

HARDWICK MASTER PLAN

January, 2001

Dear Hardwick Resident:

Three years ago we started work on our town's Master Plan. It is now complete and has been formally adopted by the Planning Board. The plan is an outline of the town's present state and possible future. The plan, required by State law, is non-binding, upgradeable and serves only as a guide to assist the town in shaping its future. Any actual change to the towns by-laws, that might come about because of the creation of this plan, would of have to be approved by YOU, the voters of Hardwick. Having the plan has already qualified the town for grant money to study its housing needs. In the near future, other grants and services will be available to us.

Instead of hiring a consultant from outside the community we used a process where we involved as many townsfolk as possible in creating the plan. At the very beginning, we had a public meeting at the school where eighty-three residents got directly involved in the process. The gymnasium was separated into groups of ten people, many agreeing and disagreeing about what was important to them and the future of their town. This information was then boiled down and molded into an outline for the creation of the plan. Two surveys were sent to every household in town. Normally a survey of this type gets a 4% return rate, but we received over 65%. The results of those surveys are published in the plan.

We then moved on to the hard part: drafting a plan that would preserve the character of the community and yet plan for its inevitable development. Sub-groups were established to review each of the eight elements of the plan and were facilitated by townspeople, some of whom you might know. Their names are listed next to their elements in the attached Summary. The entire plan is available at the town libraries and municipal offices for anyone to review. A list of all those who took part is also published in the Master Plan.

Our countryside is rapidly changing. You only have to take a drive to Worcester or Amherst to see how sprawl is approaching us. Farms are being abandoned and turned into house lots. Unplanned growth can have a devastating effect on municipal services, roads and schools. Please don't think that this is a "pro-development" or an "anti-development" plan. It's the beginning of a "smart-growth" plan. A plan that each one of you need to take an interest in if Hardwick is to be the town that your children's children can afford to live in and would be proud to call home.

Please take a moment to read the enclosed "Summary" of your Master Plan. We hope that it will generate interest, argument and discussion between you and your family and friends. And for the hundred-plus of you that took part, we wish to express our great appreciation.

Sincerely,

Eric Vollheim and Erik Fleming
Co-Chairmen of the Master Plan Project

HARDWICK MASTER PLAN

<i>SUMMARY – 1999</i>	1
Master Plan Methodology	1
1. Open Space and Recreation (Rick Romano and John Samek)	2
2. Historic and Cultural Resources (Pat Bock)	3
3. Natural Resources (Harry Webb)	4
4. Land Use (Lucinda Childs)	4
5. Housing (Jon Ploof)	5
6. Economic Development (Bob Page)	6
7. Community Facilities (Sherry Patch)	6
8. Circulation (Ed Lubelezyk and Bill Cole)	7

CIRCULATION ELEMENT

Introduction	10
Existing Conditions	10
Issues and Concerns	13
Approach	14

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Introduction	17
Economic Development Comparison—Hardwick and Its Neighbors	17
Existing Economic Conditions	18
Economic Development Goals	19
Issues and Concerns	22
Approach	23

GOALS AND POLICIES ELEMENT

Open Space and Recreation	27
Historical and Cultural Resources	28
Natural Resources	31
Scenic Resources	35
Land Use	36
Housing	37
Economic Development	45
Services and Facilities	48
Circulation	50

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction	52
Historic Resources Inventory	52
Cultural Resources Inventory	55
Issues and Concerns	58
Approach	59

HOUSING ELEMENT

Introduction	63
Housing Inventory and Profile	63
Issues and Concerns	65
Affordable Housing	68
Issues and Concerns	69

LAND USE ELEMENT

Introduction	77
Land Use History	77
Findings—A Summary or General Overview	79
Existing Land Use Inventory	80
Growth	81
Build-Out Analysis	82
Issues and Concerns	85
Approach	85

NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

Agriculture and the Land	93
Earth Resources	94
Water Resources	95
Wildlife Habitat	95
Types of Habitats	96
Approach	97
Action Items	97

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT

Open Space	102
Recreation	105

SERVICES AND FACILITIES ELEMENT

Introduction	108
Fire Department	108
Police	109
Rescue	109
Civil Defense	110
Tax Collector	110
Board of Selectmen	111
Finance Committee	111
Highway Department	111
Water Pollution Control Facilities (WPCF)	112
Water	113
1. Hardwick	
2. Gilbertville	
3. Wheelwright	
Building Department	114
Board of Health	114
Recycling Commission	115
Schools	115
Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School District	116
Libraries	116
Board of Assessors	116
Town Clerk	117
Planning Board	117
Veterans Department	118
Town Accountant	118
Animal Control	118
Council on Aging	119
Youth Commission	119
Approach	120

SUMMARY—1999

The Town of Hardwick Master Plan is a comprehensive plan for the future growth of the town. In text, goal and policy statements, graphs, illustrations, and maps the plan spells out a vision for the town's future which has been adopted by the Town Planning Board and the Selectmen as a guidebook. The plan is designed to provide the basis for decision-making regarding land use, zoning, capital improvements, and non-regulatory activities such as economic development to guide the social, economic, and physical development of the town over the next 20 years.

Master Plan Methodology

Development of the Hardwick Master Plan began in the spring of 1998 with the review and authorization of a community planning process aimed at grassroots support. In the end well over 100 people participated in drafting the plan. With the assistance of The Center for Community Character (Newport, Rhode Island) and The Dunn Foundation (Warwick, Rhode Island), the Hardwick Planning Board organized local facilitators for each of the Master Plan elements: Open Space and Recreation, Historical and Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Services and Facilities, and Circulation. A well-attended kick-off meeting for the beginning the planning process was held on April 26, 1998. Each of the plan element facilitators formed a select committee of volunteers to research, analyze, and present pertinent information on their plan element. The presentations were held before community meetings each month throughout the following year. At each of Plan Element meetings, the findings and recommendations of the research committee were reviewed by the community group and thoroughly discussed. In addition to the individual Plan Elements, the Planning Board wrote and disseminated two town-wide opinion surveys on a range of related and provocative topics. After several months of review and discussion, the Final Draft of the Plan culminated in the winter of 2001. Due to this inclusive planning process, the new plan genuinely represents the involvement of Hardwick residents in determining their future.

The Plan includes the following principal goals and policies:

- Retain the existing physical character of the town into the future - both in the villages and in the outlying rural areas.
- Seek to focus future development into the village areas in such a way that the villages and village life are enhanced and not degraded. This means that their historical qualities should be retained while at the same time they would provide contemporary venues for locally grown economic development and business enhancement and for cultural activities. Village area amenities such as small parks and public buildings must be included.

- Seek to preserve and enhance the rural outlying areas of the town. Alternative agriculture should be encouraged. Open space protection through state tax incentives, transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights programs and the active participation of the Land Trust in land protection deals will be very important for a proactive program.
- Nurture cultural activities, an appreciation of heritage, and the arts because these activities are core building blocks for creating and maintaining a sense of community. All of the various organizations which feed this activity should be given support in some form by the town.
- Manage the coming growth in a way that does not undermine or erode the local tax base but enhances it.

The Plan is further refined by eight (8) elements which address specific planning areas. Within each element are key goals and policies which support the overall theme of the Plan for preserving community character and the town's rural atmosphere.

1. Open Space and Recreation (Rick Romano and John Samek)

The Town recently adopted a comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan (1996) which spells out an extensive list of goals and policies over a range of focus areas including historic preservation, growth management, water resources, fisheries and wildlife, forest and vegetation, agriculture, soils, scenic qualities, recreational activities and general environmental protection. These goals and policies are incorporated within the Master Plan. The following additional action items were identified through the planning process:

- Support proactive Land Trust acquisition of open space - develop a priority list of properties to acquire, include important farmland/forest land, areas of historical significance. Protect areas of visual or scenic value.
- Work with land owners continuously to save and protect open space lands. Create within the zoning and land development bylaws more detailed standards for creative agricultural/flexible development on the lines of Randall Arendt's *Rural By Design*.
- Implement a greenbelt plan designating areas for open space protection and areas with development potential. The greenbelt plan should designate the villages as the primary locations for additional in-fill development and other small village open space/recreational enhancements, while designating the surrounding areas for open space protection. The greenbelts will help define the character of the town as it grows and help preserve the character that exists today.
- Protection of important natural features, including wetlands, the Quabbin watershed, other watersheds/aquifer areas, floodplains, rivers, streams, ponds, and other important environmental features should be fully programmed in the zoning and land development bylaws. Environmental and natural feature protection should be a major component of

Land Trust acquisition activity. The zoning and land development by-laws should be reviewed and rewritten (where appropriate) as soon as possible to reflect these priorities.

- The Ware River should be made more accessible and should become a focal point for recreational use in town, particularly within the villages that flank the river (Wheelwright and Gilbertville).
- Agriculture should be promoted by all of the Town's policies - especially within the zoning and land development bylaws. Agricultural zoning which favors agriculture and the primary zoning use should be promoted and adopted. There are many incentive programs that have been outlined in the element that support this, including tax incentives, promoting alternative agriculture, protecting large tracts of agricultural land. Agricultural protection and promotion will result from a mix of zoning, land development regulations, tax programs, Land Trust activity and activity of a future economic development committee (as proposed within the economic development chapter).

2. *Historic and Cultural Resources (Pat Bock)*

Hardwick's Cultural Resources are multi-layered, rich, and should be nurtured and preserved. Historic Resources in the form of buildings, sites, objects, and landscapes are only part of the inventory. These resources require protection through a town environmental management policy that supports and promotes historic preservation rather than imposing regulation. The following action items should be incorporated in town-wide management:

- Incentive programs to help homeowners preserve historic property, including property tax incentives, sensitive application of building code requirements, and creation of a housing land bank (as described in the Housing chapter) should be adopted by the town.
- Educational programs aimed at helping and encouraging preservation efforts should be developed and encouraged by the Town through the school system and other venues.
- Additional mapping, listing and writing about the resources should be undertaken by the Planning Board and Historical Commission to further document the resources and generate greater public appreciation for historic preservation activities. This will also be of benefit in generating a larger public awareness.
- Gilbertville's mill area should be reclassified from an industrial zoning category to one that allows adaptive mixed use for housing, offices, regional or neighborhood services and/or retail enterprises.
- There should be development standards within the zoning and land development bylaws concerning the location of new homes or other buildings within the historic and scenic landscapes of the town. These site planning standards could be similar to those in Randall Arendt's *Rural By Design* and other design manuals.

- Cultural activities within the town need continuous nurturing. The town fair, other cultural events, local artists, local arts and civic organizations, and school education programs need to be supported on a continuous basis.

3. *Natural Resources (Harry Webb)*

Natural resources protection is a vital component of the Master Plan. Hardwick's full range of natural resources benefits the town in many ways including providing clean air and water, enhancing a rural quality of life, and offering great potential for creative and environmentally sensitive forms of economic development. Hardwick's identity and future is inextricably linked to conservation of its natural setting.

- The key natural resources of the town (described in the Open Space and Recreation Plan) should be protected within the zoning and land development bylaws. Such protection could be in the form of design and performance standards for site planning and development.
- The town should explore overlay zoning for key environmentally sensitive areas, such as the Quabbin watershed, other ground-water/ aquifer areas.
- Regulation of graveling and mining activities should be increased through improved and enforceable permitting and performance standards.
- Forest cutting should be addressed through an enforceable permitting process.
- Forest management educational programs should be implemented on topics such as the nature of Diameter Limit Cutting.
- Promote design guidelines and regulations with respect toward maintaining scenic qualities in the landscape.

4. *Land Use (Lucinda Childs)*

Build-out scenarios show that the type and density of typical sprawl development, when it occurs, would not be compatible with the town's character. The Master Plan is a vehicle to re-track future development to fit into the town's character, providing benefits to the town, rather than costs. Overall the strategy should be to encourage development and growth within the existing village areas of the town - Gilbertville, Hardwick Center, Wheelwright, and around Old Furnace, while encouraging the outlying areas to be retained in open space, agricultural use (including forestry), or a use which complements the rural quality of the area. The trend toward continued residential growth without a balance of non-residential, tax generating-growth, will not benefit the town in terms of tax base. The existing village areas will be targeted for controlled growth, while there will be a proactive program for identifying and saving high

priority areas within the villages and outlying areas such as watershed areas, unique historic and cultural sites, environmentally sensitive areas, and highly scenic areas. All of the overlapping areas within master plan chapters should be consistent with the land use program. This includes historic resource protection programs, agricultural land, open space and recreational programs, and economic development, service and facility, and circulation programs.

- A major review of the zoning and land development bylaws should be undertaken as soon as possible to determine how and where within the regulations changes should be made to preserve and protect the character of the town and still allow for constructive and productive growth consistent with the Master Plan.
- Agricultural zoning, flexible zoning, and village zoning options should be primary implementation tools.
- A critical reevaluation of the industrial zoning and commercial zoning should be part of the picture as well.
- Commercial zoning along the highways and roads that link the villages together should not be extended further than that which currently exists. This type of zoning, known as strip commercial zoning, will lead to sprawl and a suburban identity for the town. Once the town begins to feel suburban in nature (even though it may not be), it is very hard to maintain a rural character. Encourage mixed use in commercial zones.

5. *Housing (Jon Ploof)*

Providing housing opportunities for a diversity of household configurations and income groups is important for a community that seeks to retain its identity as a rural town. Key action items within the housing element of the Master Plan focus on meeting affordable housing needs (Hardwick is among the poorer towns within the area).

- An affordable housing land bank should be investigated as a proactive vehicle to acquire land for housing rehab or new construction within the village areas and also within the outlying rural areas. One option under the program would be to acquire historic properties in need of rehabilitation and resell the buildings (after rehab) with preservation covenants. The land bank would hold onto the land, thus reducing the overall purchase price to the buyer. An easement would ensure resale at an affordable level into the future. Such programs have been very successful elsewhere. This program may be useful in accomplishing several interrelated goals such as providing affordable housing options in good buildings, bringing revitalization to the villages that will spur other economic development, protecting rural character-defining farmsteads, and furthering better housing opportunities for Hardwick's village and rural families in need.
- Transfer of development rights could be used to save rural open space and the active farms/forests while providing housing and other opportunities in Gilbertville and Wheelwright in particular.

6. Economic Development (Bob Page)

The economic development strategy is based upon supporting current Hardwick businesses first. Encouraging large - corporate businesses to locate in the community is not an appropriate part of the strategy and would not be supported particularly for the likelihood that such development would induce growth incompatible to a rural way of life. The following are specific goals, policies, and action items:

- Existing businesses in town will be supported and encouraged to grow, including the full range of existing economic development opportunities such as cottage industries, hospitality, service and restaurants, forestry and forest products, and conventional and innovative agriculture.
- Within the zoning and land development regulations, the regulation of “cottage industries” should be updated to encourage rather than discourage this form of development. However, appropriate site review and development standards must be included.
- The Town should organize and fund an Economic Development Committee to promote the economic development opportunities and direction given in this Plan. This committee would work with the Ware River Valley Economic Development Target Area on programs advantageous to Hardwick.
- The Town should develop and implement an appropriate small business model which would be aimed at sustaining existing businesses including agriculture and forestry.
- The Town should encourage the designation of economic opportunity areas such as the Gilbertville mills and the development or repair of infrastructure within the town’s villages to support economic development initiatives. These infrastructure facilities - sewer, water, etc. can be funded in part with community development block grant funds.

7. Community Facilities (Sherry Patch)

The Town has an obligation to provide a range of facilities for residents. These facilities include, but are not limited to schools, fire, police, and town administration.

The Town must implement a Capital Improvement Budget/Plan (CIP), which should program capital budget expenditures for town services and schools over a 5-6 year horizon. The Town should consider growth management options. Although build out of the town is programmed over a 100 year time frame, there may be near term growth in residential building that will stress Town services, fill the schools, and raise taxes rapidly. Many rural towns have been concerned with their volunteer fire departments. The support of volunteer services should be nurtured

whenever possible. The town could not afford a paid fire department. The same could be said for other volunteer town services.

Key elements of the proposed Capital Improvement Plan are:

- Build a new fire station.
- Build a new police station.
- Develop a comprehensive road maintenance and improvement action plan.
- Improve sewer lines within the wastewater district.
- Upgrade the Gilbertville and Wheelwright water services and facilities.
- Upgrade senior facilities and increase program services.
- Upgrade town administrative services including the Planning Board, Building Inspector's Office, Tax Assessor's Office, and Town Clerk's Office with the appropriate equipment and accommodations for staff support.
- Create additional town commissions and departments to implement and oversee Master Plan Elements that are not already applicable to existing services, (i.e., Housing, Land Bank Commission and Cultural Opportunity Commission).

8. *Circulation (Ed Lubelczyk and Bill Cole)*

The Route 32 through town is a major transportation concern. It not only reflects an immediate issue on character, flow, and need, but also the Town's relationship with the state DOT. The vision most expressed within this plan is one of retaining the character of the town as much as possible. The Town's roads are a primary expression of rural character. Both village roadways and country roadways have a different set of design attributes that exemplify the town's visual character. Future development will be directed to the villages and will combine the needs of pedestrians and automobiles. Here the plan strikes a balance between the two in favor of the pedestrian. Scenic roads and rural character are major concerns in the outlying areas. Any linkages to the region on arterial roads should also be investigated to determine the link with potential economic development concerns.

The Town will be responsible for the maintenance and eventual upkeep of subdivision roads. A great deal of care should be taken to incorporate road design standards that are appropriate - narrower roads are often better than wider roads, well-maintained gravel roads may be beneficial to retain. The Town has developed a road improvement plan in coordination with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. There is a potential for more than 10 additional miles of gravel road development, thereby increasing the Town's road network.

- The Town should consider the protections offered by officially designating selected roadways as Scenic, under the Provisions of Mass. Chapter 40. This valuable tool (currently adopted by many towns in the Commonwealth) provides for a simple review process (generally by the planning board of a town) prior to the “cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof” caused by roadway “repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work, on such specifically designated roadways.”
- The Town should consider requiring a similar “scenic” review prior to any improvement projects that would significantly alter the design or character of any roadway within the town, including the paving of gravel roads.
- Proposed new road construction or changes in any existing road or bridge design should be evaluated in light of resulting changes in traffic patterns. Through traffic should be channeled around residential areas whenever possible.
- The Town should consider legal means by which it can protect itself against the substantial costs resulting from having to open currently closed, but not abandoned, roads. Consideration should be given to requiring developers to provide some or all of the cost of roadway construction.
- The Town should encourage consideration of burying overhead electric, phone and cable lines around the Hardwick Common, and the removal of service poles. There may be grant monies available to assist with such a project. It could be coordinated with the proposed replacement of concrete curbing with granite.
- The current schedule of daily MART shuttles should be publicized by the Town to encourage use and improve efficiency, with vehicles running nearer to capacity. The Selectmen should authorize the dispatcher to extend hours when there is a Town Meeting held after regular MART service hours.
- The Town should consider offering bus service (McCarthy Bus Service) for after school activities (such as Ware has done). This can be accomplished with little additional cost for such service as demonstrated in Ware.
- The Town should review PVTa's current schedule and Hardwick's needs for transportation in their service area to provide appropriate information for a request for service.
- The Town should research available funding to support passenger service. A possible business opportunity identified in town is a taxi service.
- The Town should consider establishing a Hardwick Internet web site, detailing transportation and other matters.

