improved town governance
- Condition of Town Common area
- Lack of senior housing and adequate senior center

Question 3: Thoughts regarding additional development

- Need for development plan including guidelines re: impact on town character
- Revitalize Town Common area
- Renovation and infill development as opposed to new
- Expand, but contain industrial development
- Need more senior housing

Question 4: One thing to improve Littleton

- Preserve open space
- Increase walkability / bikeability
- Revitalize Town Common area
- Combine community center/senior center / new library
- More active recreation
- Improve approach to town governance
- Increase commercial vitality

### A Summary of Participant Responses at the Four Input Stations

At the beginning and end of the public forum, participants had the opportunity to engage with the Consultant Team around four input stations asking a variety of questions about the Town. Participants were able to write their answers on paper and sticky notes and place them on maps, boards, and photos at each station. The following is a representative sample of the feedback we received organized by station.

#### **Station #1 – What Makes Littleton Unique?**

One big friendly neighborhood	Ever-improving school system
Beautiful vistas	Natural beauty
Best water in the country	Excellent public safety services
Maintains historic charm	Location and access to work and leisure
Mixed socio-economic community with middle class vibe	Farms with fresh food

Long Lake	Mix of rural, residential and commercial development
Our own Electric Light Department	Small town surrounded by large town amenities
Its rural feel	Sheep and chicken
The people... who are always helpful	Manageable tax bill (compared to surrounding towns)
Wonderful library	Bucolic
Very convenient place to live	Nature walks
A great place to bring up children	I know most of my neighbors
Littleton Community Farm	Cultural opportunities such as Indian Hill Music, Nashoba Valley Chorale, Cannon Theater
Close to nature and civilization at the same time	

**Station #2 – What is Littleton's Character?** (Participants were asked to respond to photographs)

A few of the photos that drew many comments are shown below.



- Beautiful lakes
- Great schools and great for kids
- Long Lake – the town jewel. More development will kill it
- Great kid-friendly areas
- Wonderful library that goes not charge late fees
- Long Lake is very attractive
- Lakes, recreation, hiking, active lifestyle



- Need senior center and housing
- This is very reflective of something about Littleton. Lack of planning? Poor zoning? Lack of code?
- It's small town agrarian feeling
- Common remains underused
- Need for seniors



- Scenic vista
- Lots of green areas
- Nature
- Sunsets over Long Lake
- Lakes and hiking, Town Forest, and conservation lands
- Long Lake
- Lovely vistas, peaceful and natural
- Love the lakes



- Walkable retail area
- Littleton's family-owned stores
- Small business and priorities of families
- Small family-owned businesses
- Local business owners providing real services to villagers
- Still the best place to shop. Good community support – Donelan's
- Small business, not big box stores



- Building to suit neighborhood, not “flavor”
- The Common – heart of our town
- Green
- Common open space – green, love it
- Community spirit

### **Station #3 – Tell Us, and Show Us, What Areas in Littleton Would Benefit from a Deeper Dive?**

Participants were asked to identify areas (in some cases topics) that would benefit from area-specific planning efforts or more information on specific topics. A representative sample is shown below.

- Area around the commuter rail
- Town Common
- Taylor Street – mixed use and commercial
- Upper Foster Street (overlay)
- Senior housing and affordable housing in Town
- A focus on trails, open space, preservation, and connectivity
- New community facilities (library, senior center, community center, fire station, recreation fields)
- Improved walking and biking infrastructure

### **Station #4 – What Are Your Feelings About Growth and Preservation Opportunities in Town?**

- Build a new library
- More parks, open space, trails, preservation, conservation areas
- Less development in town
- Conscientious approach is needed for development
- Development of restaurants and walking spaces around the Common
- Limit apartments, maximize developments with trails and open space
- Acquire new conservation land
- Target the Very Fine plant and Route 2 interchange for corporate development
- Roads need to be improved for walking and biking
- Build offices at the corner of Taylor and Foster

## **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT FROM THE DECEMBER 7, 2016 TOWN-WIDE PUBLIC FORUM #2**

### **Meeting Purpose and Process**

A town-wide public forum was held on Wednesday, December 7, 2016 from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM at the Littleton Middle School. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit input on the eight goal statements identified thus far through the planning process. Participants were asked to think about Littleton in the future, and reflect on what the implementation of each goal statement would mean for the Town. How would the Town be the same or different? How would you measure change? What resources would be needed to accomplish each goal? Who would need to be involved? Participants were also asked to share their opinions on one or two “burning questions” for each goal, which reflected questions or issues that had come up several times throughout the planning process and required additional input from the public.

### **Process**

Approximately 90 residents joined the Master Plan Update Steering Committee for a sit down dinner, followed by an opportunity to provide input at eight interactive stations. The Consultant Team, led by RKG Associates, gave a brief presentation providing an update on the Master Plan process and instructions on how to participate in the evenings discussions. Participants were asked to go to one of eight stations to begin the evening and provide their input on the selected questions. Every twelve minutes, participants were reminded to move on to the next goal station, but also had the options of remaining for an additional period of time. At the end of the evening, a representative from each goal station summarized their groups' discussion.

### **A Summary of Participant Responses Organized by Goal Stations 1 through 8**

This summary provides a subset of the responses for each question organized by the responses that were mentioned the most during the group discussions. Please note, this is a summary of responses and does not include every response verbatim.

### **Questions**

During the small group discussions, participants were asked the following questions:

1. How would you know that the Town has met this goal?
2. What do you think it would take to do it?
3. What existing resources exist?
4. Who should be involved in making it happen?

## Goal 1: Open Space

**Goal Statement:** To maintain Littleton's small-town character as it continues to develop through stewardship of its **natural resources and open space**, forests, working farms, and lakes.

### Question 1: How would you know the Town has met this goal?

- The last big parcels of land would be protected.
- There would be more farms than there are today.
- No more major roads built. No more car dealerships.
- Small connecting parcels of open space would be protected, to have a “green necklace”.
- There would be stricter review of development near water bodies, including (importantly) grandfathered structures, to prevent eutrophication and contamination from septic/nitrogen/runoff etc.
- There would be community gardens throughout the town- maybe even under transmission lines (it's been done in Seattle).
- Trees would be protected, since trees enhance the value and character of neighborhoods in many ways. Road maintenance crews would be educated to work around and protect large trees, street trees, shade trees.
- Littleton would feel like a “small town” as opposed to “suburbia”. Small town is not just large single-family houses on large lots, denser village center development can play an important role.