- The Town should continue to support efforts to provide unproved means of alternative travel. A network of multi-use trails (ideally connecting the villages of Hardwick) for bikes, horses, and walking would be welcomed by many. Safe access to the Elementary School by foot or bike would likely be well-utilized as well.

The following individuals have been involved at various levels with development of the Master Plan:

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Gerry Audette	Charlotte Lesak	Brayton Shanley
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Emily Bancroft	Tia Lotuff	Claire Snow
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Merle Bingham	Charles Lowell	Jim Stafford
Pat Bock	Ed Lubelczyk	Andrew Swistak
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Bill Cole	John O'Donnell	Youngken
Shirley Della Penna	Linda O'Donnell	Various Hardwick
Amber Duvall	Bob Page	Youth Center
Jessica Fayard	Bob Paguet	Kids
Erik Fleming	Sherry Patch	All Town
Hildegard Freidman	Pat Pease	Departments,
Christine Greene	Raymond Pelton	Boards and
Sarah Harding	Charlie Pitzi	Commissions
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CIRCULATION ELEMENT

Introduction

The Circulation element of the Master Plan studies methods and modes of travel. The circulation network of the Town affects the ease of movement within and through Hardwick for residents, visitors, thru-travelers and emergency vehicles. Important considerations include access, maintenance, safety, aesthetics, cost to users and taxpayers, and the connections between changes in transportation and future growth and development within the Town.

Existing Conditions

Major roads

Hardwick's major road is Route 32, which enters the Gilbertville section of the town from the south (Ware), runs along the Ware River (Hardwick's eastern boundary) through the Wheelwright section and north to Barre. The town's only other numbered roadway, Route 32A, runs from route 32 in Gilbertville north past Hardwick Common, along the eastern edge of the Quabbin Reservoir watershed and on to Petersham. Primary east-west travel is by Barre Road from Route 32 and the Ware River west to Hardwick Common. From the Common, Greenwich Road leads to Gate 43 of the Quabbin Reservoir (for fishing and boating access) and then south through the West Hardwick area and into Ware.

Other Town Roads

Many of Hardwick's roads are unpaved. Many of the paved roads are relatively narrow. This does not encourage rapid through travel, but is, importantly, in keeping with the character of the town. The town contains the following unmaintained public roads (or portions of roads):

Charity Hill Road	Lucas Road
Muddy Brook Road	Simpson Road
Fleming Road	Gaudet Road
Lyman Road	Mellon Road
"Slab City" Road (i.e., Ridge Road extension)	

In total, according to the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (Oct. 1998), Hardwick's roadway network consists of 86.33 miles of town maintained roads. Most of these roads 78%) are classified as "local", while 10.72 (12%) miles are classified as "collector", and the remaining 8.80 (10%) miles of roadway are classified as "arterial". Also, 24.75 (29%) miles are paved with a bituminous concrete hot mix; 35.93 (42%) miles are considered to be "surface treated" roads. The remaining 25.65 (30%) miles of road are gravel roadways.

Bridges

Hardwick has ten bridges, six of which are maintained by the Town. Weight limits posted on several bridges (e.g. on Patrill Hollow and Muddy Brook roads) and height clearance under one bridge (Barre Road) has limited traffic by some trucks, buses and fire trucks.

Traffic controls

The Town has no flashing lights and no stoplights. There are warning signs in some appropriate locations. There are no traffic calming devices at present

Traffic volumes

The only available traffic counts were both taken on Rt. 32A where traffic increased from 370 cars per day in 1992 to a reported 535 per day in 1998.

Accidents

The Police Department reports that a total of 134 vehicular accidents occurred within town limits over the approximate five year period from 1994 to present. As might be expected, the majority (55%) occurred on the higher volume, higher speed roads (28 on Rte. 32; 26 on Rte 32A and 20 on Barre Road). A total of 48 accidents (36%) occurred in winter (Jan-Mar). Police did not specify any particular roads or locations as seeming to be particularly hazardous.

Public Transportation

Over 64% of respondents to the Master Plan survey indicated that they felt school transportation was good, while more than 50% felt that public transportation was poor. Transportation related comments stated that there was no reliable transportation, that there is a need for better transportation for the elderly, and also for rail service. Numerous residents who had not attended town meeting listed the lack of transportation as the reason for non-attendance.

The town of Hardwick has limited access to rail, bus, taxi and air travel. The rail service currently available to us is freight service via the Massachusetts Central Railroad Corporation. Bus service is provided to the public schools by McCarthy Bus Company and to seniors and the disabled by Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART). Transportation to airports is available through private limousine service. Limited taxi service is available as well.

MART currently offers service 8:00am - 3:00pm for the elderly and disabled. Requests for service should be made 24 hours in advance for social, shopping and medical trips. There are two vehicles available (a van and a station wagon) with two part-time drivers. Currently the Town limits the driver's hours to 19 hours per week per driver. The dispatcher would like to have one full time employee, one part-time employee and one on call. Although the vans are regularly booked, they often run with just two or three people. Weekly scheduled trips include ones to the Big Y Monday at 9:00am and to IGA Fridays at 9:00am. Quabbin Estates makes good use of the MART service. Vans accommodate wheel chairs, however wheel chair users must be accompanied by another rider. All riders are notified of a suggested donation depending on the

length of the trip (for example \$5.00 to Worcester). Donations received offset the amount deducted from State receipts. For 1999 the MART service cost us \$13,345 in State funding.

McCarthy Bus Company serves the Hardwick Elementary School and the Quabbin Regional Jr./Sr. High School from a Gilbertville bus storage facility. Current service transports students to and from school for regular opening and closing school hours.

Pioneer Valley Transit Authority offers bus service to the general public within 23 communities in Western Massachusetts, including a shuttle servicing Ware. Access to this transportation system could be available to Hardwick by writing a letter to the “route committed” at PVTA detailing what type of service we are interested in.

Massachusetts Central Railroad Corporation provides freight service between Palmer and South Barre. In Palmer there are connections available with Conrail and New England Rail. Current users include the Hardwick Kilns and Barre Reload and Storage, but additional users are welcome. The upgrading of the railway to passenger standards has been completed and plans to resume passenger excursions are forthcoming. The Railway would consider passenger service between Barre and Palmer with stops in Ware and Hardwick if economically feasible.

Alternative Modes of Transportation

The town has an informal network of trails for walking, biking, horseback riding, and ski-mobiling. Use of these trails fluctuates over time, many are not maintained or are now abandoned. The skimobile trails seem to have been well-used and maintained in the 1970's. With less snowfall some of these connectors are now used by “wheelers”. Lands within the town owned by Mass. Fisheries and Wildlife and various trusts contain walking and biking trails as does the MDC Reservation.

There is a project underway to use the old railroad bed through Gilbertville as a bike and pedestrian path. The plan would link New Braintree with Ware, with possible connections to Belchertown and Northampton. This Rails to Trails initiative is on hold at present, due to all available monies going to Boston's “Big Dig”.

There is some desire for a sidewalk linking Wheelwright with the new canoe landing at Old Furnace. The Highway Superintendent says that a paved path (somewhat back from the street) is less expensive to build than a sidewalk, due to curbing and drainage costs. Such a path could accommodate both walkers and bicyclists, away from traffic. The new canoe landings at Old Furnace and Gilbertville will allow easy access for canoeing that stretch of the Ware River.

The town has sidewalks in the centers of Gilbertville, Wheelwright and Hardwick. There is some accommodation for wheelchair access to sidewalks.

Ongoing and Planned Projects

Hardwick, under the authority of its Highway Superintendent is, for the most part, following a ten-year plan (the Local Pavement Management Study for Hardwick, provided by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission) for the maintenance and improvement of its roadways. Such work is generally paid for by State Chapter 90 funds. In addition, Hardwick was approved in 1998 for Federal-State ISTEA funding for the full reconstruction of approximately four miles of Rt. 32A, from North Road to the Petersham line. Town officials have indicated an intention to seek funding for a similar project for Rte 32A from Hardwick Common to Rt. 32 in Gilbertville following the two-year construction period of the first phase. In addition, the paving of some gravel roads is currently under consideration (parts of Taylor Hill Road and Muddy Brook Road in particular).

Reconstruction of at least two bridges is either ongoing or being planned. There is a possibility that some projects may be able to utilize timber rather than steel or concrete. At least one program (The National Wood in Transportation Program) exists to encourage, and often to fund, such projects and to support the regional timber industry. Generally, bridge reconstruction is intended to allow (or at least results in) higher posted weight limits, and can result in changes in traffic patterns for heavy vehicles (as well as improved response times for fire trucks).

The Highway Superintendent has indicated a desire to replace concrete curbing in places (particularly around the Common) with granite curbing.

Issues and Concerns

Rural character of roads

An important part of Hardwick's rural character has been its road network. The town's small dispersed population has not required many major roads. As a result, many of Hardwick's roads remain unpaved, and many others are paved but relatively narrow and winding. Often they are lined by stone walls.

Several factors may bring about a change in the character of the town's roadway network: Certain sections of unpaved roads may require frequent maintenance, and may be paved as funds are available. Maintenance costs are commonly thought to be higher for unpaved, relatively level roads than for paved roads, though at least one recent study suggests that this need not be so for well-constructed gravel roads.

Residential and commercial development is closely linked to changes in the character of the roadway system. Increased traffic levels can result in additional wear on the roads, and a changing population (possibly less familiar with unpaved roads) can be expected to result in an interest in continued roadway "improvement".

Unopened roads

The town contains several mapped public roads (or sections thereof) that are not officially open for travel and have no development on them. The costs to the Town of opening these roads through road construction required by any development could be substantial.

Input into proposed projects

The town is concerned that State projects be responsive to the goals of preserving the rural character of the town, and to its other needs as well. Additionally, town-directed projects which might alter the rural or scenic character of the town should be weighed carefully.

Public Transportation

Townpeople have expressed the belief that, at present, public transportation is either inadequate, inconvenient or under publicized.

Approach

The town wishes to retain the rural character of its roads while ensuring that the roads that are well-traveled are safe. The town must weigh the impact that future development will have on its current road system and to prepare for it. However, it must also consider the likelihood that road improvements will lead to increases in through traffic, and in residential development (encouraged perhaps by reduced commuting times and ease of access). Consequently, town finances as well as rural and scenic qualities can be affected.

The following are action items for the future:

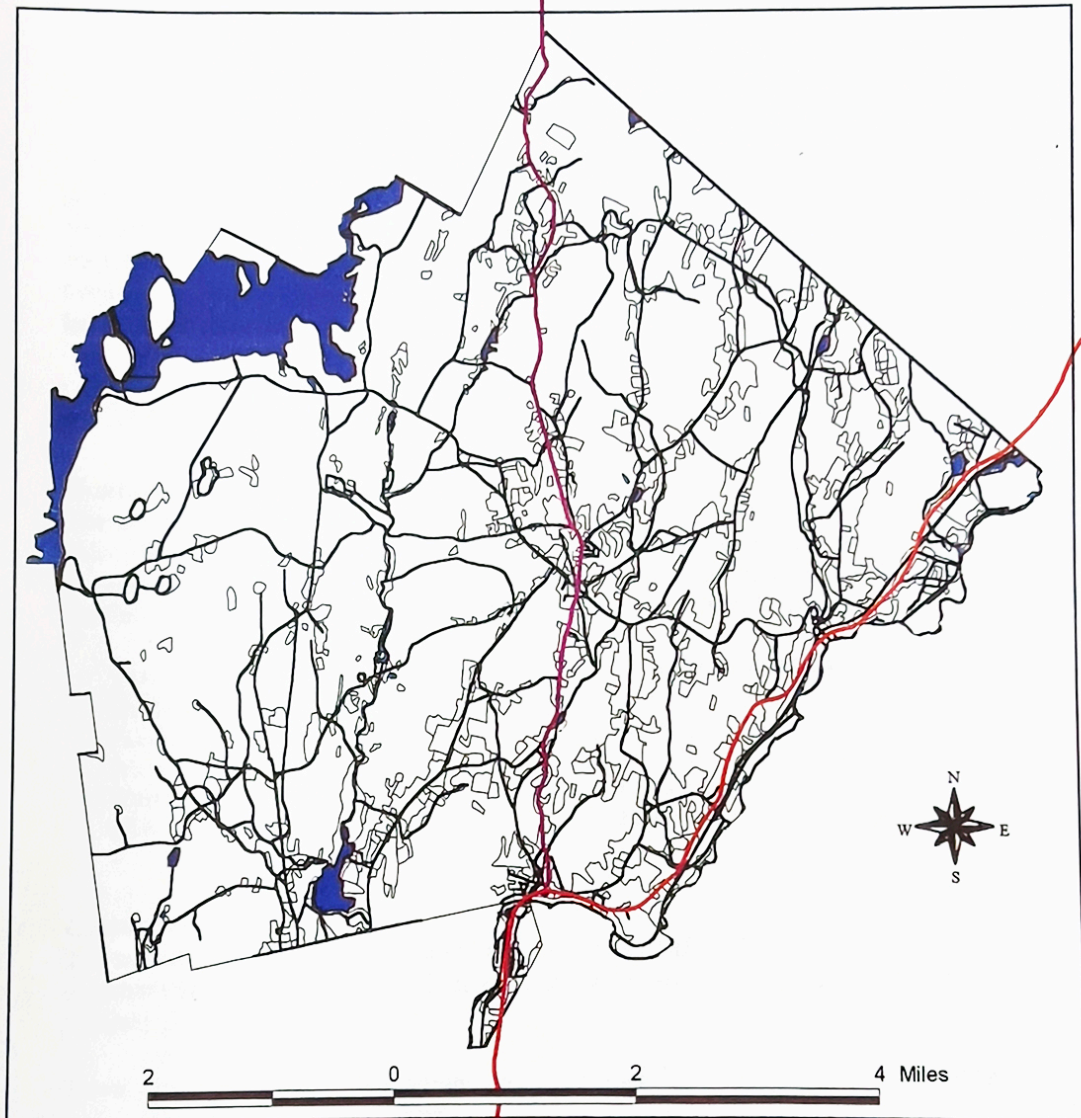
- The Town should consider the protections offered by officially designating selected roadways as Scenic, under the Provisions of Mass. Chapter 40. This valuable tool (currently adopted by many towns in the Commonwealth) provides for a simple review process (generally by the planning board of a town) prior to the “cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof caused by roadway” repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work, on such specifically designated roadways.
- The Town should consider requiring a similar review prior or public hearing to any improvement projects that would significantly alter the design or character of any roadway, including the paving of gravel roads.
- Proposed new road construction or changes in any existing road or bridge design should be considered in light of resulting changes in traffic patterns. Through traffic should be channeled around residential areas whenever possible.

- The Town should consider legal means by which it can protect itself against the substantial costs resulting from having to open currently closed, but not abandoned, roads. Consideration could be given to requiring developers to provide some or all of the cost of roadway construction. Reparations to current property owners could be considered.
- The Town should encourage consideration of burying overhead electric, phone and cable lines around the Hardwick Common, and to the removal of service poles. There may be grant monies available to assist with such a project. It could be coordinated with the proposed replacement of concrete curbing with granite.
- The current schedule of daily MART shuttles should be publicized by the Town so that the service can be better utilized, with vehicles running nearer to capacity. Selectmen should authorize the dispatcher to extend hours when there is a Town Meeting held after regular MART service hours.
- The Town should consider offering bus service (McCarthy Bus Service) for after school activities (such as Ware has done). Ware was pleasantly surprised at the low additional cost for such service.
- The Town should review PVTA's current schedule and Hardwick's needs for transportation to their service area, and send a letter to the route committee requesting appropriate service.
- The Town should research available funding to support passenger rail service.
- A possible business opportunity identified in town is a taxi service.
- The Town should consider establishing a Hardwick Internet web site, detailing transportation and other matters.



The Town should continue to support efforts to provide improved means of alternative travel. A network of multi-use trails (ideally connecting the villages of Hardwick) for bikes, horses, and walking would be welcomed by many. Safe access to the Elementary School by foot or bike would likely be well-utilized as well.

Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Existing Roads and Highways



Legend

-  Massachusetts Route 32
-  Massachusetts Route 32A
-  Local Roads
-  Water

Produced by the Center for Community Character for the Town of Hardwick using MassGIS data.

These data represent the efforts of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and its agencies to record information from the sources cited in associated documentation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Introduction

It is always interesting to have “informal” economic development discussions with town’s people. There are diverse interests, historical memories, and ideas, which arise in every discussion. Of note is the passionate way in which individuals and small groups of townspeople respond to local environmental, political, zoning, and economic development issues. This liveliness is in keeping with the choice to live in Hardwick and speaks to the immense pride we have towards our home.

Economic Development Comparison—Hardwick and Its Neighbors

Household Income

The percent of households in the Ware River Valley Regional ETA with household incomes below 80% of the median household income in the Commonwealth is 43.21 %. The percent of households in each community within the ETA with household incomes below 80% of the median household in the Commonwealth is illustrated in the following table:

Town	Households	% Households <80% MA Median HH Income
Hardwick	913	43.11%
Palmer	4,781	40.30%
Ware	3,836	47.07%
Warren	1,694	42.66%
ETA	11,224	43.21%

Commercial Vacancy Rate

The commercial vacancy rate within the Ware River Valley Regional ETA is 20.53%. The commercial vacancy rate for each community within the ETA is illustrated in the following:

Town	Total Commercial Space	Vacant Commercial Space	Percentage Vacant Commercial Space
Hardwick	431,434	254,168	58.91%
Palmer	3,238,796	626,021	19.32%
Ware	1,669,947	61,446	21.64%
Warren	1,023,942	65,314	6.03%
ETA	6,364,119	1,306,949	20.53%

(Local Boards of Assessors)
Part C: ETA Implementation Plan

Existing Economic Conditions

Originally settled as agricultural communities, the four towns experienced considerable economic development and growth during the 19th century. The combination of abundant water power and expanding railways brought the region headlong into the industrial era. Imposing mill structures were built. These mills were served by the railroads, which brought raw materials to the mills for manufacture and delivered finished goods and agricultural products to urban markets. Palmer came to be known as the city of seven railroads. Hardwick and Ware were each served by two different lines: the Massachusetts Central and the Boston and Albany, while Warren is transversed by the main branch of Conrail's Boston to Albany line.