### Question 2: What do you think it would take to do it?

- It's very difficult to restrict what private landowners can and can't do with their land- can't force someone to protect their land, and it's difficult to convince people to protect it when selling out to a developer could be very lucrative. Need to match/overcome the power of money.
- Proactive action, not just reactive. For water bodies, not to wait until an environmental hazard is declared- instead, use the threat of environmental hazard as the grounds to act.
- Quantify the value of having great open spaces; Littleton's land value wouldn't be as high if it lost all its farms and open space and just became “suburbia”. Overdevelopment ends up costing the town in services, despite tax revenue. Protected open space has a quantifiable/monetary value, and that should be articulated when endeavoring to protect open space.
- Write grants for protecting open space, in anticipation of land coming up for sale for development.
- Create an overlay district focused on open space protection.
- Purchase development rights of key open space properties (land trust).
- Designate a committee (of qualified experts and representatives of different town boards/departments) to proactively engage in open space protection.
- Build more rain gardens to intercept contaminants in water.
- Talk to landowners about a balance of their needs/wants with town needs/wants.
- Don't necessarily advertise which parcels the town considers priority for protection, since the landowner might then raise the price on their “desirable” land.
- Any time a development project occurs, focus on how it can protect open space. Use development as an opportunity to “grow smart” and afford to protect priority land.

- Enhance trails, connectivity, and community gardens to get people out into the town's open spaces, to build open space culture and public support; get people to care by getting them out into the open spaces.
- Utilize conservation restrictions for development that tries to happen on farmland.
- Give places a "name", instead of just a "parcel number", that way people identify with it better and feel a sense of connection and place, more likely to advocate for its protection.
- Leases to young farmers, since farm start-up costs are cost-prohibitive to new farmers. Keep farming going by utilizing young energy/sustainable agriculture movement.

**Question 3: What resources exist today to help?**

- Money
- Zoning
- CPA program
- Conservation restrictions
- Development- using development to "build smart here, protect open space there" on larger parcels
- Having a vision
- "Naming" rights can be sold- give someone recognition for protecting land

**Question 4: Who should be involved in making it happen?**

- Town:
  - Conservation Commission
  - Planning Board
  - Agriculture Commission
  - Town Administrator
  - Sustainability Committee
  - Community Preservation Coalition
  - Land attorney and Town Council
  - Selectmen
  - Shade Tree Committee
  - Garden Club
- Experts in various environmental areas
- Create an advisory committee for Littleton focused on proactive open space protection; comprised of members of different town departments, in order to overcome each departments' bias or self-interest. Also deliberately include qualified experts (science, ecology, planning).
- Community groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.) to use open spaces and give them identity and importance.

**Burning Question #1: Should the Town encourage farms to have a variety of commercial uses that could help to support farm operations, such as a restaurant or conference center, or an inn?**

- Yes, the Town should allow these uses but they should be monitored for appropriateness
- Yes, but I'm concerned about implementation

- Yes, I would like to see our farms supported by these burning question ideas as the farms themselves have more and more difficulty surviving on their own
- Yes, it's a good idea, but it should be done with caution and careful intention and control, so that unintended commercial uses don't sneak in and compromise the agricultural character (prevent a farm restaurant from evolving into a strip mall). Some disagreement on whether design guidelines would be a good idea or not- important to control what kind of development happens here, don't want the result to be too planned out or "phony". Restaurants may require sewer, but sewer would draw/justify more development.
- No, the town shouldn't allow bigger buildings on farms that would hinder the natural open space/agricultural uses that it has. It would defeat the purpose of open space. However, if it's between that and the sale of property for redevelopment this could work.
- Depends on what the uses would be. Small inn or restaurant could be good, other uses might not be.

## Goal 2: Land Use

**Goal Statement:** To establish and abide by land use policies that are effective at guiding sustainable development in a manner consistent with the goals of the Master Plan in terms of location, appearance, neighborhood and community impact, and efficiency of delivering town services.

### Question 1: How would you know that the Town has met this goal?

- Drinking water and rec water – Nitrate levels will come down.
- Not lose open spaces, preserve, increase, and connect
- Increase permanent protected areas from 15% to 20-25%. Farmland increases.
- Good balance of open space and trails, connecting places and to neighboring towns easily. More people walking around.
- More clustered development less sprawl, cluster similar uses
- Scenic roadways but no vistas of homes in background
- Community gardens
- Smart reuse of existing buildings, range of housing options
- Land acquisitions to have larger lot sizes
- No large buildings to be built (i.e. Mill)
- Common's commercial space is revitalized, more restaurants, define areas
- Retention of existing residents
- Additional space for sports activities and associations
- Fewer barriers to alternative energy e.g. solar
- Less pavement and more waterways
- Keep historic character
- Architectural look – colonial era only
- Maintain health of Long Lake- still swimmable

### Question 2: What do you think it would take to do it?

- Zoning changes – Housing/lot structure; foot print limitations; square footage limitations
- One-time property incentive to grant easements for open space connections
- Incentives for historic structure owners to repurpose or preservation
- Incentives for farmers, conservation restrictions, purchase development rights or transfer development right
- Increasing CPA funds, utilize cell tower funds, funds to purchase open space
- Visual standards, design guidelines per neighborhood and businesses
- Exploring alternative forms of housing development; mixed-use/accessory unit
- Enforce conflict of interest rules for town boards, R/E and legal advice
- Education and training of sustainable management to boards/committees
- Leverage development
- Accountability to implement Master Plan, establish priorities

**Question 3: What existing resources exist?**

- Open space plan
- Right to farm bylaws
- Accessory farm business
- CPA funds
- Existing committees
- Historic inventory