The rails also brought the people required to work in the mills. For this new immigrant population the mill owners built multi-unit housing in close proximity to the workplace. The mills also supported the construction of extensive infrastructure systems, building water and sewer lines prior to the start of the 20th century. Regional centers of trade sprang up in shadows of the mill buildings, and the daily life of the communities came to be centered "downtown". Here the residents lived and worked, built schools and churches, found opportunities for recreation and spent their wages in the shops and stores which flourished along Main Street.

By the middle of the 20th century the mill economy was in a state of steady decline. Highways soon surpassed the railroads as a means of transporting raw materials and finished goods. Manufacturers left for other regions where labor was cheap and newer facilities operated more efficiently. In the proposed Ware River Valley Regional ETA unemployment reached thirty percent, and many residents were forced to look for work beyond the borders of the traditional labor market. This new commuter population soon worked and shopped outside of town, causing additional stress on the remaining commercial ventures. In the four towns the booming Main Streets of the industrial era are now left with vacant mills and storefronts, deteriorating structures, and declining property values.

In contrast to the Ware River Valley Region's proud past, the present day economy lags behind the average in the Commonwealth in every statistical category. Chronic unemployment, low median wages, low per capita and household incomes, and high poverty and commercial vacancy rates reflect the economic distress that is now endemic to the region.

These statistics also reveal a disturbing trend. Though the rate of unemployment has shown recent improvement, it must be noted that the total labor force has steadily declined. Regional demographics illustrate the impact of this trend. Though it is true that there are fewer unemployed, there are also fewer jobs and fewer workers. It is of primary importance that the region takes effective measures to reverse this trend. The Ware River Valley Regional ETA must hold on to the remaining employment opportunities which exist within the region. The ETA also needs to be able to effectively compete with other areas to attract new business development and new jobs to the region.

Economic Development Goals

Recognition of these needs resulted in the adoption of the first of the ETA's broad goals for development:

Goal 1: Seek to create an environment that is conducive to economic development by supporting the retention and modernization of existing manufacturers and by streamlining the development permit process for new business investment.

The lack of jobs has also caused the younger, more educated and more mobile members of the communities to move on in search of better employment opportunities in other areas. As a result the population of the Ware River Valley Regional ETA is aging significantly faster than it is growing.

In the communities of Ware and Hardwick, for example, US Census statistics illustrated in the following table show that the elderly population is growing at a significantly higher rate than the total population.

Population Growth

Town	Residential Pop.	1980	1990	Increase	% Increase
Hardwick	Total	2,272	2,385	113	5%
	Elderly	279	376	97	35%
Ware	Total	8,953	9,752	799	9%
	Elderly	1,256	1,581	325	26%

(U.S. Census, 1980-1990)

This aging population also tends to be strongly established in the older downtown areas of the Ware River Valley communities. These elderly owner occupants, living on fixed incomes, are often unable to afford routine improvements to maintain the appearance and structural integrity of their buildings. This results in further deterioration of the downtown environment. A younger, more affluent commuter work force that works and shops outside of town populates newer housing in the outlying areas. Revitalization of local commerce will require the reintroduction of significant employment opportunities that will reestablish the working population in the downtown areas of the communities. Attracting new industry that will utilize the existing vacant structures in these areas poses one of the most significant challenges to the ETA. In response to this challenge the ETA's steering committee established the second broad goal to govern the economic development efforts within the region.

Goal 2: Seek to revitalize the downtown business areas through the creation of jobs within the ETA’s member communities, emphasizing the utilization of vacant and underutilized commercial spaces and existing “brownfields”.

One of the region’s economic development assets is the existing infrastructure capacity to support new commercial growth. The local resources that are available to support economic development in the proposed Ware River Valley Regional ETA are fully described later in this section. Generally speaking, the capacity to support development is already in place throughout the region. Municipal services and infrastructure systems are highly developed and able to accommodate immediate expansion. The area also supports local hospitals, district courts, sound educational systems, as well as the necessary public safety agencies. The ETA’s member towns are actively established in the region:

Goal 3: Seek to provide adequate public facilities, infrastructure, and services to accommodate planned economic growth and development.

The Ware River Valley Regional ETA further recognizes that the unique rural environmental character of the region must not be sacrificed to the economic development process. The area is rich in open lands that should be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. The region should also be encouraged to continue to support some level of agricultural activities.

Protecting the abundant water resources of the region is also a significant concern. The water quality and scenic beauty of the Ware and Quaboag Rivers have been identified as a potential attractions for tourism activities and must be protected. The Quabbin Reservoir and its watershed occupy significant land in the towns of Ware and Hardwick, and safeguards must be in place to prevent any possibility of contamination of this irreplaceable drinking water supply.

The Ware River Valley Regional ETA’s steering committee has established the following strategies for the implementation of this economic development initiative:

- The regional economic development committee will seek to expand access to debt financing for businesses wishing to locate or expand within the region. Particular emphasis will be placed on funding for utilization and modernization of existing commercial structures. It should be noted here that in addition to the region’s conventional sources of financing, a peer lending program for micro enterprise borrowers is about to be established in the region. The QVCC has established the Quaboag Valley Business Assistance Corporation, which offers a revolving loan program to area businesses unable to secure conventional bank financing. The Ware CDD manages a similar program serving small businesses in the towns of Ware and Hardwick.
- Criteria for the Designation of Economic Opportunity Area.. These may potentially include the former sites of Romar Tissue, Raitto Engineering, Gage Loom Works, and Hardwick Knitters in the Town of Hardwick, as Hardwick seeks to attract new occupants to these vacant and blighted structures. Please note that Hardwick’s commercial vacancy rate is the highest in the Ware River Valley Regional ETA, standing at 58.9%.

Other Local, State and Federal Resources

- Hardwick joined with Ware in the submission of a successful application for FY95 CDBG grant funds through the Executive Office of Communities and Development. The grant will provide \$40,000.00 in funding for strategic planning and engineering studies for the modernization of the Gilbertville Village fire protection water distribution system. This system originated with the former mill industry of Gilbertville and has been severely neglected with little or no periodic maintenance since the decline of the mills' activity.
- Municipal Services and Infrastructure

Water

Of the ETA's four member communities, Hardwick has the least capacity to provide water to serve the needs of additional commercial development. Hardwick Center has the only town-owned water distribution system with a yield limited to 21,600 gallons per day (GPD). This service is limited to eighteen residential connections. The availability of water for fire suppression is limited to two small ponds that have been equipped with dry hydrant connections. Please note that commercial development of the Hardwick Center area is not envisioned due to the historic and rural nature of the village. The village of Wheelwright is served by the Wheelwright Water District, which is a private entity. The system's capacity is rated at 93,600 GPD. The village of Old Furnace is entirely served by private wells. Gilbertville village has the most developed water distribution systems, which are also in the private ownership of the Gilbertville Water District. The system's capacity is rated at 165,600 GPD. Distribution of water for fire suppression in Gilbertville is entirely separate from the domestic water supply and is further divided into two separate systems to serve the two sides of the Ware River.

Water Waste Treatment

In Hardwick, only the villages of Gilbertville and Wheelwright are served by wastewater collection and treatment systems. The two wastewater treatment plants have the capacity to treat 230,000 and 43,000 GPD, respectively. Neither plant is designed to accept industrial discharge, and pretreatment would be required for certain new industrial uses.

Transportation

Hardwick is located on state Route 32 approximately 13 miles from the Massachusetts Turnpike interchange at Palmer. Route 32 serves both local and long-distance users simultaneously and does not function as a high-speed corridor. In fact, traffic from Hardwick must travel through Main Street in Ware to access the interstate highway system. Rail service is provided over the Massachusetts Central Railroad. Hardwick has no active local airport.

Public Safety

Hardwick has limited full time public safety capabilities. There are two full time police officers that generally work first and second shifts. Night time calls are handled by the part-time police chief. The police department also has a part-time clerk. The town has no lockup facilities and utilizes Ware's local lockup when prisoners are taken into custody. Two cruisers are maintained by the local police department. Hardwick is served by a volunteer call fire fighting force which is equipped with a tanker, two pump trucks, and a forestry truck.

Permit and Approval Process

A comparison of the growth management permit and approval processes existing in the four communities, which make up the Ware River Valley Economic Target is provided in the following table. Please note that to assist in the economic development of the ETA, the four towns have committed to developing a consistent and streamlined permit process.

	Hardwick	Palmer	Ware	Warren
Growth Management Comprehensive Plans	No	Yes	Yes	No
Rent Control	No	No	No	Yes
Condominium Controls	No	Yes	No	No
Groundwater Protection	No	Yes	Yes	No
Subdivision Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Requires Site Plan Approval	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other Growth Limitations	No	No	Yes (Wetlands Protection)	No

Issues and Concerns

The prospect of marketing our town to outside businesses seems to be an overwhelming task. There are hundreds of other communities that have advantages, which Hardwick does not. Also, the monies to attach to such a recruiting effort are large and difficult to find. Hardwick does not have the roads, water capacity, and other infra-structure developed to support new medium to large businesses in town. Even in our industrial zoned properties, new business would encounter personnel and transportation obstacles.

Granted, we are on the rail line, and we have some available commercial/industrial space (see list) where business could be located. However, other communities have better roads, enhanced telecommunications, and a larger pool of potential employees to develop a new business. (Site example of Call Center.) There is more lenient legislation recently passed to help redevelop potential “Brownfields” parcels in our town. This is complicated, risky and expensive business nonetheless.

Though we have a history of periodic industrial success in our villages, this type of ED is better located along the main line. We do have, however, a thriving inventory of current enterprises, which need our attention and support. The decline in traditional dairy farming has hurt us all. We are concerned for the families and traditions that dairy farming brings to our community. We feel concern for the open space that remains attached and worked by these farmers. And finally, we need to foresee the disposition of these spaces and transition to new ED ideas.

Our “heavy” industrial land in Gilbertville and Wheelwright in part is being utilized and in part is a real potential hazard. The corridors of current commercial development continue to blend well with our environment. We see that the strength of our business community is the small business. These businesses are in a multitude of shapes and sizes, work in a diverse number of areas and need our attention. Our local artists continue to look for ways to expand their trades. Local garages are busy with local repairs. The Hardwick Landfill continues to be a vibrant operation. Large garbage disposal companies have not made their way into our local entrepreneurial efforts. Home construction and renovation continues to be strong, as the economy moves forward. We continue to flirt with tourism through our artists, bait shops, proximity to Quabbin Reservoir, and recently along the Ware River. Our local veterinarian, general stores, rod and gun clubs, golf course, and lumber kiln continue to plan for their business futures.

Approach

We look to improve the commercial climate in town while keeping in tune with the overwhelming sentiment of our citizens for stability and protection of our natural resources and open space.

As we cite ideas and individual efforts, we hope we do not offend nor to be meddling. Using real life examples helps to look for solutions to expanding yet controlling our ED efforts.

Action Items

- The Town should support existing businesses rather than trying to prospect new businesses is prudent at this time and for the foreseeable future. Because our citizens surveyed feel strongly about not inviting “big business” into town, small business development is a natural next step. The implications of this ED will spill over into many of the other areas already presented in the Master Plan exercise. Housing, Open Space, Zoning, Natural Resources all will be affected by the direction of Hardwick’s ED efforts. Our “cottage industries” will continue to offer local employment, and commuting individuals will continue to travel to the greater Worcester, Springfield, Leominster/Fitchburg, and Greenfield areas for their livelihoods. The march of population will affect Hardwick as it has Oakham, Hubbardston and the west part of Hardwick. Some of this population sparks potential for ED. Some of this growth could erode what our townspeople have come to cherish.
- The Town should undertake economic development as a long-term project. We see it as a work in progress, as is the Open Space Committee’s planning. ED cooperation with Ware, our distinction as an Economic Target Area, thoughtful disposition of our dairy farms, and the formation of a Small Business Development Model are the cornerstones of this continued effort.

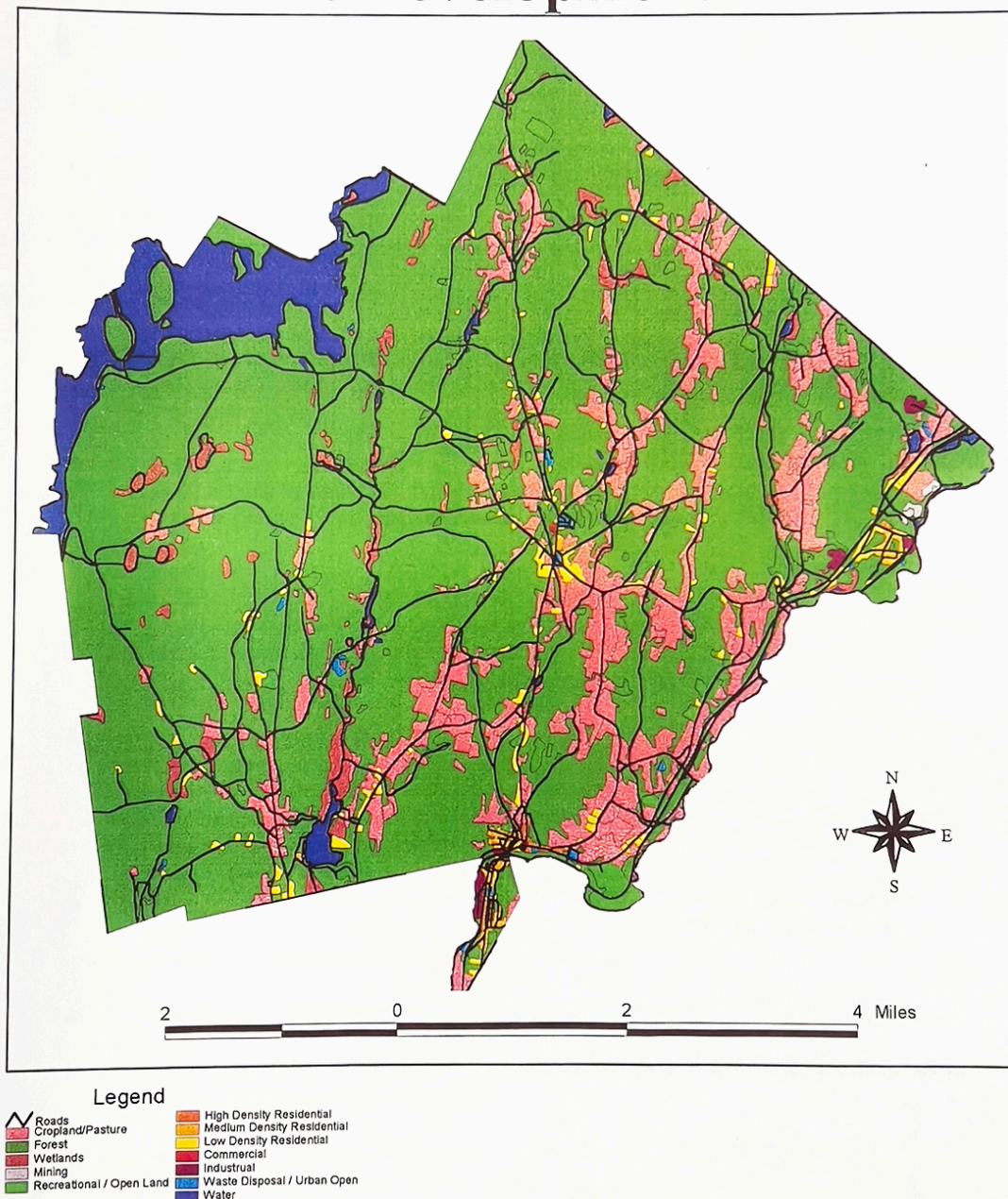
- As our town changes, growth can be absorbed and economic stability can be nurtured through planning and careful consideration of our resources. To maintain a balance, diverse land use could be a tool. Historically, ours has been a land based economy. Dept of Fisheries and Wildlife and the Forest Industry are about equal in their ownership of woodland across the state. A majority of forestland, 85%, is in private ownership. The number of owners has doubled since 1972 and the average size is only 30 acres. Woodlot management could be viable alternative to growing houses for financial return.
- To some degree, the logging business is a victim of its own malpractice. Logging has traditionally impacted everything in its way: it has cut stately trees, strewn slash, debarked standing trees along skidways, cut roads through previously pristine areas and beaten down stream banks—all in the name of hauling logs. In the past, loggers working in remote areas had little motivation to care about their impact on the land. But as homeowners move further and further out into the country, living on land that was once reserved for logging, loggers are finding that the land they work on has become the subject of competing opinions and values. What was once log land now may be regarded as landscape. Massachusetts has a law (MGL Chapter 132) that requires a cutting plan to be submitted for timber harvesting over 50 cords or 25,000 board feet. Both loggers and foresters are now required to be licensed. (Some noncommercial harvesting solely for the personal use of the landowner is exempt under the law, but landowners may voluntarily file, if wetlands are involved, to qualify for the exemption from wetlands procedures.)
- Many landowners fear that if they manage their woodlots to produce timber, the harvests will wreak havoc on their land and trees. This does not have to happen. Local logging firms, which are generally, small family run operations, typically harvest small volumes in thinning operations on small sized woodlots. Pre-harvest planning with a forester, and harvesting in compliance with the Massachusetts Forestry Best Management Practices, can protect the long-term aesthetic and wildlife values of private woodlands while still allowing a financial return. The Forest Cutting Practices Act insures environmental protection of all forests during harvest.
- While most of the forest was cleared long ago for farming, the forests which have grown back contain many highly-valued species like white pine, red oak, sugar maple, white ash and black cherry. These species are sold throughout the world by our local wood industry. and can provide a periodic cash return to landowner. Woodlands can provide a variety of salable products in addition to Christmas trees and maple syrup. For instance, sustainable harvest of mountain laurel, wreath greens or mushrooms may provide limited income. Also, hunting leases, which are common in the southern United States, are gaining some attention here. Each year about 40,000 gallons of maple syrup are produced from sugar bushes and 50,000 planted Christmas trees are harvested from properties across the state.
- The Town should encourage the management of forests for wood products. This can help to further non-monetary goals that a landowner may have. Carefully located woods roads and skid trails might also serve as walking or skiing trails. Thinnings or small harvests may provide firewood or some income to pay taxes, while creating new areas for seedling

growth to provide diverse habitat for wildlife, or open scenic vistas. Management for forest products may also help cut property taxes. The state's Forestland Tax Law defers up to 95 percent of the property taxes for landowners willing to make a long-term commitment to improve the quality and quantity of the timber on that land. These tax savings may make it easier for a landowner to keep the land in the family into the future. Year to year, the largest woodland expense may be property taxes, and landowners can save money on this annual cost. Chapters 61, 61A and 61B assess forest, farmland and open space on the basis of its current productive use rather than its fair market value for development.