**Question 4: Who should be involved in making it happen?**

- Business owners
- Planning board
- People voting
- Rotary
- Lake Association
- Community farm
- Conservation commission
- Conservation Trust
- N.E. Forestry Foundation
- User groups – Boy Scouts, skiing, Audubon, horse owners
- Zoning board of appeals
- Chamber of Commerce
- Open space committee
- Ped and biking committee
- Board of Selectman
- MassDOT for transportation and sidewalks
- Sustainability committee
- Historical society
- Residents

**Burning Question #1: Should the Town have zoning that allows for more types of housing than single-family homes, such as mixed-use, multi-family apartments, townhouses, accessory apartments, or other types of housing developments?**

- Yes, I'm interested in seeing mixed use zoning. Combining commercial and residential buildings can make better use of land because they are often utilized at different times.
- Yes, providing there is some provision for preserving open space.
- Yes, and be proactive about deciding what kind of growth we want.
- Yes, especially near the center of town - or the "new" center of town
- No, it would be an incentive for developers to quickly eat up our open space

**Burning Question #2: Should the Town revise its Cluster Zoning to allow medium-density development and/or commercial development in exchange for preserving open space and scenic views along roadways?**

- Yes, I'd rather see some medium density development with more open space
- Yes, in exchange for open space and it's imperative we preserve wild life corridors
- No, instead of blurring the lines between other towns it will be wise to maintain open space and scenic views long term
- No, I don't want more kids in the LPS system, it is already underfunded. Apartments don't help schools.

**Goal 3: Housing**

Goal Statement: To encourage a variety of housing that meets the needs of different age groups and is affordable to people of different socio-economic backgrounds.

**Question 1: How would you know that the Town has met this goal?**

- Senior housing that is abundant
- Subsidized and affordable housing for all people that need it
- Increased density in town
- Building more units
- Prioritize housing for Littleton residents and veterans
- Metrics to benchmark housing supply by age and demographics
- No displacement due to taxes and cost of housing
- ADA compliant housing, preservation of one-story houses

**Question 2: What do you think it would take to do it?**

- Incentives for developers: cash, tax abatements, density, target housing typologies, and unit sizes
- Improve the politics
- Change zoning
- New center between the Common and Toyota
- Avoid 40B and the 10% threshold. Don't want 40B
- Mixed retail and housing with parking
- State government money
- Business improvement district; downtown partnerships for housing
- Update in-law apartment zoning
- Streamline committee process and increase their focus
- Adjust property tax. Possibly exempt/abate a threshold of basis value to entice development.

**Question 3: What existing resources exist?**

- Currently have land, resources, and zoning code
- Human capacity to conduct research on housing
- CPA funds for preservation
- Housing Authority
- Mobile home parks
- Council on aging
- Sustainability committee

**Question 4: Who should be involved in making it happen?**

- Diverse demographic cross-section from groups in town
- Town government
- Town selects developers for projects.

**Burning Question #1: Should the Town purchase land for senior housing development?**

- Yes, senior population is growing and cannot maintain large lot homes

**Burning Question #2: Should the Town revise its zoning to encourage the inclusion of affordable housing in new development?**

- Yes, every new development should include affordable housing - including cost of housing, taxes, heat, insurance, etc.
- Yes, senior housing although other developments with a mix of senior and non-senior would be good
- No, we already have a 40B.

## Goal 4: Economic Development

**Goal Statement:** To encourage a local economy that includes a variety of businesses, increases the tax base, provides local jobs, and results in more goods and services available to residents.

### Question 1: How would you know that the Town has met this goal?

- Property tax rate growth flattens – commercial base increases
- Improve water-water treatment to facilitate economic growth and protect current water supply
- Minimize taxpayer exposure to municipal borrowing on infrastructure improvements
- Diversify commercial base to attract low-impact business (traffic, water-reuse, noise, pollution)
- Coordinate development between commercial property owners (parking, landscaping, waste water, trash)
- Remove traffic center at town to facilitate economic development
- Discourage high impact or non-local owner/operated development
- Use and re-purpose existing structures versus new buildings
- Entice pass through traffic to stop and spend

### Question 2: What do you think it would take to do it?

- Research why empty office parks are not attracting tenants
- If office parks can't be filled, can the property be re-purposed
- Facilitate ways for allowing farms to remain economically viable
- \*Develop marketing and economic strategies to enhance awareness of farms
- \*Bury state highway at center of town (Little Dig)
- \*Create continuous awareness of master plan goals and vision to foster community involvement.
- Profile and inventory current business and commercial types and categories
- Increase entertainment and recreation commercial base
- Enhance walkability of town center to facilitate growth
- Co-operative/regional strategies for waste-water treatment and other large ticket infrastructure item (transportation, etc.)
- Marketing campaign for Littleton

### Question 3: What existing resources exist?

- None noted.

### Question 4: Who should be involved in making it happen?

- Chamber of commerce, real estate, economic development groups to target and encourage type of growth being supported by town
- Economic Development Committee

- Regional Economic Development Groups
- Town Government
- Town Staff
- Businesses
- Planning Board

**Burning Question #1: Should the Town have zoning and/or offer incentives that would allow older, vacant or underused industrial space to be redeveloped for a mix of uses, including business uses and some housing?**

- Yes, we should, but how far do we want to go in offering variances or incentives and what do we want to attract?
- Yes, the Town should allow rezoning of VACANT industrial space for mixed use. As long as it follows other plans for housing, etc.
- Yes, encourage reuse as housing and market the train station close by
- How do we provide incentives to companies to facilitate renovation of existing spaces?
- What grants are available to business owners to incentivize them to follow the new plan (remodel current buildings for mixed use)?
- How do small businesses succeed against big box stores or internet shopping in a small town? What attracts patrons?
- How can we alleviate our dependence on property taxes by encouraging more economic development in Littleton?
- Should the Depot/Taylor/Foster Street area be developed as a new village center?

## Goal 5: Transportation

Goal Statement: To improve the safety and ease of getting around town and better connect the “pieces” of Littleton with safe and pleasant bike and walking paths, and public transportation.

### Question 1: How would you know that the Town has met this goal?

- Qualitative Measures
  - End state: get around without needing car. Include mass transit. Access to intermodal hubs and transport in all seasons. Key locations to connect to include:
    - Castle in trees park
    - Commerce centers
    - Schools Library
    - Train Station
    - Long Lake in summer
    - Neighborhood hubs
    - Churches on Sunday
  - Creation of bike routes that connect to other towns
  - Electric vehicle charging stations
  - Railroad station with parking at existing depot
  - Improve means by which people commute out of Littleton
  - Bypass around the Common
  - Slow down traffic/ raised crosswalks
  - Improve safe use by other than cars
  - Sidewalks and bike lanes especially as an alternate means to navigate around 110 and 119
  - Shuttle services around town for non-council on aging people. Council on aging is just weekday service now. Network connecting sidewalks and bikeways
  - Improve signage, etc. to get to locales
  - Crosswalks especially near schools, and safe bike routes too
- Quantitative Measures
  - Fewer crashes
  - Increased fitness (BMI)
  - Number of crosswalks
  - Number of complaints to highway department
  - Not on next master plan
  - Traffic counts, time study, level of service

### Question 2: What do you think it would take to do it?

- Recruit inter/university student to work on pieces
- Land Access
- IBM green team

- Money
- State buy-in /cooperation
- Rental bikes
- Changes to existing roads
- Make priorities
- Regional cooperation
- Shuttle vehicles – use fees to pay
- Leverage development for shuttle or infrastructure
- Localized Uber option
- TIF - require mitigation and buy-in
- Youth, getting home after late bus, and after school jobs

**Question 3: What existing resources exist?**

- Engage experts
- Planning
- Grants
- Volunteers/ energetic people

**Question 4: Who should be involved in making it happen?**

- Developers (Point)
- State
- B.O.S. and Town admin
- Bike/Ped committee
- Highway department
- Creation of transportation commission, includes many entities and staff
- Regional shuttle solution

**Burning Question #1: Should the Town invest money in the creation of a local bus route that would have a set route and schedule to take people around Littleton?**

- Have a small shuttle (cable car-type) on a dedicated route on a regular schedule all the time.
- Yes, but not necessarily a fixed-route and schedule. Could be on-demand (like Bridj).
- Yes, but leverage existing shuttles from businesses like IBM or seek federal/state grants and expand from there.
- Yes, a local bus line or shuttle service is a great idea and would give our elders, younger people, and others with a need a travel option.
- Yes, definitely needed and should serve local and regional destinations.

**Burning Question #2: Should the Town create its own funding source dedicated to the construction and maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks?**

- Yes, the Town should create funding for non-auto transportation that includes infrastructure for both bikes and pedestrians. Would help relieve some traffic in town.

- Yes, create the fund and then partner with businesses and industries for construction and maintenance
- No, we should write this into developer agreements and have them provide sidewalks and crosswalks
- How is this currently funded? Highway department? I'm in favor if making this a stand-alone fund would result in better infrastructure.
- Maintenance of existing infrastructure should also be a priority.

## Goal 6: Facilities and Services

Goal Statement: To continue to provide excellent town services, schools, and community facilities.

### Question 1: How would you know the town has met this goal?

#### Library

- Track usage
- Expand to new location, integrate the latest technology, provide additional meeting space, film space and video cubbies for use of virtual headsets. Retain areas for kids and teens.
- The current library space should be converted to community meeting space
- Increase the library networks to include participation in broader geographic area (beyond the Minuteman Network).
- Transportation for teens to library (walking, biking, town shuttle)

#### Schools

- Evaluate and monitor student college destinations to evaluate the effectiveness of schools
- Revise school budgeting process, develop long term goals and determine long term costs
- Continue to support student tutorial center (for non-special needs students)
- Review process for assigning special needs student status and support out of district enrollments when appropriate
- Build up life skills mentoring (in or out of school)
- Ensure there is adequate space and staff for providing excellent education

#### Water

- Measure and monitor water quantity and quality
- Enforce water bans when in effect
- Develop programs to encourage low water usage

#### Technology

- Improved communication between Town and residents, including:
  - improve website
  - use cable TV
  - use apps to report needed repairs
  - provide free Wi-Fi town-wide
  - use technology to encourage more citizen participation (distant voting for town meeting)

#### Various

- Keep the electric company as a Town municipal service
- Plowing of all Town access ways
- Improving Transfer Station (increase size and better flow of traffic)
- Well maintained public buildings
- Capacity of public buildings and services adequate for population
- Safe places for kids to congregate

- Shared Work Space: For people working from home, shared resources and spaces (e.g. “work bar” style)

**Question 2: What do you think it would take to do it?**

- Increase coordination of communication across departments to facilitate providing intergenerational activities and build community, and cooperative attitude
- Provide additional training to Town staff on resource management of natural resources
- Town leadership
- Increased public participation with focus on particular issues
- Teen participation on Town Boards, Committees, Commissions (connect teen community service requirements to participation in town)
- Improved communication between Town and residents
  - improve website
  - use cable TV
  - use apps to report needed repairs
  - provide free Wifi town-wide
  - use technology to encourage more citizen participation (distant voting for town meeting)
  - create community calendar
- Funding
  - Town appropriation
  - Grant funding
- Sewer System to support creation of Community Center
- Transportation
  - Need to connect public facilities, town center and recreational facilities with safe and accessible alternative modes of transportation (e.g. walking, biking, town shuttle)
  - Provide heated space to wait at MBTA station
  - Provide way to buy tickets for train (at station and/or at other places in town)
  - Better traffic enforcement and improved crosswalks
  - Stop signs need better visibility
  - Use Lowell Rapid Transit Authority (LRTA) to access key town shopping, public facilities and MBTA

**Question 3: What resources exist today to help?**

- Town website
- Cable TV

**Question 4: Who should be involved in making it happen?**

- Existing departments that can collaborate to provide additional services

**Burning Question #1: Should the Town plan for and build a community center to provide programs and services for residents of all ages and abilities?**

- Yes, but only after the library is approved and funded.
- Yes, the Town should build an intergenerational community center/art center/library facility that concerns itself with international diversity.
- Yes, but make it a mix of library and community center to pull together some of the Town's big needs.
- Yes, but the maintenance of the facility should be self-funded by renting it out for different functions.
- Yes, but make it a combined youth and senior community center to provide learning for both groups. This would have more backing for funding at Town Meeting.
- Yes, but it needs to be available for all groups to use (youth, seniors, young adults, families, disabled, etc.), and one that is easy to get to.