- Tap into the Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program run by Dept of Environmental Management-Div of Forestry and Parks encourages landowners to balance ecological, economic and social values of their forests and to apply long-term thinking to their ownership goals. The program helps landowners to improve wildlife habitat and forest aesthetics, protect soil and water resources and ensure a renewable supply of high quality wood products, according to their ownership goals. The Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) is the cost-share arm of the Forest Stewardship Program, providing financial assistance for a variety of woodland projects.

Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Economic Development Resources



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GOALS AND POLICIES ELEMENT

Open Space and Recreation

Goals:

- 1) Encourage the development of public access to lands of “passive” recreation interests.
- 2) Foster creative land protection methods to save open space.

Action Items:

- Support proactive Land Trust acquisition of open space - develop a priority list of properties to acquire, include important farmland/forest land, areas of historical significance, areas of visual or scenic value.
- Work with land owners continuously to save open space lands. Create within the zoning and land development bylaws more detailed standards for creative agricultural/flexible development on the lines of Randall Arendt’s publication Rural By Design.
- Implement a greenbelt plan designating areas for open space protection and areas of development potential. The greenbelt plan should designate the villages for additional in-fill development and other small village open space/recreational enhancements while designating the surrounding areas for open space protection. The greenbelts will help define the character of the town as it grows and help preserve the rural character that exists today.
- Protection of important natural features, including wetlands, the Quabbin watershed, other watersheds/aquifer areas, floodplains, rivers, streams ponds and other important environmental features should be included in the zoning and land development bylaws as well as a function of Land Trust thought acquisition. The zoning and land development by-laws should be reviewed and rewritten (where appropriate) as soon as possible.
- The Ware River should be made more accessible and should become a focal point for recreational use in town, particularly within the villages that flank the river such as Wheelwright and Gilbertville.
- Acquire shoreline at Hardwick Pond for recreational purposes.

- Encourage Chapter 61 protection or permanent conservation restrictions on areas such as Muddy Brook and Moose Brook valleys.
- Provide safe swimming, investigate quality of water and explore the feasibility of reconstructing a dam on lower Danforth Brook.
- Develop a “Greenway” between Wheelwright and Gilbertville along the Ware River and elementary school. Include multi-use trails, small parks, river access & scenic views.
- Consider opening Silver Bridge area for shore fishing, and boat landing.
- Incorporate the Quabbin area in passive recreation land needs.

Historical and Cultural Resources

Goal:

Protection of land parcels of historical significance and the physical context of the town.

Action Items:

- Identify properties and parcels of historical significance.
- Work with land owners to encourage their preservation.
- Actively promote preservation of historic resources, both natural and built, in all activities of the Town and the community, by encouraging a sense of stewardship. This philosophy means viewing property not as a commodity, but as a non-renewable resource which needs to be protected for future enjoyment. Historic buildings and locations are particularly appropriate for stewardship protection because they have existed for many years longer than their present owners and are physical records of the history of the town—a possession of not any one individual, but of the whole community and its residents.
- Owners of historic buildings should be encouraged to consult with the Historical Society and the Historical Commission for advice and guidance when considering exterior alterations to their buildings to evaluate the compatibility and affect of their projects.
- Financial incentives for the preserving, rehabilitating, and adapting of historic properties and locations should be promoted by the Town and community groups. These incentives can take many forms, some carried out completely at the local level, some featuring a partnership with State and Federal agencies. Examples include: tax

incentives, such as Federal investment tax credits and local exemptions from, or reduction of, property tax; grants from the State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other public and private agencies; Federal, State, and local subsidies to assist key businesses and to support low-income housing, helping to stabilize deteriorating commercial areas and neighborhoods; the Department of Housing and Urban Development has published examples of such programs that are worth consideration (e.g., Leveraging Your Community Development Block Grant); the charitable contributions of partial interest in an historically important land area or certified historic structure that can be deducted from taxes; and the use of revolving funds and low interest loans to support such activities as sensitive rehabilitation and facade restoration.

- The Town should consider an alternative valuation for historic property. Where a property has substantial development potential, its fair market value is often much greater than the value of the property at its existing use. If a basis other than fair market value can be established for assessment, the pressure created by taxation to convert the property to its most profitable use would not be the owner's only option. Essentially, this plan could be similar to some of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction programs, but applied to historic property.
- The Town and community groups should Identify valued buildings and sites with historic markers that explain their significance. These resources should be mapped with other important features of the town such as wetlands, streams and rivers, agricultural lands, and so forth to enable planners to plan for their preservation. This information should be used when deciding where development should occur that fits into the character of the town and its resources.
- The Town should place in each village a permanent sign that briefly recounts its history and the roots of its architecture.
- The Town should continue to support traditional celebrations such as the Hardwick Fair, patriotic parades, and annually held social activities.
- The Town should encourage the reuse of older buildings within the villages as an alternative to new construction. The multi-family company-built housing of Gilbertville and Wheelwright are among our most visible historic resources. Sensitive maintenance of these old buildings is expensive and its lack is a major contributor to their deterioration. Information about financial assistance programs and tax options helpful to landlords and owners should be made available.
- The Town should reclassify Gilbertville's mill area from 1-40, Industrial, to C-40, Commercial, Light Manufacturing, Residential.

- Town agencies should encourage the preservation of the integrity of the landscape. Hills, ridge lines, valleys, streams, wetlands, rock outcrops and formations, major tree cover, specimen trees, tree canopies, and the topography of the land, even minor topographical features such as drainage swales and gentle rises, need to “read” through all development. Zoning by-laws, subdivision and land development by-laws and design guidelines should be implemented as soon as possible to accomplish this action item.
- The Town should prohibit excessive earth cuts and fills. Where grading cannot be avoided, as in road construction, the rough that results should be sculpted into natural looking contours and planted native vegetation.
- The Town should publish development guidelines to minimize the visual impact of new houses on former farm property and retain rural features:
 - Residences and structures should be located adjacent to tree lines and wooded field edges. This would avoid placing them in open fields.
 - Buildings should be located not on ridge lines, but below them to preserve the natural form of the topography and the silhouette of the town’s hills.
 - Existing farm roads should be used in the subdivision design whenever possible.
 - Highly visible stonewalls, stonewalls along roadsides and tree lines should be kept.
- Existing agricultural structures such as barns and silos should be preserved where feasible.
- Zoning by-laws should be rewritten to not require, or even allow, continuous lots of equal road frontage that unravel the patterns of the rural community. They should be redrafted to allow irregular lots that follow the topography and keep contiguous areas of open land preserved.
- Elementary school program and high-school projects having to do with local and regional history, and community character and appearance should be developed and promoted through a partnership of the schools, the Historical Society, and with the town.
- The Town should establish a special Cultural Opportunities Commission to serve as a municipal link for the private and non-profit preservation interests of Hardwick.

Scenic Resources

- Maintain high visual quality of historic/cultural/scenic resources.

- Promote design guidelines and regulations that maintain scenic qualities.
- Promote a widespread commitment to and tradition of stewardship with regard to maintaining scenic qualities in the landscape.
- Influence land use decisions with respect toward maintaining scenic qualities-
- Enforce gravel removal bylaws.

Natural Resources

General Environmental Degradation

Goals:

- 1) Identify and address areas of environmental degradation.
- 2) Identify and protect areas and resources susceptible to future environmental degradation.
- 3) Recognize in all Town policies that natural resources are finite and that many natural assets of the town are non-renewable within the planning horizon. The town should adopt a policy of promoting sustainability.

Action Items:

- Establish regulation of hazardous waste pick-ups. Support Recycling Commission in their highly regulated hazardous waste pick-up events.
- Decrease non-point pollution via education.
- Identify and protect highly erodable lands.
- Evaluate site conditions at the Gilbertville mills.
- Identify and record old dump sites.
- Identify and document all underground storage tanks (USTs) in Hardwick
- Examine current industrial zoning overlying Wheelwright Aquifer.

Water Resources

Goals:

- 1) Wetland Protection
- 2) Aquifer and drinking water source protection.
- 3) Development of water recreation.

Action Items:

- Ensure proper permitting and oversight takes place whenever natural resources are removed from Hardwick to prevent damage to waterways and aquifers.
- Properly enforce all laws and regulations whether local, state or federal applicable to the protection of all aquifers, public and private drinking sources, waterways, and wetlands within the town of Hardwick.
 - Prevent damage to water sources and aquifers whenever natural resources are removed.
 - Enforce of all laws and regulations applicable to the protection of water sources in Hardwick.
- Improve public access to the Ware River through open space land acquisition or easements.
- Monitor water quality of the Ware River for recreational purposes, including fishing, swimming and boating.
- Protect existing wetlands in their current natural state through the provisions of the Wetland Protection Act. There should be significant support and frequent encouragement by the town for the enforcement of this law by the Conservation Commission.
- Protect Moose Brook and Muddy Brook drainage for purposes of providing wildlife habitat and corridors.
- Minimize non-point pollution sources by investigating, inventorying, and enforcing underground storage tank regulations.
- Map aquifer recharge areas.
- Protect aquifer recharge areas.
- Closely monitor industrial zones over the Wheelwright aquifer.

- Consider alternate zoning for aquifer protection.
- Identify and protect vernal pools.

Fisheries and Wildlife

Goals:

- 1) Maintain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat
- 2) Protection for endangered species and species of special concern.

Action Items:

- Encourage participation in Chapter 61 Forest Management Program, Chapter 61A Agricultural Program, and Chapter 61B Recreation Program, all of which reduce and defer property taxes on lands managed for various open space purposes.
- Encourage wildlife habitat improvement as one goal of forest Management plans under the Chapter 61 program.
- Encourage participation in the stewardship cost sharing program for timber stand and wildlife habitat improvements.
- Through easements and acquisitions, give protection to wildlife corridors, large blocks of open space, and other significant areas.
- Disseminate information on habitat improvement, wildlife needs, and special wildlife concerns. Such information is available from public agencies and private conservation organizations.
- Involve Hardwick residents in helping to reduce impacts to wildlife populations by promoting responsible use of chemicals, reduction of chemical use, erosion control practices, and proper storage of animal manure.
- The Town should provide educational material to forest landowners on agricultural methods and long term forest management. The Town should encourage practices that help maintain bio-diversity, preserve wildlife habitat, and protect endangered species.
- The Town should identify and protect contiguous tracts of habitat.
- The Town should continue support for the land trust and other creative methods to allow for the preservation of important habitats.
 - There is a need to protect wildlife habitats from various pollution sources
 - Wetland habitat has been declining in Hardwick over the past 40 years. This should be stabilized.

- The Town should foster educational programs on habitat protection and pollution control to reduce further losses of habitat.

Forest and Vegetative Resources

Goals:

- 1) Promote long term viability of the local forest product industry.
- 2) Encourage practices that help maintain biodiversity.

Action Items:

- Educate woodland owners on cutting practices including Diameter Limit Cutting practices
- Identify and protect contiguous tracts of forest.
- Educate forest landowners in agricultural methods and long term forest management.
- Promote participation in the Chapter 61 Assessment Program.
- Suggest that the Industrial Development Committee study the wood products industry and develop a long term forest policy to encourage long term forest management and the local forest products industry.
- Create and use a land trust and other “creative” methods to allow for the preservation of important forest tracts.
- Assess and evaluate forest areas in terms of viability as a “climax forest” sanctuary of approximately 20 - 30 acres.
- Work with town assessors to accurately address the valuation of forest lands to promote long term forest management

Topography, geological features and soils

Goals:

- 1) Minimize the loss of farmland soils due to uncontrolled growth.
- 2) Minimize loss of erodable soils due to haphazard site development practices.

Action Items:

- Support the APR and 61A programs.
- Encourage profitable farm enterprise and sustainable forms of agriculture.
- Insure all gravel removal operations are properly permitted and regularly monitored for compliance.
- Monitor gravel removal near water sources and aquifers to prevent contamination.
- Permits for the removal of stone walls and field stone.
- Reclaim soil and field stone deposited by land clearing operations.
- Incorporate major principles of erosion and sedimentation control into site development activities. (Source: Mass. Conservation Guide Volume)
- Keep disturbed areas small.
- Stabilize and protect disturbed areas as soon as possible.
- Keep storm water runoff velocities low through encouragement of permeable parking and road surfaces.
- Protect disturbed areas from storm water runoff.
- Retain sediment within the corridor of site area.

Scenic Resources

Goal:

Preserve the scenic integrity of the landscape

Action Items:

- Promote design guidelines and regulations.

Land Use

Growth and Development

Goal:

Encourage growth and development that takes into consideration the natural resources and unique character of the town and is in step with the ability of the Town to provide essential community services.

Action Items:

- Develop a growth management/monitoring strategy based upon build-out analyses of current zoning. This will enable on-going visualization and analysis of the impact of current zoning bylaws. Establish a growth rate threshold beyond which the Town will be unable to provide services and facilities.
- Develop zoning bylaws for future large-scale subdivision projects incorporating open space, agricultural, area character, and recreational needs.
- Consider a zoning variance to allow for “cluster zoning” and creative development means of protecting the rural and historic character of Hardwick Center.
- Identify Priorities for Protection - Watersheds, Wildlife corridors, Unique Historic/Cultural sites, Outstanding Views.
- Designate Area(s) for Controlled Growth where infrastructure exists already (roadways, electrical service, and town water/sewer)
- Specific Zoning action items
 - For the purpose of preserving the feel of distinct villages, keep the village residential zoning as it is with small lots but include large open space lots in between the village and the next built up area in order to define and emphasize the village edge.
 - In the regulations for subdivision of more than two lots, require plan review to maintain farmland, good woodlot conditions, and scenic views as much as possible.
 - Include more commercial zoning along major roadways with restrictions perhaps on square foot area with the intent of attracting small business to residential areas (i.e., mixed use zoning). (NOTE: The Center for Community Character does not agree with this action item—it will lead to sprawl development along the roadway and it will eventually destroy the rural feel of the town in these areas.)

Housing

Goal

Maintain and enhance the mix of housing opportunities in Hardwick to provide accommodation for a mix of income groups and family sizes into the future.

Action Items:

- Housing Zoning Component—Create a Land Bank Tax on property transfers which would go to preserving open space, agricultural land, historic preservation, and in addition creating affordable housing. Alternatively, consider adopting a property tax surcharge (the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act, if implemented, will permit this).
- Limit building permits for new construction so that growth is controlled. New Braintree has had a 20 permit limit over a two year period in place since 1978.
 - on a first come first serve basis
 - with limits that continue current ratios of demography
- Distribute a rural design manual with building permit applications to explain and promote preferred development scenarios in keeping with the goals of the Town’s master plan to developers.
- Housing for the Elderly is prohibited in all areas except R-20 where it is allowed by special permit (Zoning Bylaws under Section 3. Use Regulations, page 6,# 3c). This should be changed to require a special permit in all village areas for elderly housing projects.
- Commercial, retail business, light manufacturing and moderate density residential purposes are allowed by special permit in all areas (Zoning Bylaws under Section 3, Use Regulations, page 7,# 10). This should be changed to prohibit such uses in all R-40 and R-60 zones (or add special considerations for these areas which will mitigate harmful environmental impacts.

We currently have 5 zones and land intensity regulations for Housing for the Elderly;

Zoning District	Min lot size	Min Frontage	Min Yard Depth			Max Ht
			Frt	Rear	Side	
R-60 Rural Residential -	60,000 Sq. Ft.	200'	35'	40'	20'	35'
R-40 Neighborhood Residential	40,000 Sq. Ft.	150'	35'	40'	20'	35'
R-20 Village Residential	20,000 Sq. Ft.	100'	25'	30'	20'	35'
Housing for the Elderly	80,000 Sq. Ft.	200'	50'	50'	50'	35'
I-40 Industrial	40,000 Sq. Ft.	200'	60'	50'	50'	35'
C-40 Commercial, Residential	40,000 Sq. Ft.	150'	35'	40'	20'	35'
Light Manufacturing						

- After reviewing the New Braintree and West Brookfield zoning requirements, Randall Arendt’s *Rural by Design*, other design guides, and discussions with community members, The following changes to the current zoning requirements are recommended:

Zoning District	Min lot size	Min Frontage	Min Yard Depth			Max Ht
			Frnt	Rear	Side	
R-225 Agricultural and (5 acres) Rural Residential	225,000 Sq. Ft.	250’	50’	40’	30’	35’
R-45 Neighborhood - (1 acre) ResidentialR-25	45,000 Sq. Ft.	175’	40’	40’	20’	35’
Village Residential -	25,000 Sq. Ft.	125’	30’	30’	20’	35’
Housing for the Elderly	80,000 Sq. Ft.	200’	50’	50’	50’	35’
1-40 Industrial	40,000 Sq. Ft.	200’	60’	50’	50’	35’
C-40 Commercial, Residential Light Manufacturing	40,000 Sq. Ft.	150,	35’	40’	20’	35’

- Explore increasing the R-60 zone to 5 acre minimum based on the overwhelming community response from the plan survey to the importance of preserving working farms and open space within Hardwick. Within R-225 the Town could encourage “Area Based Allocation Zoning” (ABAZ) especially in areas of town with the most productive soil and desirable open space. Five acres is a minimum area considered to be farmable.
 - Within this zone farmers could have the right to build employee housing as necessary
 - Creating this zone could help maintain a “critical mass” of farmland in town. This “critical mass” is needed to retain equipment dealers, large-animal vets, feed stores, etc.
 - Under ABAZ, the number of houselots allowed is directly proportional to the farmer’s total acreage (e.g., one lot for every 5 acres), but these lots are subject to maximum size restrictions (often one acre), and are sometimes further required to be located on the parts of a property that are least suitable for farming.
 - The development rights which farmers give up under ABAZ could be tied to the commercial zone so that those interested in developing the commercial area need to buy the development rights from the farmers. We recommend that a committee be formed with representation of farmers and commercial business people as well as other community members and an expert on agricultural zoning. This committee would decide how ABAZ could best be accomplished.
- Under Section 5, Special Regulations, page 10, 5.2 Cluster Development it is stated that “The land remaining in the subdivision as a result of the lot size and frontage reduction shall be deeded to the Town of Hardwick with adequate provision for

public access.” The Town should consider modifying this zone to allow farmers to easily utilize the land. Also it might be wise to add maintenance of a wildlife corridor and affordable housing to the justification for issuing a special permit.