## Goal 7: Historic

Goal Statement: To promote Littleton's unique history and preserve its variety of historic resources.

### Question 1: How would you know the town has met this goal?

- Quantitative Measures:
  - Publicly available and publicized inventory of historic sites accompanied by analysis of trends in local historic preservation activities.
  - Publicly available compilation of visitor counts at historic sites and a record of the number of inquiries about historic sites at town hall or from the historic commission.
  - Key buildings still protected, in good upkeep, and, preferably, in use.
    - Mill Buildings
    - Train Depot
    - Visible Historic Houses close to town center
    - Visible Historic Houses on Foster Street
    - “1600 House” on Robinson Road
    - Historic Churches (e.g. the Unitarian church)
  - Key landscapes still protected, in good upkeep, and, preferably, in use.
    - Farms and Orchards:
      - Pickard Farms
      - Spring Brook Farm
      - Spring Dell Farm
      - King Stables
    - Hayfields
- Qualitative Measures:
  - Ability to recognize historic areas & buildings.
  - Ability to remember places and neighborhoods even many years since a previous visit.
  - A diversity of architectural forms, textures, colors.
  - Pervasiveness of a preservation-oriented attitude among residents.
  - Balance: key historic buildings preserved/not destroyed, but new development still possible in town.
  - Historic land uses continued:
    - Can sheep/horses still be seen in the town center?
    - Is there still an orchard in town?

### Question 2: What do you think it would take to do it?

- A clear written statement from the town listing specific goals and actions
- Preservation restrictions
- Political Will
- More forums for the public's voice to be heard by the town

- More funding for Littleton's Historical Commission, and Littleton Historical Society.
- Funding Sources:
  - Community Preservation Act: Community Preservation Funds
  - Fees/taxes on New Developers
  - Taxes
  - Grants
- Print Publications
  - Explaining existing or proposed incentives programs for historic preservation
  - Maps/guides to existing historic resources in town
- Interactive Media
  - Cell phone Apps about local historic resources
  - Maps about local historic resources on town website
- Date plaques on Historic Buildings
- Interpretive signs at Historic Sites
- Building Technology: New techniques and materials for adaptive reuse of buildings
- New Zoning Restrictions and Historic Districts
- Engagement with local history in Littleton's schools:
  - Field Trips
  - Tours
  - Lessons

**Question 3: What resources exist today to help?**

- Community Preservation Act: Community Preservation Funds
- Town and State Inventories of Historic Sites (though not well publicized or accessible)
- Books and other publications about town history
- State/local government
  - Massachusetts Historical Commission
  - Littleton Historical Commission
- Private Non-profits:
  - New England Forestry Foundation
  - Littleton Historical Society

**Question 4: Who should be involved in making it happen?**

- State/local government
  - Massachusetts Historical Commission
  - Littleton Historical Commission
- Private Non-profits:
  - New England Forestry Foundation
  - Littleton Historical Society
- Littleton School System

- Private Businesses
- Private Land Owners
- National Preservation Organizations
- Professional Grant Writers and other Support Staff

**Burning Question #1: Should the Town work with property owners to establish a historic district for the area around the Common or other portions of the Town?**

- Yes, while keeping a balance between preserving history and allowing for new growth.
- Yes, we need several historic districts - Common, Depot/Sanderson, Foster Street, Pingry.
- Yes, historic area for the Common - King Street down Foster to Fay Park.
- Yes, when I think of a small town atmosphere many towns have old and historic buildings (including many surrounding towns).
- No, just limit the types of buildings that are developed in the same area.
- No, this is not a big priority.
- No, overcoming the resistance of property owners is not worth the time and expense.
- I'm not convinced the Common is the historic center of Littleton, so a way to connect different sites for visitors and help locals understand the history of the town.

**Burning Question #2: Should the Town provide incentives for preserving or re-using historic properties?**

- Yes, there are a number of historic homes that need to be made to stand out in town.
- Yes, if it can be done in a way that preserves buildings without costing a lot of money.
- Yes, particularly for affordable housing, mixed use, or incubator space.
- No, I'm afraid incentives would be abused in Littleton. Would consider some other form of protection though.

**Goal 8: Government**

**Goal Statement:** To provide local government with both the structure and the resources needed to manage growth and change.

**Question 1: How would you know that the Town has met this goal?**

- Town website updated in a timely manner and prior to meetings, user-friendly
- Technology used for responding to concerns; e.g. alerting official of road problems
- Transparent, proactive communication of important meetings/events
- Conflicts of interest don't exist, and Town Council is a non-resident to avoid perception of conflict of interest
- Towns people engaged and participating in Town meeting. Seating, transportation, timing (day/night and time of night out off) all optimized for different parents. Respect at Town Meeting.
- Town meeting is more efficient (electronic voting) and protects privacy (vote private)
- Town meeting article submitters guided through process
- Receptiveness to all subjective information/opinions by boards and committees
- Adequate funding to support future medical/health insurance costs (retirees)
- Ability to reach out to live person
- Adequate space to accommodate growth of government and meeting spaces needed
- Newcomers welcome and encouraged to participate in committees, public service, introduce newcomers
- Adequate resources to support animal control needs and knowledge staff on processes
- Customer service friendly/oriented staff and board members
- Public expectations match what town can effectively deliver

**Question 2: What do you think it would take to do it?**

- Joint boards/committees and staff meeting
- Open to public to discuss meeting schedules
- Website that clearly outlines town assets available (trails, historic) linked resources, google, Haik
- Town meeting – scheduling and process improved to accommodate
- Decisions coming to town meeting to be discussed/agreed to prior to town meeting
- More public information sessions for big ticket items that are recorded/notes accessible
- Use of technology to inform and collect information/opinion from public (interactive online tools)
- Community survey on public satisfaction on town government
- \*\*Use technology for town meeting votes electronic voting (clickers)
- Conflict of interest
  - Defined
  - Monitored/policed
  - Additional staff

- Revenue needed
- Human services staffed to support increased population and request/demands (people with disabilities)
- Televised town meeting for home views
  - Ability to vote from home (phone and internet)
  - Bring more items to ballot vote rather than town meeting
  - Central place to get all questions answered (town hall, LEWLD, Highway, etc)

**Question 3: What existing resources exist?**

- Historic, planning board, town clerk, town administration
- Conflict of interest
  - Attorney general and ethics requirements
  - Townspeople raising to officials
- Electric company – continue with good rates and improvement to lower rates
- Continue with financial planning and finance practices
- Town meeting – provides voice and discussion opportunity to citizens
- Staff/committees centralized within in town hall (ex LEWLD, and Highway offsite)
- Library resources

**Question 4: Who should be involved in making it happen?**

- Board of selectman, clerk, admin
- MMA – training, reinforcement for MMTA staff
- Define roles and responsibilities
- Ethics and conflicts of interest committee (establish)

**Burning Question #1: Should the Town invest more money to add staff, resources, and training to help professionalize Littleton's town departments as demands on time and resources grow?**

- I am not sure if the Town needs to invest right now. When the time is right the Town can invest in training and adding staff as needed.
- Yes, as the Town grows more demands are placed on staff and it's hard to keep information updated. We need more infrastructure to help adapt to a growing population.
- Yes, to better training, access to more information and resources, and a mandate to be well-informed.
- Yes, health and human services is swamped with people in need and don't have enough staff.
- Yes, we need staff with up-to-date knowledge on current technology. The Town is a mess, and its shows.

**Burning Question #2: Should the Town centralize more government functions by increasing responsibilities and authority of the Town Administrator?**

- Yes, we need an actual town manager position.
- Yes, but don't let the Board of Selectmen control the position as much.
- Yes, as long as there is careful attention paid to transparency and access, centralizing more of the town's functions is a good thing.
- Yes to centralizing contact points and decision making, but not necessarily under only one person.
- No, an absolute democracy gives more people a voice even if it's inefficient.
- No increase to the TA position. It's a slippery slope.
- No, the current TA has a lot of responsibilities and does a great job. I don't like the idea of centralizing so much through one person.
- Depends on what would be centralized.

**Littleton Public Forum #3 - Open House**  
**January 25, 2017**

**Natural Resources, Open Space, Recreation Goal:**

To maintain Littleton's small-town character as it continues to develop through stewardship of its natural resources and open space, forests, working farms, and lakes.

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Need More Info	Spend Money to Get More Info	Disagree	Why Agree/General Comments	Priority
Town-Wide #1: Develop specific criteria that can be used to establish the Town's priorities for acquiring open space, and look for opportunities to acquire land or conservation restrictions to help connect open space, nature corridors, and trails in Littleton.	75	7	2	3	1	I've seen many opportunities brought forward with a high level of support from citizens yet town boards did not act accordingly. Specific criteria are good if listened to.	58
						Build in accountability. How do we ensure these priorities are listened to?	
						Use this to constrict development.	
						Top priority lands may never become available, so prioritizing them may make it harder to get support for less important but available and still desirable land.	
						Open space matters and increases property value in town.	
Town-Wide #2: Revise the Town's Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) bylaw to remove Special Permit requirements to make it more attractive to developers than a standard subdivision.	41	24	23	1	4	I'd rather see no more subdivisions.	19
Town-Wide #3: Revise the existing Accessory Business Uses at Active Farms bylaw to allow some commercial uses as-of-right instead of only by Special Permit, and further clarify requirements for restaurant and food service uses to make farms more financially viable.	62	12	7	0	6		33
Town-Wide #4: Implement the recommendations from the Town's recently funded Comprehensive Analysis of Recreation Facilities and Fields to address maintenance and capital needs to support recreation in Littleton.	36	28	15	0	10	Well - we just spent 4 million dollars so isn't it kind of late for a common sense approach?	22
Town-Wide #5: Undertake a town-wide planning effort to examine the connections between agriculture, food production, and systems for sustaining farms long term (often called a Food Systems Plan).	48	19	13	2		Where is this assessment?	
						What are the recommendations?	
Town-Wide #6: Undertake a corridor study for Great Road to plan for future land uses, open space and natural resource preservation, changes to current zoning, and infrastructure needs.	68	17	3	3	3	Since you all ignored us relative to the Couper Land, I wonder how genuine this is.	55
						The Town says again and again what it values. The BOS and PB have no interest in preserving land - we need stronger laws and regulations around these land issues.	
						Sidewalks down 2A.	
						Based on the unfortunate experience with the Couper Farm, it is clear that developers will have the upper hand in this corridor.	
						Include sidewalks please.	
						Would be open to a study if it focuses on preservation and the recommendations are actually followed.	

**Littleton Public Forum #3 - Open House**  
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**Economic Development Goal:**

To encourage a local economy that includes a variety of businesses, increases the tax base, provides local jobs, and results in more goods and services available to residents.

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Need More Info	Spend Money to Get More Info	Disagree	Why Agree/General Comments	Priority
Town-Wide #1: Partner with high-tech companies to keep spin-off businesses in Littleton.	76	12	10	0	0	Complete no-brainer.	34
Town-Wide #2: Invest in the creation of a website that markets the economic development opportunities in Littleton and promotes features of the Town that would be attractive to prospective businesses.	37	33	19	1	11	We don't have the capacity to do this in a smart way, I see it ending badly.	13
						First fix the town's website for citizens and increase visibility through proven, automated technology like RSS feeds, mail lists, etc.	
						No more banks and car dealerships.	
						Make it part of town website, which looks depressing and out of date.	
Town-Wide #3: Continue the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a tool to attract new businesses to Littleton.	16	40	19	0	22	Need to see some historical info to determine whether prior choices were prudent and some comparative info from other towns (are we overusing or underusing?)	3
						A TIF mechanism is necessary as a 21st century tool for smart, small towns like ours to generate meager but needed funds to use at the Town's discretion.	
						Do not offer every new business a TIF, many will come anyway. TIF is to be used to attract users to empty spaces, like those on Taylor/Foster	
						Corporations know how valuable it is to be here, we need not supplement their bottom lines.	
						Companies that don't require a TIF shouldn't get one. Littleton has enough to offer and if required make TIF smaller.	