Specific Affordable Housing Action Items:

- Housing and development in Hardwick should be planned so that the town maintains the same ratio of social and economic diversity that it has today. This goal requires controlled diversity in both the villages and rural areas of town. Many other communities in New England and the country have addressed this goal—Hardwick is not without models and assistance.
- The Town should consider forming an Affordable Housing Study Group to explore opportunities for planning and action.
- The Town should consider adopting flexible design standards and guidelines for forms of rural development where houses are in closer proximity on irregularly shaped lots with surrounding land being preserved. These land “conservation” projects can accommodate a variety of building types that reflect diversity in cost and size.
- Within the villages of Gilbertville, Wheelwright and Hardwick, The Town should promote housing with a range in affordability and layout. For instance, in Gilbertville, some multi-family dwellings could be rental units, others condominiums owned by each apartments’ occupants, other buildings could be owned co-operatively by their residents and others could be owned by a Housing Trust. This would create a diversity of housing and residential patterns in this beautiful village while maintain the village center’s architectural integrity.
- The Town should support accessory dwellings like apartments or the conversion of outbuildings on farms can create opportunities for varied housing.
- The Town should support through local educational initiatives the development of local appreciation for the remarkable beauty and historical interest of each village and the surrounding countryside. Old Furnace, Hardwick Center, Gilbertville, Wheelwright and the farms and rural houses that surround them trace the history of New England back hundreds of years, to long before the colonial era in America. Local housing reflects the history and also the individual families who, generation-after-generation or as new residents, give the town the complicated and endearing character it has today. The young people of every part of town should be able to cherish where they live. An appreciation of the architectural integrity of the village centers will guide the individuals who build houses here just as sensitivity to the character of a piece of land in the broader landscape will hopefully guide new building or renovations in rural housing.
- The Town should consider valuable and attractive experiments in co-housing, shared houses and other kinds of building that might require re-figuring of current housing with special zoning permits and perhaps with help from the Historical Commission.

- The Town should support the creative re-design of spaces that might once have been commercial or even manufacturing into mixed use and residential areas.
- Village housing needs to be supported by social and commercial services that meet the needs unique to patterns of village life; e.g., recreational areas, sidewalks, gathering places like restaurants and park areas, youth centers, transportation, and places for young children to play.
- Although grants and financing for these kinds of services are complicated and not always easy to come by in rural towns such as Hardwick, there are real and creative ways that other rural towns like the hill towns on Route 9 west of the Connecticut River have gotten funding for child care, local vans for transportation, funds for parks and sidewalk repair, etc. The Town should take advantage of these opportunities, several of which are listed below.
 - There are also creative ways that volunteer community action can gather to build playgrounds and fund their construction.
 - There are already in place agencies in the Quaboag Valley and in the Pioneer Valley that are eager to help small local businesses, including day car programs for children and other small commercial business like restaurants or manufacturing businesses get underway and receive guidance.
 - Block grants from Worcester County service providers as well as through joint work with the town of Ware can help provide services.
 - Old buildings that provide multi-family residences for many people should be repaired and renovated to support more and better use. Funds are available that can help low-income residents with this process and there are ways that other agencies can be involved. Valuing these buildings and assuring that when they are sold they are maintained, takes advantage of community assets, of good construction, and of the historical value of the buildings to the town. Funds are available for this work. There are programs that can help the community meet this goal. The analysis of housing conditions demonstrates that the quality of housing varies and declines in the large multifamily houses that are homes to many families in town, to many of the town's children and youth. These buildings are also central to treasuring the town's historical roots. One of the best ways to support affordable housing is to support the maintenance and improvement of currently available housing (and buildings that could become housing) through renovation.
 - The Ware River Valley Housing Rehabilitation Program is part of the Ware River Valley Housing Assistance Program and is designed as a "direct" benefit to low and moderate income persons. All homeowners or a majority of renters must fall within Section 8 income guidelines (for example a family of four must have an income no larger than \$37,000 to qualify). This Ware/Hardwick Program

- distributes Massachusetts Housing and Development Funds and acts as the central grant agency.
- Safety and Home Assessment Program (SHAP)—The Ware River Valley Housing Assistance Program administers this program to confirm rehabilitation needs in the town of Hardwick.
 - Fannie Mae Housing Programs: The Senior Housing Opportunities Program, established in 1989, allows federal support for seniors over 65 to establish secure living arrangements close to relatives or other seniors. Four options apply that should be explored:
 - ✓ An Accessory Apartment is a completely private living unit in a single family home.
 - ✓ Home Sharing is the conversion of a single family home (according to Fannie Mae guidelines) into four separate living units so that seniors can make use of a residential house while not living entirely alone.
 - ✓ A sale-leaseback arrangement in which a senior sells his or her home to an investor (who could be one of his or her children) and leases it back.
 - ✓ An Elderly Cottage Housing Opportunity (ECHO) unit is a separate, self-contained housing unit built on the lot of an existing home.
 - Encourage Farmers Home Administration Programs:
 - ✓ Section 502 Rural Housing Loans: Very low interest loans (as little as 1%) are available to assist low and very low-income families in the purchase and/or rehabilitation of new or existing homes in rural areas.
 - ✓ Farm Ownership Loans: these loans are available for buying, improving enlarging farms and constructing, improving and repairing farm and repayment schedules vary.
 - ✓ Farmers Home Administration has funds for 504 Grant and Loan programs. A 504 Grant can be approved up to \$5000 and people in Hardwick who are at least 62 years of age, own and occupy a modest dwelling and have a very low income are eligible for this help to repair and improve their homes. A 504 Loan is a 20-year loan at 1% interest for up to \$15,000. Applicants must be over 18 years of age, must own and occupy a dwelling, must have a very low income, and must have necessity to repair and improve the dwelling for reasons of health and safety. (Very low-income guidelines mean incomes of less than \$23,000 for, a family of four and less than \$18,500 for two people.)

- Establish a Community Housing Trust (a non-municipal organization trust that retains control of the land on which local needs housing (non-speculative housing, housing that meets current needs) exists or is constructed. A Community Housing Trust can buy land and build new units or buy and rehabilitate existing housing with the assistance of a state housing program and other donations and grants. Possible sources of funding for Community Trusts include land donations, property transfer fees, state trusts for land preservation and offices like the Institute for Community Economics in Springfield.
- Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development: From 1995 to 1997 the Town of Hardwick received \$1,798,349.00 from the MDHCD to rehabilitate housing, to help with social service programs like Fuel Assistance, to support planning projects, make infrastructure improvements to water supply systems, and for the removal of architectural barriers in the Hardwick Municipal Office Building. The board of selectmen and a public meeting review potential grants for projects like these and can release funds that are granted by the state. The housing rehabilitation projects in this period met building and repair needs in fourteen multi-family housing units.
- The Town should explore appropriate tax exemptions and tax freezes which help members of the community afford housing. Although Hardwick doesn't have tax freezes for qualified people over 65 years of age, some towns do. Hardwick does have tax exemptions for residents who are 70 years and over who qualify under special income guidelines (the exemption is for \$500) and there are also smaller exemptions for qualified widows and widowers, minors who are without parents, and others. Veterans and their widows can be eligible for exemptions. And in time of crisis, individuals and families can apply for tax abatements.
- The Town should continue to tap funding from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development: From 1995 to 1997 the Town of Hardwick received \$1,798,349.00 from this department to rehabilitate housing, help with social service programs like Fuel Assistance, support planning projects, infrastructure improvements to water supply systems, and for the removal of architectural barriers in the Hardwick Municipal Office Building. The board of selectmen and a public meeting review potential grants for projects like these and can release funds that are granted by the state. The housing rehabilitation projects that took place in this period addressed situations in fourteen family housing units.
- The Town should create an Affordable Housing Task Force: This study group could be made up of local citizens and elected officials, regional planners and grant-writers.
- The Town should consider design standards that protect rural affordable housing. At the same time that village housing and the broad issues of affordable housing programs are addressed, new housing in rural parts of town needs to be sited so as to emphasize and value the rural landscape and support rural ways of life on these homesteads. Many landowners feel very strongly that they should be able to get as

much profit for their land as possible when they sell it. The Town should explore alternative ways that make rural lands affordable to people who are not particularly wealthy. If this is not successful the nature of the town and its villages will surely change in ways that cannot be undone easily. It is not only the farmland that needs to be preserved but a way of life that sustains ordinary people on the land as well. Various measures have been used in other communities to marry affordability with acreage that will maintain the small town rural character of an area. Land banks, land trusts and other programs deal with these issues.

- Land Banks
 - Housing Trusts
 - Varied patterns of cluster housing: Planners insist that a few house lots can be just as lucrative to sellers as many smaller lots with the use of cluster housing and “residential compounds”. A “residential compound” is a development pattern currently in use in other New England towns. In one town it refers to a group of not more than five single-family dwellings that share common frontage and a private access road. Its purpose is to provide limited residential development within large tracts of land in a manner which minimizes maintenance responsibility and cost, while simultaneously preserving the rural character of the town.
 - Tax incentives or zoning by-laws can encourage or require developers or landowners to provide affordable housing within a cluster of houses or a “residential compound”.
 - The shared desire to keep taxes low while keeping housing affordable for people of all ages and income groups means that growth has to be slow so that people who want affordable housing can afford to live in the town. Rapid development and intense development mean that infrastructure growth and needs soar and overwhelm the town with higher municipal costs and taxes. The increase in affordable housing, growing at a pace that maintains the town’s current economic diversity, needs to develop in a slow rhythm along with other types of housing.
- At the Land Use Study Committee’s public meeting, people suggested a town meeting that could, on at least an annual basis, be a forum for discussion and education about these kinds of dynamics (i.e., the relationship between development and taxes etc.) This kind of regular discussion could help the community stay aware of the broader implications of changes that are found to be positive and negative. The Town should consider having such forums on a regular basis.
- The Planning Board, a Housing Task Force, along with the Conservation Commission and other town organizations should meet together to stay abreast of local changes and opportunities and discuss affordable housing initiatives.

Economic Development

Goals

Create a climate for small-scale economic development that fits with the community's character and environment and does not bring with it excessive residential growth

Action Items

General

- Supporting existing businesses rather than trying to prospect new businesses is prudent at this time and for the foreseeable future. Because our citizens surveyed feel strongly about not inviting “big business” into town, small business development is a natural next step. The implications of this economic development will spill over into many of the other areas already presented in the Master Plan exercise. Housing, Open Space, Zoning, Natural Resources all will be affected by the direction of Hardwick's economic development efforts. Our “cottage industries” will continue to offer local employment, and commuting individuals will continue to travel to the greater Worcester, Springfield, Leominster/Fitchburg, and Greenfield areas for their livelihoods. The march of population will affect Hardwick as it has Oakham, Hubbardston and the west part of Hardwick. Some of this population sparks potential for economic development. Some of this growth could erode what our townspeople have come to cherish.
- Economic Development should be viewed as a long term project. Economic Development is a work in progress. Cooperation with Ware, our distinction as an Economic Target Area, thoughtful disposition of our dairy farms, and the formation of a Small Business Development Model are the cornerstones of this continued effort.
- As our town changes, growth can be absorbed and economic stability can be nurtured through planning and careful consideration of our resources. To maintain a balance, diverse land use could be a tool. Historically, ours has been a land-based economy. Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and the Forest Industry are about equal in their ownership of woodland across the state. A majority of forestland, 85%, is in private ownership. The number of owners has doubled since 1972 and the average size is only 30 acres. Woodlot management could be viable alternative to growing houses for financial return.
- To some degree, the logging business is a victim of its own malpractice. Logging has traditionally impacted everything in its way: it has cut stately trees, strewn slash, debarked standing trees along skidways, cut roads through previously pristine areas and beaten down stream banks—all in the name of hauling logs. In the past, loggers working in remote areas had little motivation to care about their impact on the land. But as homeowners move further and further out into the country, living on land that was once reserved for logging, loggers are finding that the land they work on has

become the subject of competing opinions and values. What was once log land now may be regarded as landscape. Massachusetts has a law (MGL Chapter 132) that requires a cutting plan to be submitted for timber harvesting over 50 cords or 25,000 board feet. Both loggers and foresters are now required to be licensed. (Some noncommercial harvesting solely for the personal use of the landowner is exempt under the law, but landowners may voluntarily file, if wetlands are involved, to qualify for the exemption from wetlands procedures.)

- Many landowners fear that if they manage their woodlots to produce timber, the harvests will wreak havoc on their land and trees. This does not have to happen. Local logging firms, which are generally, small family run operations, typically harvest small volumes in thinning operations on small sized woodlots. Pre-harvest planning with a forester, and harvesting in compliance with the Massachusetts Forestry Best Management Practices, can protect the long-term aesthetic and wildlife values of private woodlands while still allowing a financial return. The Forest Cutting Practices Act insures environmental protection of all forests during harvest.
- While most of the forest was cleared long ago for farming, the forests which have grown back contain many highly-valued species like white pine, red oak, sugar maple, white ash and black cherry. These species are sold throughout the world by our local wood industry. and can provide a periodic cash return to landowner. Woodlands can provide a variety of salable products in addition to Christmas trees and maple syrup. For instance, sustainable harvest of mountain laurel, wreath greens or mushrooms may provide limited income. Also, hunting leases, which are common in the southern United States, are gaining some attention here. Each year about 40,000 gallons of maple syrup are produced from sugar bushes and 50,000 planted Christmas trees are harvested from properties across the state.
- Managing forests for wood products can help to further non-monetary goals that a landowner may have. Carefully located woods roads and skid trails might also serve as walking or skiing trails. Thinnings or small harvests may provide firewood or some income to pay taxes, while creating new areas for seedling growth to provide diverse habitat for wildlife, or open scenic vistas. Management for forest products may also help cut property taxes. The state's Forestland Tax Law defers up to 95 percent of the property taxes for landowners willing to make a long-term commitment to improve the quality and quantity of the timber on that land. These tax savings may make it easier for a landowner to keep the land in the family into the future. Year to year, the largest woodland expense may be property taxes, and landowners can save money on this annual cost. Chapters 61, 61A and 61B assess forest, farmland and open space on the basis of its current productive use rather than its fair market value for development.
- The Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program run by Department of Environmental Management-Division of Forestry and Parks encourages landowners to balance ecological, economic and social values of their forests and to apply long-term thinking to their ownership goals. The program helps landowners to improve wildlife

habitat and forest aesthetics, protect soil and water resources and ensure a renewable supply of high quality wood products, according to their ownership goals. The Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) is the cost-share arm of the Forest Stewardship Program, providing financial assistance for a variety of woodland projects.

Agricultural Resources

Goals:

- 1) Create and maintain a close understanding and working relationship between the farm and non-farm population.
- 2) Encourage and promote active agriculture in Hardwick

Action Items:

- Develop and maintain sustainable methods of land preservation that meets both the needs of the farming and non-farming population by:
 - Promoting the APR program, increasing protected agricultural acreage 100% in five years;
 - Providing information and assistance to landowners regarding land conservation alternatives.
- Encourage new forms of agricultural enterprises, as business alternatives for the farming population and for public education for the non-farming population.
- Identify and preserve large blocks of productive agricultural land; develop and follow a rating system for the preservation of land when limited resources are available.
- Lower the capital costs and operating costs (taxes) as well as the cost of ownership transfer of agricultural land to reflect its agricultural value by:
 - Promoting the concept of the percent of taxes paid versus the percent of taxes needed by the town to maintain farmland;
 - Promoting methods of estate planning through local agricultural and town organizations;
 - Reviewing tax rates for Chapter 61A lands with regard to products grown.

Services and Facilities

Action Items:

Fire

- Build a new Fire Station.
- A new fire truck,
- Training computer equipment for fire fighting strategies
- Full-time Chief
- Fire Awareness Training
- Fire Prevention Week at School

Police

- Build a new Police Station
- More Qualified Officers
- Specialized Training
- Equipment upgrades

Highway Department

The Department maintains approximately 100 miles of roadway, of which approximately 33 miles are gravel. There is a potential for 10 more miles of gravel road development. If this occurs, current man-hours would be stretched. With current Town services fragmented (not under DPW) it is difficult at times to set priorities on how to service when multiple needs exist. However, a DPW with control responsibilities of all services in Town would be measurably more difficult and complicated to manage, as well as add to the fixed costs of operation.

The Highway Department is providing a good quality service to the community. The department acknowledges the need to continue to educate personnel in the areas of safety and hazardous waste regulations in order to comply with state (DEP) regulations. This year the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission conducted a comprehensive study of the roads, their conditions, and the cost to meet minimum expected good condition standards. The plan also prioritized the work to be done.

Wastewater Treatment

- Replace some existing sewer lines

Water Resources

- Upgrade and/or modify existing Gilbertville water services and facilities:
 - Install corrosion control chemical injector.

- Replace/repair major water lines
- Upgrade and modify present Wheelwright water services:
 - New Tank, Well Pump, Pumping System
 - Distribution line improvements
 - Storage Tank and Distribution

Solid Waste - Recycling/ Transfer Station

- Upgrade existing recycling services and complete renovations and site work at the Transfer Station
- Additionally, identified is the need for closer alliance with town leadership whereby all town departments recognize and support the importance of recycling.
- Environmental education is needed not only for kids, but also for their parents and leaders as well.
- Open co-operative efforts between town officials, recycling commission, landfill and local haulers is the only way to meet state requirements, increase recycling rates and save the environment.

Schools

No major changes are envisioned by the school department in the next 10 years with regard to schools. However, a population increase could have a dramatic impact on existing services and facilities. Adequate support for the schools exists in the community in terms of programs and policies. However, support for the maintenance of the facilities is needed.

Building Department

- Upgrade computer software to improve tracking of land parcels

Tax Collector

- Purchase Microfiche Equipment

Health

- Undertake a more proactive role in some of the Health Agent responsibilities such as inspection of eateries.

Town Clerk

- Purchase Electronic Ballot Tabulating Equipment

Animal Control

- Provide New Catch Equipment
- Provide Municipal Animal Shelter
- Possible FT Position or PT Increase hours

Senior Services

- Increase Participation in Programs
- Re-hire COA Associate
- Implement more Social and Wellness Programs

Circulation

Action Items:

- The Town should actively pursue transportation planning that is sensitive to maintaining the rural character and qualities of the town, its land use and landscape. The Town should consider traffic calming design and maintenance activities to help control road speed. Village transportation planning and design shall be aimed primarily at retaining and enhancing a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere rather than aimed at satisfying auto-convenience, efficiency of auto movement and accommodation.
- The Town should consider the protections offered by officially designating selected roadways as Scenic, under the Provisions of Mass. Chapter 40. This valuable tool (currently adopted by many towns in the Commonwealth) provides for a simple review process (generally by the planning board of a town) prior to the “cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof” caused by roadway “repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work, on such specifically designated roadways. The Town should consider a similar review prior to any improvement projects that would significantly alter the design or character of any roadway, including the paving of gravel roads.
- Proposed new road construction or changes in any existing road or bridge design should be considered in light of resulting changes in traffic patterns. Through traffic should be channeled around residential areas whenever possible.
- The Town should consider legal means by which it can protect itself against the substantial costs resulting from having to open currently closed, but not abandoned, roads. Consideration could be given to requiring developers to provide some or all of the cost of roadway construction. Reparations to current property owners could be considered.

- The Town should encourage consideration of burying overhead electric, phone and cable lines around the Hardwick Common, and to the removal of service poles. There may be grant monies available to assist with such a project. It could be coordinated with the proposed replacement of concrete curbing with granite.
- The current schedule of daily MART shuttles should be publicized by the Town so that the service can be better utilized, with vehicles running nearer to capacity. We also request that Selectmen authorize the dispatcher to extend hours when there is a Town Meeting held after regular MART service hours.
- The Town should consider offering bus service (McCarthy Bus Service) for after-school activities (such as Ware has done). Ware was pleasantly surprised at the low additional cost for such service.
- The Town should review PVRTA's current schedule and Hardwick's needs for transportation to their service area, and that a letter be written to the route committee requesting appropriate service.
- The Town should research available funding to support passenger service. A possible business opportunity identified in town is a taxi service.
- The Town should consider establishing a Hardwick Internet web site, detailing transportation and other matters.
- The Town should continue to support efforts to provide improved means of alternative travel. A network of multi-use trails (ideally connecting the villages of Hardwick) for bikes, horses, and walking would be welcomed by many. Safe access to the Elementary School by foot or bike would likely be well-utilized as well.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

Historic Resources reflect the story of Hardwick and its development. They are the signs of community and personal identity and, thus, take many forms: public buildings and workplaces, rural landscapes and village centers, cemeteries, housing, churches and schools, the goods people used, and the people themselves. Consciously and unconsciously, we depend on these “resources” to understand how the town has evolved socially, ethnically, and in terms of landscape, religion, and economics. We also depend upon these resources to understand how we have changed as individuals over time.

Cultural Resources reflect Hardwick’s active and participatory identity. They are the town’s many public and private organizations who play an invaluable role in identifying who we are as a community. It’s the many veterans groups, artists and craftsmen, sports leagues, scouts, hunting and fishing clubs, the historians, and the many private groups that form the backbone of Hardwick’s character as a town whose citizens take initiative and responsibility for a certain quality of life. Historic and Cultural Resources are always evolving. We need to appreciate and honor practices and places that might hold significance in the future.

Historic Resources Inventory

In 1991 the Hardwick Historical Commission completed an inventory of the town’s Historic Resources. Enough survey data was available to record the Historic District of Gilbertville and the Historic District of Hardwick in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the Federal Government’s list of structures, sites, areas and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology and culture. It is the official inventory of the Nation’s Historical Resources which are worthy of preservation. The buildings, sites, structures, and objects in our districts are listed on the following pages. A complete explanation, including boundaries and descriptions, can be found in “National Historic Register Report for Hardwick and Gilbertville Massachusetts, 1991” at both of our libraries. This report is a functional part of this plan and is a technical appendix of information regarding historic resources in Hardwick.

National Register of Historic Places Resource Classifications: Definitions

District: A district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

Site: A site is the location of a significant event, a pre-historic or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historical, or archeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure.

Building: A building, such as a house, barn, church, hotel, or similar construction is created to shelter any form of human activity. “Building” may also be used to refer to a historically and functionally related unit, such as a courthouse and jail or a house and barn.

Structure: The term “structure” is used to distinguish from buildings those functional constructions made for purposes other than creating shelter.

Object: The term “object” is used to distinguish from buildings and structures those constructions that are primarily artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed. Although it may be, by nature or design, movable, an object is associated with a specific setting or environment, such as a statue in a designed landscape.

Additions to the Historic Resources Inventory

An additional informal listing of other Historic Resources has been compiled for this report. These additions do not appear in any “official” catalog. Their importance, however, should be considered in all town planning. For instance, even though there was not enough supporting documentation to qualify Old Furnace and Wheelwright for National Register inclusion, there can be no denying their particular value. Several Historic Resources have been included in the informal inventory based on their importance to “local lore.” Others may be added to the official list once additional information is collected and presented to the state historical commission.

Informal Listing of Historic Resources

West Hardwick

- Hell Huddle, near Gate 43
- Foundations and Raceways of Spooner’s Mills, on Muddy Brook on Greenwich Road
- Barnes House, on Thayer Road
- Site of Schoolhouse, intersection of Greenwich Road and Patrill Hollow Road
- Janeczek Farm, on Greenwich Road
- Stanley Bartoszek Farm, on Greenwich Road

- Baptist Cemetery, on Collins Road
- Wright's Home, Old Greenwich Plains Road
- Camp Shari, built 1920, on Hardwick Pond on Turkey Hill Road
- Large Oak Trees on Turkey Hill Road

Hardwick Center

- Ten Acre Preserve
- Site of the first common and meeting house prior to 1741 on Greenwich Road
- Deer Park site of Timothy Ruggles Home on Upper Church Street
- Oldest Home, originally a parsonage on Sessions Road
- Mystery Numbered Stones on Thresher Road
- Stone Walls
- Old Ruggles' Homes on Ridge Road
- Stone Pillars behind Warburton's home on North Road
- Newton-Lincoln-Robinson House on corner of Jackson Road and North Road

Gilbertville

- Trillium Bank, on New Braintree Road
- Rock Walls, on New Braintree Road
- Site of Gilbertville Bandstand near Main Street bridge
- Site of Howard's Mills, on Danforth Brook near intersection of Gilbertville Road and Dow Road
- Aiken-Allen House, north side of Lucas Road

Wheelwright

- Wheelwright School, built in 1912, on Route 32
- War Memorial at Wheelwright School
- Gablefront single-family houses
- Single and two-family Gambrel houses
- Men's Club on corner of Maple Street and Pine Street
- Boardinghouse on Maple Street
- Site of Wheelwright Company Paper Mill
- Water Storage Tower at Wheelwright Co. Paper Mill
- St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church on Church Street
- Superintendent's House on Church Street
- Scoop's Gas Station on Route 32

Old Furnace

- Hamlet of Old Furnace
- Red Prouty's Place
- Site of Taylors Mills/Slab City near junction of Moose Brook and Taylor Hill Road

Cultural Resources Inventory

Hardwick/ New Braintree Cultural Council

The Hardwick/New Braintree Council is the local representative of the Massachusetts Council. It annually distributes grant awards to non profit organizations and to individual artists conducting high-quality arts and humanities projects. The council also distributes funds through the PASS program which provides opportunities for youths to attend professional theatrical performances.

The Hardwick Community Learning Center

The Community Learning Center is a place for people of all ages to share ideas, talents, resources, and enthusiasm for life and learning. People can come to the center to take classes and workshops, to participate in discussion groups and meetings, to sing together, to join -others for folk dancing or sports, to play chess or other board games, to watch old movies, to help out with community service projects, to check the local mentors and teachers file. Hardwick's five villages and the surrounding towns are unusually rich in people living thoughtful, creative lives. The center is a place for, the people of this area to share their skills and interests and to enjoy being together.

Youth Sports Leagues

Quabbin Area Little League, Hardwick Little League, Hardwick Youth Soccer League, Quabbin Youth Football League, Quabbin Youth Basketball League, Hardwick Youth Basketball League.

Friends of the Gilbertville Organ

The Friends of the Gilbertville Organ are an informal, non-profit group whose only activity is the presentation of an annual series of concerts centered on the historic 1874 Johnson & Son organ in the beautiful Trinitarian Congregational Church in Gilbertville. Each of the year's four concerts feature a different organist from among the better solo performers in the northeast. The concert which takes place the first Sunday each December usually brings a boys' choir or similar ensemble to present a free seasonal program of particular family interest. The other concerts ask a small donation, and all receipts above the artists' fees are used for the maintenance of the organ. All concerts are followed by a colorful reception and abundant refreshments in the church hall.

Hardwick 4-H Horse Club

Hardwick 4-H Busy Bee Sewing Club

Gilbertville Golden Age Club

Hardwick Historical Commission

The Hardwick Historical Commission's goal is the preservation of the community's historic places. The commission plans and implements programs for identification, evaluation, and protection of historic resources. The commission is an active participant in local planning efforts and works with other town and area agencies. The Hardwick

Historical Commission has prepared historical documents about the town, been involved in historical restoration, and is working with the State and National Historic Registers. The commission is very interested in working with town agencies to preserve documents, preserve the Center Cemetery, and preserve the many old and picturesque barns still in existence. The commission also seeks to work with agencies that can help with financial means to preserve the historic qualities of the town.

Hardwick Historical Society

The Hardwick Historical Society was founded-in 1959 in order to collect, preserve and, when appropriate, exhibit items relating to the history of the town of Hardwick. Included among the society's holdings are letters, books, historical documents, pictures, clothing, toys, furniture and other household items such as china and kitchen utensils. Five meetings, to which all are welcome, are held during the year, and the programs at such times generally deal with matters of local historic interest. The society maintains a museum at Hardwick Center in a building built c. 1840 as a two-room school. The museum welcomes visitors on Sunday afternoons in July and August and at any time by appointment.

Hardwick Meditation Group

The purpose of the Hardwick Meditation Group is to provide a space and time to sit together as a group in meditation. This is a non-sectarian group, supporting one's spiritual path rather than any one religious affiliation. It is also egalitarian - anyone wishing to lead the group is welcome to do so. All styles of meditation are welcome. We see this group as supporting our ongoing inner exploration and meditation practice.

Quabbin Studies Program

This is a parent created and run project held each Spring at the Hardwick Elementary School. Students in kindergarten through grade six have an opportunity to learn about our environment and natural history through classroom activities and field trips.

Memorial Handbell Choir

Founded in 1974, the Memorial Handbell Choir of the Hardwick Community Church consists of nine members who ring four octaves of handbells. Participation is not limited to church members or residents of Hardwick, and ringers from nearby towns are always welcome. Many programs of handbell music have been presented by the choir throughout central Massachusetts, and each year at Hardwick a concert is given in the Spring and another at Christmastime. The choir is a member of Area I (New England and the Maritime Provinces) of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers, an organization uniting ringers from all parts of the United States and eastern Canada.

Gilbertville Public Library and Paige Memorial Library

The libraries are a department of town government overseen by elected boards of library trustees who have responsibility for library management, collection development, and provision of library services to the public. The libraries maintain collections of adult and child fiction and non-fiction books, periodicals, audio and video recordings, and reference materials for circulation. Through grant programs and/or with other local

resources, the libraries offer various children's programs, including story hours and craft workshops, and some adult programming. The libraries serve as information centers. The libraries serve as important resources for the increasing population of home-schooled children in Hardwick.

John J. Weir Post #246 American Legion

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post

Hardwick Community Fair Committee

This committee is responsible for pulling together the Annual Hardwick Agricultural Fair.

Hardwick's First Friday Group

Hardwick's First Friday Group is a men's organization that sponsors the Boar's Head Feast to honor a local citizen for a life of service to the community and a local high school student for showing promise of the same. Each winter toward the end of February, the dining hall of the Eagle Hill School is transformed into a medieval banqueting hall for the purpose of the Boar's Head Feast. The meal is served by members of the group dressed in monk's habits, and entertainment is provided by a monk's chorus and other members of the group. In spite of the "copiousness of the feast," a considerable amount of money is raised through ticket sales and is donated to local charities.

New England Roleplaying Organization (NERO)

New England Role-playing Organization is a new concept in game playing. In the NERO game a fantasy medieval town is created and participants develop props and supporting characters to carry through a storyline that serves as a framework for play - much like improvisational theater. NERO is dedicated to the legendary days of high fantasy, while running a fun (and above all safe) game. NERO is located on the grounds of the former Northeast Music Camp on Hardwick Pond. NERO was founded in 1989 and is the first American live action roleplaying game. It has a nationwide membership of around 5,000 and runs events through numerous chapters throughout the country. "To the heart of the woods and in the dark of the night they come - chemists, construction workers, and computer programmers - living out a fantasy full of monsters and magic, heroes and villains. Armed with duct tape and foam rubber, they gather to battle monsters, magic spells and the occasional tree stump."

Calvin Paige Agricultural Fund, Calvin Paige Agricultural Fund Trustees

The purpose of the Paige Fund is to be supportive of agriculture and agriculture related efforts in the community. The Paige Fund also supports the Greenhouse Project at Quabbin Regional High School.

Joseph Pilsudski Association

Hardwick Area Rod and Gun Club

Hardwick Artists Guild

The Hardwick Artists Guild is a non-profit organization of local artists who represent many artistic disciplines. The purpose of the group is to provide support for its members through information sharing and opportunities to exhibit and/or perform. The guild also provides occasions for the community-at-large to enjoy a variety of experiences. The ArtsPATH (Performances At Town Hall) program has brought puppeteers, musicians, and theatrical productions to the stage at Town Hall. The guild sponsors an annual Christmas Fair and an annual Valentine Coffeehouse fundraiser to buy books for the school libraries. Guild artists and artisans exhibit their work throughout the year in conjunction with many of these events and at the Hardwick Fair. The guild artists support other community-events, such as the Halloween Trick-or-Treat Playground Fundraiser where they create an imaginative Pumpkin Walk. The Hardwick Artists Guild is a tenant of Town Hall through an agreement with the Hardwick Board of Selectmen.

Boy Scout Troop 3, Hardwick and Girl Scout Troop 732, Hardwick

The Hardwick scouting programs are opportunities for kids to have fun while developing responsibility skills through service to their families and community. Boy Scout Troop 3 has three programs: Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts, and Boy Scouts. Girl Scout troop 732 has four programs: Daisy Scouts, Brownies, Cadets, and Senior Scouts.

Issues and Concerns

How can historic buildings and locations be protected while remaining true to Hardwick's heritage as a town that changes according to the community's needs?

There is no protection in the town's regulations for historic buildings or locations. Although much of Gilbertville and Hardwick center has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, National Register listing only serves to regulate federal and state agency activities or funding that may affect the integrity of these places. Historic Resources that are taken care of give residents a real sense of place and pride. Many of Hardwick's buildings of historic value are in poor condition.

How can we encourage community awareness, interest, and pride in the things that contribute to each village's unique character and place in Hardwick's history?

Hardwick's development has created four distinct villages: Old Furnace, with saw, grist, and fulling mills; Gilbertville, with its textile company built worker housing and mill buildings; Wheelwright, which was essentially constructed to house and employ paper mill employees; and Hardwick Center, an unusually intact example of an early 19th century highland meeting-house village. Unique characteristics of architectural styles, established building patterns, and the way property has been used, all contribute to the personalities of Old Furnace, Wheelwright, Gilbertville, and Hardwick Center.

How can we keep the traditional look of open fields and wooded areas that still exists outside our villages, while accommodating the needs of a growing residential population?

The appearance of Hardwick outside its center villages comes from the way farms were scattered throughout the rural landscape of open fields and forests along roads that were situated according to why they were needed and to the lay of the land. A serious threat to this historic farm related identity is the pattern of development where lots are being created and built on along Hardwick's roads with houses at intervals similar to standard subdivision development.

How can we help young children and teenagers learn about Hardwick's history?

We recognize that a sense of the town's history and an appreciation of its resources can't begin in middle age. Pride and ownership in Hardwick's future must begin as part of our children's education.

How can we assist the efforts of our cultural resource groups?

The town's many public and private organizations play an invaluable role in identifying who we are as a community. Cultural Resources provide connections that help us feel comfortable about taking part in community life. Most of the groups listed in the Cultural Resources Inventory are non-profit volunteer groups motivated by common interests. Yet, they sponsor events, supplement public and private education, and offer the community many positive opportunities.

Approach

In spite of the changes that recent decades have wrought on its landscape, Hardwick retains the clear imprint of the historical processes that shaped it. The town abounds with houses that embody the popular image of New England's agricultural past. Working farms are fewer now but the town's best fields remain in cultivation. The machines may be gone from Gilbertville and Wheelwright, but the vast majority of the buildings in these villages survive, and new generations living in the apartments and houses have recreated thriving communities. We need to learn to look at these pieces of the past that surround us to see history in a new way, close at hand. We can learn about the past personally and locally and come to value the buildings, the farms, the villages, and the broader landscape that embody that past. We can recognize, often for the first time, the importance of the historical processes that unfolded right here in Hardwick.

This approach to Historic and Cultural Resources builds on concepts of awareness, interest, appreciation, and community pride in the town's past and present. These concepts become concrete in recommendations for community education that includes

young children and teenagers, creative action, restoration and preservation, and support and encouragement of arts and learning.

Throughout our lists of important issues, concerns, and action items, we aim to highlight the importance of a number of ideas:

- History is ongoing and seamless.
- The entire town and each of its villages are the sources of historic and treasures.
- Youth, as well as the older people in town, have histories and offerings worth capturing and encouraging.
- Change, at various rates, is part of the march of time and, thus, of history. We are not interested in arguing for a static community, even as we argue for preserving historic sites.
- Hardwick should be a town where families, old and new to town, can find places to live economically diverse lives. It is critical not to preserve a landscape and its buildings without the people who are essential elements to the town's history and culture.
- Historic and Cultural Resources can't exist without what is called "historical memory," which requires people from one generation to the next, in different parts of the community, to live in the town they grew up in; to find work and raise families and to welcome new people as well. Thus, the well-being, preservation, and development of our Historic and Resources depends on the way that they can be meshed with issues of social services, housing, natural resource protection, development of work opportunities, and education.

Action Items

- A way to promote preservation of Historic Resources, both natural and historic, is to encourage a sense of stewardship. This philosophy means viewing property not as a commodity, but as a non-renewable resource which needs to be protected for future enjoyment. Historic buildings and locations are particularly appropriate for stewardship protection because they have existed for many years longer than their present owners and are physical records of the history of the town - a possession of not any one individual, but of the whole community and its residents.
- Owners of historic buildings can consult with the Historical Society and the Historical Commission for advice and guidance when considering exterior alterations to their buildings to evaluate the compatibility and affect of their projects.