**Economic Development Goal:**

To encourage a local economy that includes a variety of businesses, increases the tax base, provides local jobs, and results in more goods and services available to residents.

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Need More Info	Spend Money to Get More Info	Disagree	Why Agree/General Comments	Priority
Town-Wide #1: Partner with high-tech companies to keep spin-off businesses in Littleton.	76	12	10	0	0	Complete no-brainer.	34
Littleton Common Area Strategy #1: Implement the recommendations of the upcoming Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan.	50	14	11	4	21	Asked and answered already.	54
						I'm sure residents will end up paying for this. Plus, the process for pushing this was terrible.	
						Plan is being done under the radar. No committee, no public input. Another pet project of the Selectmen.	
						A sewer in the Common does not encourage business development. Need parking.	
						Having a sewer does not prohibit the use of a business. For example, if there is a restriction on the number of bathrooms for a specific building, this limits the type of businesses that could occupy it.	
						We need more than marginal businesses at the Common that are restricted by Title V.	
						I agree.	
Littleton Common Area Strategy #2: Invest in infrastructure changes that enhance walking, biking, signage, and parking to make it easier and more convenient for customers and residents to visit local businesses.	89	2	1	3	3	There won't be many businesses to visit unless strategy #1 is done.	108
						Also, need to keep car traffic flowing.	
						There is no code for a standard of maintenance of property on the Common. There are improvements that don't need to cost anything.	
Littleton Common Area Strategy #3: Underground overhead utility lines along portions of Great Road and King Street to reduce instances of power outage caused by storms, high winds, and traffic crashes involving utility poles.	45	18	11	7	16	Look at underground power lines.	26
						Instead of underground, consider behind buildings. Cost can be \$1 million per mile and TIP won't fund this from my experience.	
						Please ask LELWD about how difficult it is to fix underground lines. It takes longer to fix problems and downtime will be bigger.	
						Anything to beautify congested area is a plus.	

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**Land Use Goal:**

To establish and abide by land use policies that are effective at guiding sustainable development in a manner consistent with the goals of the Master Plan in terms of location, appearance, neighborhood and community impact, and efficiency of delivery town services.

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Need More Info	Spend Money to Get More Info	Disagree	Why Agree/General Comments	Priority
Town-Wide #1: Update the Town's Aquifer and Water Resource Protection District bylaw in order to clarify its purposes and requirements and bring it in line with the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) standards for groundwater protection zoning.	69	5	3	3	0	Protecting water supply important for future residents.	61
Town-Wide #2: Change zoning to allow multi-family housing in generally recognized activity centers (e.g. Littleton Common, near The Point, near the Commuter Rail station).	40	18	11	1	16		29
Littleton Common Area Strategy #1: Rezone Littleton Village Common and the Beaver Brook area by creating new districts that encourage redevelopment (if wastewater issues can be satisfactorily addressed).	22	23	26	0	23	What does redevelopment mean? Re-use of existing buildings?  I don't understand what this one would give us.	16
Littleton Common Area Strategy #2: Change zoning to encourage parcel consolidation in the Littleton Village Common area to allow higher density for developers who assemble land.	21	35	31	0	11	What could "parcel consolidation" actually look like? Do not want overdevelopment or strip malls.  This would depend on implementation. Yes to mixed-use.  No strip malls, no fast food, ever.  Maybe also allow other incentives as well (height, and maybe multifamily component) but with maximums and always commercial on the ground floor and a larger percentage of the use.	18
Littleton Common Area Strategy #3: Change zoning to allow mixed-use development, that includes residential uses as a component, to be permitted in the Beaver Brook Overlay District.	16	32	27	2	16		6
Taylor/Foster Street Area Strategy #1: Prepare an area plan for parcels in the vicinity of the Taylor/Foster Street intersection and institute zoning to implement the plan.	49	13	21	1	8		33

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**Transportation Goal:**

To improve the safety and ease of getting around town and better connect the "pieces" of Littleton with safe and pleasant bike and walking paths, and public transportation.

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Need More Info	Spend Money to Get More Info	Disagree	Why Agree/General Comments	Priority
Town-Wide #1: Prioritize bicycle and pedestrian improvements on roadways that connect residential neighborhoods to activity centers, Littleton Common, schools, and public facilities.	86	8	3	3	2		69
Town-Wide #2: Establish and annual sidewalk and crosswalk fund that would provide money for construction, maintenance, and signage.	44	28	16	1	10	If we don't have this already, require sidewalks with all new subdivisions, site plans, and other special permits and establish sidewalk fund to allow developers to offer donations in lieu of constructing. Establish a payment equation.	19
						Need this influx of infrastructure to stop cars taking over communal spaces.	
						How is this different from the roads budget already? Why a separate item rather than a redirection of funds?	
						Great idea.	
						Good idea, but where is the money coming from? New or existing revenue?	
						Shouldn't my taxes be paying for this anyway?	
Town-Wide #3: Develop a comprehensive trails plan that identifies and prioritizes opportunities to connect existing trails and open spaces to form a network of off-street trails for pedestrians and cyclists.	87	3	4	2	2		52
Town-Wide #4: Continue to update the Town's Complete Streets Prioritization Plan to reflect recent roadway projects, align with the Town's Five-Year Capital Plan, and utilize local, state, and federal funding to implement Complete Streets projects.	70	9	5	2	0	Who has the lead in town for this now?	34
Town-Wide #5: Strengthen the CrossTown Connect regional transportation program by moving forward with agreements to share shuttle vans across municipalities and provide a greater level of transit service for Littleton residents.	69	14	6	3	3	How much would a service like this be used? Is there a need for this?	21
Town-Wide #6: Provide more transportation choices for seniors in Littleton.	72	13	7	3	4	New library and senior center are useless to seniors if they can't get there, and to medical appointments, etc.	40
						Transportation service can't meet demand now, need alternative means of transportation for seniors.	

**Littleton Public Forum #3 - Open House**  
**January 25, 2017**

**Community Facilities, Services, and Government**

To continue to provide excellent town services, schools, and community facilities.