- Financial incentives for the preserving, rehabilitating, and adapting of historic properties and locations can take many forms, some carried out completely at the local level, some featuring a partnership with State and Federal agencies. Examples include: tax incentives, such as Federal investment tax credits and local exemptions from, or reduction of, property tax; grants from the State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other public and private agencies; Federal, State, and local subsidies to assist key businesses and to support low-income housing, helping to stabilize deteriorating commercial areas and neighborhoods; the Department of Housing and Urban Development has published examples of such programs that are worth consideration (e.g., Leveraging Your Community Development Block Grant); the charitable contributions of partial interest in an historically important land area or certified historic structure that can be deducted from taxes; and the use of revolving funds and low interest loans to support such activities as sensitive rehabilitation and facade restoration.
- An interesting idea that might be worth looking into is an alternate valuation for historic property. Where a property has substantial development potential, its fair market value is often much greater than the value of the property at its existing use. If a basis other than fair market value can be established for assessment, the pressure created by taxation to convert the property to its most profitable use would not be the owner's only option. Essentially, this plan could be similar to some of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction programs, but applied to historic property.
- Identify valued buildings and sites with historic markers that explain their significance. These resources should be mapped with other important features of the town such as wetlands, streams and rivers, agricultural lands, and so forth to enable planners to plan for their preservation. This information should be used when deciding where development should occur that fits into the character of the town and its resources.
- Place in each village a brass sign that briefly recounts its history and the roots of its architecture.
- Support traditional celebrations such as the Hardwick Fair, patriotic parades, and annually held social activities.
- Encourage the reuse of older buildings within the villages as an alternative to new construction. The multi-family company-built housing of Gilbertville and Wheelwright are among our most visible Historic Resources. Sensitive maintenance of these old buildings is expensive and is a major contributor to their deterioration. Having information about financial assistance programs easily available, and considering tax options, would be helpful to landlords and owners.

- Reclassify Gilbertville’s mill area from I-40, Industrial, to C-40, Commercial, Light Manufacturing, Residential.
- Preserve the integrity of the landscape. Hills, ridge lines, valleys, streams, wetlands, rock outcrops and formations, major tree cover, specimen trees, tree canopies, and the topography of the land, even minor topographical features such as drainage swales and gentle rises, need to “read” through all development. Zoning by-laws, subdivision and land development by-laws and design guidelines should be implemented as soon as possible to accomplish this action item.
- Prohibit excessive earth cuts and fills. Where grading cannot be avoided, as in road construction, sculpt the rough that results into natural looking contours and plant native vegetation.
- Guidelines to consider to minimize the visual impact of building houses on former farm property and retain rural features:
 - ✓ Residences and structures should be located adjacent to tree lines and wooded field edges. This would avoid placing them in open fields.
 - ✓ Buildings should be located not on ridge lines, but below them to preserve the natural form of the topography and the silhouette of the town’s hills.
 - ✓ Existing farm roads should be used in the subdivision design.
 - ✓ Stonewalls and tree lines should be kept.
 - ✓ Existing agricultural structures such as barns and silos should be preserved where feasible.
- Hardwick’s zoning should be redrafted to not require, or even allow, continuous lots of equal road frontage that unravels the patterns of rural community. Allow irregular lots that keep contiguous areas of open land to be preserved.
- Hardwick should develop an elementary school program and high-school projects having to do with local and regional history. These programs should be developed through a partnership of the schools, the Historical Society, and with the town.
- The Town should appoint a special commission to serve as a municipal link for the interests of Hardwick regarding historic and cultural resources.

HOUSING ELEMENT

Introduction

The Master Plan Survey for the Town provides insight into the public perception of housing choices in Hardwick. The results were interesting and conflicting. Townspeople's concerns and wishes are decidedly in favor of affordable housing and retirement communities, decidedly against multi-family homes, condominiums, cluster development and mobile homes. Rental housing was thought to be in good to fair condition. Housing costs were thought to be fair. A large majority thought elderly and handicapped housing was extremely important, or important. A substantial majority also agreed that Town officials should be able to limit the number of building permits each year in order to plan for new growth and development.

Housing Inventory and Profile

The following is an overview of the current housing stock in the town of Hardwick as listed by the assessor's office through 1996.

Single Family	661
Two Family	84
Three Family	18
Four to Eight Family	43
Mobile Homes	19
Rooming Houses	1

The age and condition of each housing category was also able to be obtained from the assessors office.

Single Family Homes—have an age range from the 1700's to the present with a continuous line of construction dates. Their conditions are as follows:

E	EV	V	VG	G	GA	A	AF	F	FP	P	U
130	16	80	87	165	62	80	18	12	2	9	0

540 units - 81.7 % are rated as above average in overall condition

80 units - 12.1 % are rated average

41 units - 6.2 % are rated below average

Two Family Homes—have an older age average with 68% being built prior to 1920, 11% built between 1920-1969, 6% built between 1961-1979 and 15% built from 1980-1997. It is interesting that almost as many units were built from 1980-1997 as from 1920-1979. Their conditions are as follows:

E	EV	V	VG	G	GA	A	AF	F	FP	P	U
6	0	2	3	20	7	27	7	8	2	2	0

38 units - 45.2% are rated above average in overall condition

27 units - 32.2% are rated average

9 units - 22.6% are rated below average

Three Family Homes—were all built prior to 1905 with one exception built in 1958. Their conditions are as follows:

E	EV	V	VG	G	GA	A	AF	F	FP	P	U
0	0	0	1	3	2	8	1	1	1	1	0

6 units - 33.3% are rated above average in overall condition

8 units - 44.4% are rated average

4 units - 22.3% are rated below average

Four to Eight Family Homes—were all built prior to 1925 with the exception of 6 units built in 1982. Their conditions are as follows:

E	EV	V	VG	G	GA	A	AF	F	FP	P	U
0	0	6	0	2	1	19	7	5	1	2	0

9 units - 20.9% are rated above average in overall condition

19 units - 44.2% are rated average

15 units - 34.90/e are rated below average

Mobile Homes—17 built between 1950-1970, 2 built in 1980. Their conditions are as follows:

E	EV	V	VG	G	GA	A	AF	F	FP	P	U
0	0	0	1	4	1	6	2	4	0	1	0

6 units - 31.6% are rated above average in overall condition

6 units - 31.6% are rated average

7 units - 36.8% are rated below average

Issues and Concerns

Based upon this information it can be concluded that single family homes make up the bulk of the present housing stock in Hardwick. These homes are in general in good condition. Multiple family units are more uniformly older and in less good condition, particularly 4-8 family units. There is clearly an aging rental housing stock centered primarily in Gilbertville that is need of updating and repair at present. This housing stock will be even more in need of updating and repair in the near future. Much of it is of historic significance. Currently much of this housing is owner-occupied or locally-owned. As ownership ages more of these units will go on the market. This could be a significant problem if absentee ownership becomes a trend. Present absentee ownership in town provides a snapshot of a grim future if this trend develops. Later in this report possible ways the town can encourage both local ownership and upgraded housing conditions in Gilbertville will be addressed.

Other Related Information

Population Growth:	1980-1990	1990-1996
	5% 1990 Census	7.3% DHCD 1996

Median Home Sale Price		
1990	\$55,000	Banker & Tradesman
1991	\$94,000	
1992	\$77,209	
1993	\$70,000	
1994	\$100,000	
1995	\$76,200	From Town Assessors Office
1996	\$81,666	
1997	\$94,500	

Rental Price Information			
Size of Unit	Range	Average	Median
1 Bedroom	\$250-\$600	\$354.60	\$350
2 Bedroom	\$200-\$600	\$402	\$400
3 Bedroom	\$330-\$685	\$448	\$450
4 Bedroom	(1 unit) \$300		
6 Bedroom	(1 unit) \$500		

New Construction 1994-1998
58 units

Subsidized Housing Units			
Program	Year	Units	Name
DHCD	1993	48	Quabbin Estates

Rental Assistance		
Source	Units	Program
State	5	MRVP
Federal	7	Section 8
Public Housing	0	

Action Items

The Town should:

- Support a Community Housing Bank.
- Control and direct growth. Limit building permits for new construction so that growth is controlled. New Braintree has had a 20 permit limit over a two year period in place since 1978.
 - ✓ on a first come first serve basis OR lottery system
 - ✓ with limits that continue current ratios of demography
- Distribute a design manual with building permit applications to give direction on appropriate design for new housing to fit into the character of Hardwick and foster sensitivity toward protecting existing housing of historic significance.
- Modify the Town's Zoning Bylaws under Section 3, Use Regulations, page 6, #3c Housing for the Elderly is prohibited in all areas except R-20 where it is allowed by special permit. We recommend it be changed to special permit in all areas.
- In the Town's Zoning Bylaws, under Section 3, Use Regulations, (page 7, #10) Commercial, retail business, light manufacturing and moderate density residential purposes are allowed by special permit in all areas. The Town should change the Bylaws to prohibit these uses in R-40 and R-60 zones (or add special considerations for such uses to be permitted in these areas.)

Currently there are 5 zones in town with land intensity regulations and a separate category for housing for the Elderly:

Zoning District	Min. lot size	Min. Frontage	Min. Frt	Yard Rear	Depth Side	Max Ht
R-60 Rural Residential	60,000 Sq. Ft.	200'	35'	40'	20'	35'
R-40 Neighborhood Residential	40,000 Sq. Ft.	150'	35'	40'	20'	35'
R-20 Village Residential	20,000 Sq. Ft.	100'	25'	30'	20'	35'
Housing for the Elderly	80,000 Sq. Ft.	200'	50'	50'	50'	35'
1-40 Industrial	40,000 Sq. Ft.	200'	60'	50'	50'	35'
C-40 Commercial, Residential Light Manufacturing	40,000 Sq. Ft.	150'	35'	40'	20'	35'

- After reviewing the New Braintree and West Brookfield zoning requirements, the *Rural by Design* planning guide, and discussions with community members, the following changes to the current zoning requirements should be considered:

Zoning District	Min. lot size	Min. Frontage	Min. Frt	Yard Rear	Depth Side	Max Ht
R-225 Agricultural and -(5 acres) Rural Residential	225,000 Sq. Ft.	250'	50'	40'	30'	35'
R-45 Neighborhood - (1 acre) Residential R-25	45,000 Sq. Ft.	175'	40'	40'	20'	35'
Village Residential	25,000 Sq. Ft.	125'	30'	30'	20'	35'
Housing for the Elderly	80,000 Sq. Ft.	200'	50'	50'	50'	35'
1-40 Industrial	40,000 Sq. Ft.	200'	60'	50'	50'	35'
C-40 Commercial, Residential Light Manufacturing	40,000 Sq. Ft.	150'	35'	40'	20'	35'

Other neighboring towns have larger lot zoning districts. For example, New Braintree has had a 3 acre minimum lot size and 250' minimum frontage throughout the town since 1978.

- The recommendation to increase the R-60 zone to 5 acre minimum is based on the overwhelming community response from our survey to the importance of preserving working farms and open space within Hardwick. Within R-225 we recommend encouraging “Area Based Allocation Zoning” (ABAZ) especially in areas of town with the most productive soil and desirable open space. We are using 5 acres as the minimum area considered to be farmable
 - ✓ Within which farmers could have the right to build employee housing as necessary
 - ✓ Creating this zone could help maintain a “critical mass” of farmland in town. This “critical mass” is needed to retain equipment dealers, large-animal vets, feed stores, etc.

- ✓ Under ABAZ, the number of houselots allowed is directly related proportional to the farmer's total acreage (e.g., one lot for every 5 acres), but these lots are subject to maximum size restrictions (often one acre), and are sometimes further required to be located on the parts of a property that are least suitable for farming.
- ✓ The development rights which farmers give up under this type of zoning could be tied to the commercial zone so that those interested in developing the commercial area need to buy the development rights from the farmers. We recommend that a committee be formed with representation of farmers and commercial business people as well as other community members and an expert on agricultural zoning. This committee would decide how this could best be accomplished.
- Under Section 5, Special Regulations, page 10, 5.2 Cluster Development it is stated that "The land remaining in the subdivision as a result of the lot size and frontage reduction shall be deeded to the Town of Hardwick with adequate provision for public access. The Town should modify this provision to allow farmers to more easily utilize their land (we may want to encourage organic methods in areas close to housing). Also it might be wise to add maintenance of a wildlife corridor, and affordable housing to the reasons such a special permit could be issued.

Affordable Housing

Housing, like every single element in the town's Master Plan is part of the whole fabric of life in Hardwick, its villages and countryside, if we don't pay attention to it, the entire fabric will unravel. Housing is tied in to land use, economic development, cultural life and history, infrastructure issues, recreation and conservation. It affects such seemingly disparate issues as the quality of education, the well being of youth, family unity and the lives of elders. At the center of Housing as a topic for study is the issue of affordability and around that issue revolve elements of zoning, the cost of land and construction, demographic change, the conditions of existing structures, and needs for supporting services.

In planning for change, whether gradual or abrupt, planning for housing means much more than thinking about new construction as the only important and affecting manner of town growth and change. What will happen when large multifamily, historically significant buildings in Gilbertville come up for sale in the not-so-distant future- Will they start, or in some cases, continue to decay, owned by absentee landlords. Will they afford poor conditions to their inhabitants- Or will they provide new opportunities to restore unique and beautiful old buildings, providing a diversity of housing opportunities from rental housing, to cooperatives to condominiums at affordable prices- What will happen as current farmlands and open spaces, are sold off and old farmhouses and outbuildings go up for sale- Will we be ready for development pressures that push for subdivisions, will old houses be torn down, and will rural life available only to the wealthiest people in town- Or will we rehabilitate and improve current buildings, act creatively in developing rural land, and make sure that ordinary people can live spaciously in the countryside of this town- These are exciting questions and exciting times. They require us to

bridge the issues that link the necessity of looking at current and future housing needs realistically and imagining the best possible future.

Issues and Concerns

Hardwick is not a wealthy town or a wealthy part of the state. Nevertheless, as is clear in current charts on housing and demography, the cost of buying land and building a house has soared in the past two decades. This has happened because of the rising cost of land more than as a result of rising construction costs. In rural areas of town, the high price of land and the availability of flat open land encourages both land sales and development at the same time that it tends to encourage the placement of more houses on small lots and to discourage most people from farming or using their land. In the villages of Gilbertville, Wheelwright, and Hardwick Center, land for new houses is scarce. But prices are rising for everyone. Rental housing changes hands at increasing cost in Gilbertville. At the same time in Gilbertville, where most of the children of Hardwick live, the condition of housing declines as the number of rental units per building increases.

The town is unequal in the prosperity and comfort of different villages and in the opportunities and situations they offer for housing, while the rural parcels of land are volatile depending on location, pressure for development, quality of soil, topography, and cost. Given the spread of the town, the rich diversity of lifestyles and the good fortune of many people of high and moderate incomes, it is difficult for many people in town to truly see that the Ware River Valley Region of the state (which includes Hardwick and Ware together with West Warren) are the poorest parts of the entire Pioneer Valley Region. Many residents were below the poverty level in the 1990 U.S.

The census report tells us that many people here still are. Of the 43 municipalities in the Pioneer Valley Region,, only Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke have greater poverty rates than this area. While many of the people in town are fortunate, very difficult lives are being led behind the white clapboard walls of rural houses and within the apartments of historic mill housing. We as a town have the opportunity to raise the level of housing and community life for all of Hardwick's residents and to benefit everyone in the process; we can do this by taking advantage of grants, developing volunteer programs and other community projects, and by planning. The fact that we are a small community makes it more rather than less possible to plan about and address these issues. And the raising the quality of life for people of moderate and low incomes in town benefits the whole town because it better the atmosphere and levels of its schools, its community life and its economic well-being.

The vast majority of people who answered the town Master Plan Survey listed affordable housing as a major concern and goal. People in Hardwick appear to want a variety of housing options; they want housing that is accessible and affordable to everyone (including the elderly and handicapped); and they want social services to support village life.

At the very same time townspeople are more uncertain about specific elements that mesh the needs and realities of affordable housing. Although half the people in town are in favor of

multifamily housing or have no opinion, half of those who answered the questionnaire are opposed to creating more. They expressed concern over new residential development, uncertainty over the meaning of “cluster housing,” as it differs from other forms of subdivision, and they want to assure that municipal taxes are moderate in the face of certain growth and change.

Above all, it seems to us on the Housing Committee, that their answers and comments declare that townspeople want the town to stay much as it is today:

- People value Hardwick’s social and economic diversity. They want to preserve the architectural integrity and beauty of Gilbertville, Wheelwright and Hardwick Center, the nature and rhythms of small-town life, and the rural landscape that is the broader fabric of the town. They want to be able to afford to live here and to remain here in their old age and infirmity and for their children to be able to stay in town when they are grown and starting families of their own.
- People know that the passage of time brings change, and they are eager for more local jobs, recreation and services. They are also concerned about the future of youth, the quality of education, and the condition of housing. They want the future to bring improvements. They want growth and change to happen by increasing, not diminishing, the quality and nature of life that is here today. They clearly argue in the questionnaire for the elements of town activity that support and sustain family life (including education for our children, recreation for our youth, jobs for adults and services for our elders) over generations and varied economic circumstances.

Our committee believes that it is absolutely possible to meet these aims. We find exciting opportunities to make the town even better than it is today, to enhance the special beauty and the quality of life in Gilbertville, Wheelwright and Hardwick Center and to maintain the rural landscape and nature of the town. We have used the responses on the Questionnaire, the work of other Town Plan Committees in Hardwick, the plans developed by other communities, and information about interesting projects nationwide to help shape the following list of concerns and issues relating to housing in this town:

Action Items

- Housing and development in Hardwick should be planned so that the town maintains the same ratio of social and economic diversity that it has today. This goal requires controlled diversity in both the villages and rural areas of town. Many other communities in New England and the country have addressed this goal, so we are not without models and assistance.
- We propose that the town form an Affordable Housing Study Group to explore opportunities for planning and action.