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Need More Info	Spend Money to Get More Info	Disagree	Why Agree/General Comments	Priority
Facilities Strategy #1: Construct a community center that meets the needs of all residents in Littleton for all ages and abilities.	73	20	11	2	4	<p>Build a community, strong community. Low crime, healthy for all. Not everyone can do sports. Older citizens need to included.</p> <p>An appropriate senior center, could be a community/senior center. But seniors first please.</p> <p>Need a better senior center and a place for youth to hang out.</p> <p>Senior center needed.</p> <p>The library is a community center.</p> <p>Dance hall, yoga studio, rec center! Yes!</p> <p>We don't need a community center because we already have a library that provides many needs and services. The Parks and Rec Dept adds to that, and the senior center and other programs already provide for the needs of the citizens. Also, the renovated library is designed to also function as a community center.</p> <p>A well designed community center would be good for the community development and relationships.</p> <p>Senior center is a must.</p> <p>Can the community center and library be rolled into one project?</p>	79
Facilities Strategy #2: Build and operate a new public library.	75	8	2	2	33	<p>Need a modern library.</p> <p>Keep aesthetics in mind - not too modern.</p> <p>Need more places for kids to gather and hangout safely. Library supports many community groups.</p> <p>Library is the most heavily used facility in town. It needs to be modernized.</p> <p>Libraries enable and support social mobility for the poor. The only reason to not support the library is to continue to oppress poor people.</p> <p>A properly designed and thought out library is a community center.</p> <p>Modern library to support current and future community needs. Let's look ahead!</p> <p>The library is a vital part of the community - a community center - and a new one to support the needs of a growing community is essential.</p> <p>If you want to build a great town and nation, support public education. Libraries are an extension of this.</p> <p>Library is used by the whole community and is especially important for our children.</p> <p>I love Lexington as a model for a modern library.</p> <p>The library is the real community center.</p> <p>Using the library saved my family over \$750 in costs I didn't have to spend on books and movies.</p> <p>Anyone that has watched the presentations on the library knows that 3 options were presented and a new building was the best use of money. Especially with the state grant. The library is truly there for all citizens not a select few.</p> <p>Current library is outdated. Possibly exceeds floor loading due to weight of books. It was built as a school.</p> <p>So many other things we need first.</p>	102

**Community Facilities, Services, and Government**

To continue to provide excellent town services, schools, and community facilities.

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Need More Info	Spend Money to Get More Info	Disagree	Why Agree/General Comments	Priority
						<p>The library is hugely important because it crosses all age groups, socio-economic class, interest, abilities - pretty much any way you want to cut it.</p> <p>Littleton has never built its own library. The current space is too crowded and not ADA accessible. Our children deserve a place of lifelong learning.</p> <p>RHL is the center of democratic thought and creative expansion of the mind. We must fund an RHL for the 21st century.</p> <p>Current library is overcrowded, not ADA compliant, and the roof leaks. The teens don't have private space.</p> <p>The RHL is a hub of learning, enjoyment, and a sense of community. This is awesome, but the library is falling apart. The books are starting to cave the floors, the structural supports are failing, and the roof has water damage. Also, if the new library is built, the town offices, senior center, and parks and rec can have room to stretch their legs and spread their wings.</p> <p>A library can be used by all. Babies, toddlers, kids, teens, adults, parents, and elderly.</p>	
Facilities Strategy #3: Upgrade and modernize the Shaker Lane School.	4	50	51	9	12	<p>I did not know anything about Shaker School, would like to learn more.</p> <p>What should be done to Shaker Lane School? Is more room needed?</p> <p>More families moving to Littleton (filling large homes) and we need to ensure Shaker Lane (and other schools) can meet future demand.</p> <p>What would need to be done?</p> <p>Needs more parking. Needs clearer signage that there is a school. Drivers speed past and it's dangerous.</p> <p>There needs to be a discussion of capacity - when do we need to build a new school?</p> <p>Shaker Lane needs air conditioning.</p> <p>Just recently renovated.</p> <p>Education is the path to prosperity. If population projection indicate growing need for this school, then modernization is essential.</p> <p>Seems to me to be well taken care of already with new paving.</p>	6

### Community Facilities, Services, and Government

To continue to provide excellent town services, schools, and community facilities.

Strategy	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Need More Info	Spend Money to Get More Info	Disagree	Why Agree/General Comments	Priority
Services Strategy #1: Hire a full-time facilities manager who would be responsible for the maintenance of town and school buildings, as well as development of long-term maintenance and replacement plans.	46	24	20	0	8	Long overdue. Good idea - only if town designates % of budget to maintenance. Town needs to take care of its property. Pay attention to reducing carbon footprint - efficiency, and also look into solar on roofs. PMBC does a fantastic job at no cost to the town.	44
Governance Strategy #1: Institute a process for annually evaluating the need for existing volunteer boards and committees. Where possible, consolidate committees with overlapping jurisdiction and eliminate committees whose services are no longer needed.	48	18	10	0	13	Boards have enough to do without an annual evaluation. Existing boards tend to get stale and nothing seems to get done. Would be better to have every five years or increase mandatory communication or cross-training between boards. Volunteer boards are moderately well-staffed already. Need to maintain their individual focus. Annual review seems unnecessary. I'm concerned that such a process would make it too easy for town officials to control or eliminate committees they disagree with. Having multiple committees overseeing or directing the same "turf" is generally a recipe for turf wars and resource misallocation. Yearly evaluation would allow quick pivots to address community needs. There are boards that are not functioning anymore - bring the boards into discussions when relevant. Annual seems to frequent. Perhaps every 5 years would be more reasonable and correspond to term lengths.	19
Governance Strategy #2: Continue to professionalize town government by elevating the position of Town Administrator to a Town Manager.	16	22	24	0	38	More accountability needed from Town Administrator to citizens. Return calls. What are Town Managers' roles and responsibilities now? Town Administrator has proven his value and judgement ten fold. Why does a town of less than 10,000 people need more government? Only after they do something about volunteer committees and boards, one step at a time. Do we need a larger "managerial" body? I think not.	8

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