- Cluster housing, a form of rural development where houses are in closer proximity on irregularly shaped lots with surrounding land being preserved, can accommodate a variety of kinds to building that reflect diversity in cost and size.
- Within the villages of Gilbertville, Wheelwright and Hardwick, housing should range in affordability and layout. For instance, in Gilbertville, some multi-family dwellings could be rental units, others condominiums owned by each apartments occupants, other buildings could be owned cooperatively by their residents and others could be owned by a Land Trust. This would create a diversity of housing and residential patterns in this beautiful village while maintain the village center's architectural integrity.
- Accessory dwellings like apartments or the conversion of out buildings on farms can create opportunities for varied housing.
- We are strongly in favor of really developing local appreciation for the remarkable beauty and historical interest of each village and the surrounding countryside. Old Furnace, Hardwick Center, Gilbertville, Wheelwright and the farms and rural houses that surround them trace the history of New England back hundreds of years, to long before the colonial era in America. Local housing reflects the history and also the individual families who generation after generation or as new residents give the town the complicated and endearing character it has today. The young people of every part of town should be able to cherish where they live. We hope that an appreciation of the architectural integrity of the village centers will guide the individuals who build houses here just as sensitivity to the character of a piece of land in the broader landscape will hopefully guide new building or renovations in rural housing. But this said we want to note that we believe that few of us would be happy in a town that never celebrated the passage of time or individual style and taste in its architecture. Happiness at home comes partly from the way each individual feels that his or her dwelling reflects their tastes and values. Thus we hope that the community will trust its inhabitants, its neighbors to find their own blends of community consciousness, historical appreciation and individual taste and pleasure. This enriches the feeling of character and variety in town.
- Explore co-housing, shared houses and other kinds of building that might require re-figuring of current housing with special zoning permits and perhaps with help from the Historical Commission.
- Support the creative re-design of spaces that might once have been commercial or even manufacturing into mixed use and residential areas.
- Support village housing needs by committing social and commercial services that meet the unique to patterns of village life; e.g., recreational areas, sidewalks, gathering places like restaurants and park areas, youth centers, transportation, and places for young children to play.
- Search for implementation funds. Although grants and financing for these kinds of services are complicated and not always easy to come by in rural towns such as

Hardwick, there are real and creative ways that other rural towns like the hill towns on Route 9 west of the Connecticut River have gotten funding for child care, local vans for transportation, monies for parts and sidewalk repair, etc.

- Activate the volunteer community. There are also creative ways that volunteer community action can gather to build playgrounds and fund their construction.
- Activate assistance from social service agencies. There are already in place agencies in the Quaboag Valley and in the Pioneer Valley that are eager to help small local businesses, including day car programs for children and other small commercial business like restaurants or manufacturing businesses get underway and receive guidance.
- Tap into the federal funding.
- Block grants from Worcester County service providers as well as through our joint work with the town of Ware can help us provide services.
 - ✓ Old buildings that provide multi-family residences for many people should be repaired and renovated to support more and better use. There are funds that can help low-income residents with this process and ways that other agencies can be involved. Valuing these buildings and assuring that when they are sold they are maintained, takes advantage of what we already have, of good construction, and of the historical value of the buildings to the town. There are funds and programs that can and already do help us toward this goal. The preceding analysis of housing conditions shows that the quality of housing varies and declines in the large multifamily houses that are homes to many families in town, to many of the town's children and youth. These buildings are also central to treasuring the town's historical roots. One of the best ways to support affordable housing is to support the maintenance and improvement of currently available housing and buildings that could become housing through renovation.
 - ✓ The Ware River Valley Housing Rehabilitation Program is part of the Ware River Valley Housing Assistance Program and is designed as a "direct" benefit to low and moderate income persons. All homeowners or a majority of renters must fall within Section 8 income guidelines (for example a family of four must have an income no larger than \$37,000 to qualify). This Ware/Hardwick Program distributes Massachusetts Housing and Development Funds and acts as the central grant agency.
 - ✓ Safety and Home Assessment Program (SHAP)- The Ware River Valley Housing Assistance Program administers this program to confirm rehabilitation needs in the town of Hardwick.
 - ✓ Fannie Mae Housing Programs: The Senior Housing Opportunities Program, established in 1989, allows federal support for seniors over 65 to establish secure living arrangements close to relatives or other seniors. Four options apply:

- An Accessory Apartment is a completely private living unit in a single family home.
 - Home Sharing is the conversion of a single family home (according to Fannie Mae guidelines) into four separate living units so that seniors can make use of a residential house while not living entirely alone.
 - A sale-leaseback arrangement in which a senior sells his or her home to an investor (who could be one of his or her children) and leases it back.
 - An Elderly Cottage Housing Opportunity (ECHO) unit is a separate, self-contained housing unit built on the lot of an existing home.
- ✓ Farmers Home Administration Programs:
- ✓ Section 502 Rural Housing Loans: Very low interest loans (as little as 1%) are available to assist low and very low-income families in the purchase and/or rehabilitation of new or existing homes in rural areas.
 - ✓ Farm Ownership Loans: these loans are available for buying, improving enlarging farms and constructing, improving and repairing farm and repayment schedules vary.
 - ✓ Farmers Home Administration has funds for 504 Grant and Loan programs. A 504 Grant can be approved up to \$5000 and people in Hardwick who are at least 62 years of age, own and occupy a modest dwelling and have a very low income are eligible for this help to repair and improve their homes. A 504 Loan is a 20-year loan at 1-% interest for up to \$15,000. Applicants must be over 18 years of age, must own and occupy a dwelling, must have a very low income, and must have necessity to repair and improve the dwelling for reasons of health and safety. (Very low-income guidelines mean incomes of less than \$23,000 for, a family of four and less than \$18,500 for two people.)
- Support a community housing land bank. A community housing land bank is a non-municipal organization trust that retains control of the land on which local need housing (non- speculative housing, housing that meets current needs) exists or is constructed. A Community Land Trust can buy land and build new units or buy and rehabilitate existing housing with the assistance of a state housing program and other donations and grants. Possible sources of funding for community land trusts include land donations, property transfer fees, state trusts for land preservation and offices like the Institute for Community Economics in Springfield. According to a 1991 survey by the United States Census Bureau, only 9% of renters in the United States can afford home ownership. (See Rural by Design). With the support of a community land bank or trust, people living locally in villages and in the countryside could improve their living situations in spite of

incomes that might often keep them in a cycle of housing that would let them save little money and have little equity.

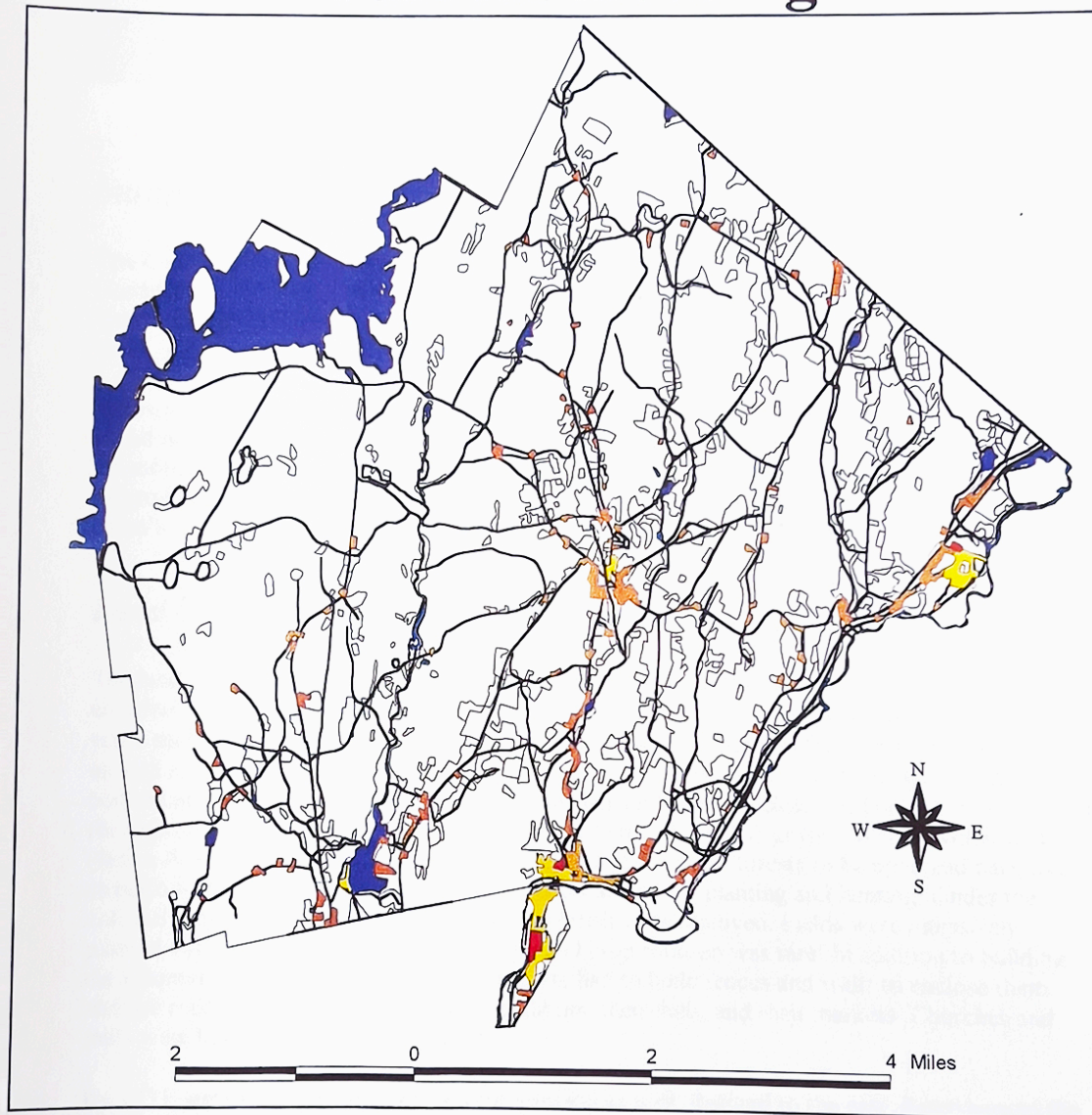
- Tap into Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development funding for housing rehabilitation: From 1995 to 1997 the Town of Hardwick received \$1,798,349.00 from the MDHCD to rehabilitate housing, to help with social service programs like Fuel Assistance, to support planning projects, make infrastructure improvements to water supply systems, and for the removal of architectural barriers in the Hardwick Municipal Office Building. The board of selectmen and a public meeting review potential grants for projects like these and can release funds that are granted by the state. The housing rehabilitation projects in this period met building and repair needs in fourteen multi-family housing units.
- Provide tax exemptions and tax freezes to support affordable housing: Although Hardwick doesn't have tax freezes for qualified people over 65 years of age, some towns do. Hardwick does have tax exemptions for residents who are 70 years and over who qualify under special income guidelines (the exemption is for \$500) and there are also smaller exemptions for qualified widows and widowers, minors who are without parents, and others. Veterans and their widows can be eligible for exemptions. And in time of crisis, individuals and families can apply for tax abatements.
- Create an Affordable Housing Task Force: This study group could be made up of local citizens and elected officials, regional planners and grant-writers.
- At the same time that we address village housing and the broad issues of affordable housing programs, new housing in rural parts of town needs to be situated so as to emphasize and value the rural landscape and support rural ways of life on these homesteads. Many landowners feel very strongly that they should be able to get as much profit for their land as possible when they sell it. We emphasize the need to figure out ways that make rural lands affordable to people who are not particularly wealthy. If we don't succeed at doing this, the nature of the town and its villages will surely change in ways that we cannot undo. It is not only our farmland that we need to preserve but a way of life that sustains ordinary people on the land as well. Various measures have been used in other communities to marry affordability with acreage that will maintain the small town rural character of an area. Land banks, land trusts and other programs deal with these issues.
 - ✓ Land Banks
 - ✓ Land Trusts
 - ✓ Varied patterns of cluster housing: Planners insist that a few house lots can be just as lucrative to sellers as many smaller lots with the use of cluster housing and "residential compounds". A "residential compound" is a development pattern currently in use in other New England towns. In one town it refers to a group of not more than five single-family dwellings that share common frontage and a

private access road. It's purpose is to provide limited residential development within large tracts of land in a manner which minimizes maintenance responsibility and cost, while simultaneously preserving the rural character of the town.

- Tax incentives or zoning by-laws can encourage or require developers or landowners to provide affordable housing within a cluster of houses or a “residential compound”
- The shared desire to keep taxes low while keeping housing affordable for people of all ages and means that growth has to be slow so that people who want affordable housing can afford to live in the town. Rapid development and intense development mean that infrastructure growth and needs soar and overwhelm the town with higher municipal costs and taxes. The increase in affordable housing, growing at a pace that maintains the town's current economic diversity, needs to develop in a slow rhythm along with other types of housing.
- At the Land Use Study Committee's public meeting, people suggested a town meeting that could, on at least an annual basis, be a forum for discussion and education about these kinds of dynamics (i.e., the relationship between development and taxes etc.). This kind of regular discussion could help us all stay aware of the broader implications of changes that we find both positive and negative.
- The Planning Board, a Housing Task Force, along with the Conservation Commission and other town organizations could meet to stay abreast of local changes and opportunities.

Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Current Housing



Legend

- Roads
- Multi-family
- Smaller than 1/4 acre lots
- 1/4 - 1/2 acre lots
- Larger than 1/2 acre lots
- Water

Produced by the Center for Community Character for the Town of Hardwick using MassGIS data

These data represent the efforts of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and its agencies to record information from the sources cited in associated documentation.

LAND USE ELEMENT

Introduction

The Land Use Element contains an inventory and identification of the land use patterns of Hardwick of the past and present. It offers ways to influence the patterns of the future to increase opportunities for ongoing local employment, foster stable or declining property tax rates, and higher relative property values.

An assumption is made that a majority of residents want to see their town remain agriculture-based with its character of associated open fields and rural quality of life. Growth and resulting development in Hardwick and within some of the surrounding towns illustrates the relationship of growth to the tax rate. Growth for growth's sake is not always beneficial to the tax base or a town's character and quality of life.

Land Use History

The land of Hardwick, formerly known as Lambstown, as deeded in 1686 was originally fully wooded. Less than half of Lambstown's total acreage of 11,100 was divided into 111 lots of 100 acres each: one for each of the original sixty settler families, four lots for each proprietary share, as well as one each for the minister, ministry and the schools. To assure stable agricultural communities, the settlers were required by the General Court to "clear and bring to, four acres fit for improvement, and three acres more, well stocked with English grass." Where evidence of Native American occupancy remained, the settlers found these forests to be open and park-like as periodic burning of thick underbrush opened the land for planting and hunting. Under the colonial formula for land use, trees as well as brush were removed. Fields were intensively planted with single rather than mixed crops, and crop rotation was rare. In addition to building their homes and making their farmland, settlers had to build fences and walls to enclose them and the roads to connect them to their neighbors, their mills, and their markets. Churches and mills were built as the community grew.

By 1731, surrounding communities were growing as well. Rutland to the east, Petersham to the North, Greenwich to the west and the Ware River parish and Braintree grant to the south. People came from other English settlements to populate and work on the farms. In 1732, Hardwick township was incorporated.

Woodlands were cleared in the 1700's for buildings, profit, pasture and fuel. Water powered mills were built and rebuilt on the same sites along the Muddy, Danforth and Moose Brooks as

well as the Ware River for the sawing of timber and processing of grain. Most farms were diverse in their use of the land with the “improved” land used for tillage, pasture or meadow. Tillage for corn, wheat, and rye were the smallest fields. The largest fields were used for cultivated grasses, supplemented by natural fresh meadow grasses for fodder. Both cattle and sheep were raised to serve several purposes including textiles, trade, and meat, while oxen used for muscle power were dear. Horses were used primarily for transport.

By the end of the eighteenth century, population had grown to 1,725. Farms were prospering and associated manufacturing was successful. At the same time the number of mills in town grew and became important sources of wealth and capital investment. Villages grew up around the mills. The forest industry remained the most usual complement to farming as well as the likeliest enterprise for investment by Hardwick’s wealthier citizens. Available resources made it possible to develop an iron industry in the village of Furnace as well as a fulling mill on Moose Brook. In 1799, the Sixth Massachusetts Turnpike was completed from Shrewsbury to Amherst (which is now Barre and Greenwich roads), a boon to commerce.

The landscape changed as growth continued in the form of larger fields, outbuildings and mills. Deforestation became fairly complete. By the mid 1800’s, dairy fanning had become the focus of agriculture. Sheep herds had dwindled and major improvements in town services and public buildings were enabled by surpluses in the town’s coffers. In 1860, George Gilbert had acquiring land to eventually total 300 acres; building a complex of four mills and 100 buildings and employing, at its peak 15 00 workers. In 1870, the Ware River Railroad opened its route from Palmer to New Hampshire. Second generation Gilberts expanded further in the 1880’s and 1890’s to add 30 more buildings. The settlement by then had taken on its own momentum with the appearance of non-company owned hotels and restaurants and privately owned business.

1893 was the high water mark for a paper mill in Wheelwright, after a variety of owners from its start in 1860’s. Although a much smaller enterprise, this mill acquired 120 acres to offer their workers their own homes although they did not relinquish control of development. In just 50 years between these two village conceptions, the relationship between mill owners and workers had degraded. Also, the advent of the automobile had made it’s mark so Wheelwright was a “new” style of village settlement. Still, there was a 26 acre dairy farm right next to the mill to supply milk, etc. to the village. The paper mill changed hands in 1934 and declined thereafter.

In the early 1900’s construction slowed on the Gilbertville mills, but community improvements continued as the library was built. ‘Me Hardwick High School had burned so its much larger replacement was built in Gilbertville. About this time, the wool industry followed the cotton industry to the southern states. In 1916, Mill #3 was razed and in 1919 Lewis Gilbert died. In 1932, the entire Gilbert Mill Company was sold to Boston based investors. The Mills were effectively finished off by the 1938 hurricane.

In 1915, population dropped dramatically after a peak of 3,696, due in part to the decline of large and small manufacturing businesses. There was renewed interest in the area for resort activities around the 1920’s and the Hardwick Pond area was built up with summer cottages.

With the construction of water diversion of the Swift River starting in 1929, many activities in Hardwick and the surrounding towns were disturbed or eliminated. The west part of Hardwick was totally disrupted as what were thriving farms and other enterprises were removed and relocated. Roads no longer were through roads. Population continued to drop to its lowest in 1945 to 2116 as families disappeared from dislocation and the Great Depression. Farmland reverted to forest.

Findings—A Summary or General Overview

Although all small towns had similar beginnings, Hardwick has retained its agricultural and architectural integrity through various twists of fate. The area has weathered dips and peaks in population and activities. The only thing we can be sure of is that we will continue to change. With the advantage of history as our teacher, we can make choices that may guide the changes to sustain our lifestyle and our livelihood.

Existing Land Use Inventory

Table I
Division of Acreage by Zone
According to Land Use Codes

Land Use	R-20	R-40	R-60
Multi-Use Comm.	6.28	87.50	363.98
Residences	238.30	1,163.00	3,940.00
Commercial	30.24	7.78	172.18
Industrial	38.14	25.43	4.10
Forest-Ch. 61	-	127.03	314.09
Agriculture-Ch. 61A	-	768.81	787.42
Recreation-Ch. 61B	8.00	141.57	228.45
Public Services	52.95	105.57	1,498.95
Forestry-mixed use	-	138.00	354.81
Ag-mixed use	-	1,846.76	1,646.28
Rec.-mixed use	13.75	459.30	305.70
Multi-use. Res.	1.12	-	-
Developable Land	169.86	595.95	2,718.18
Apartments	20.74	.47	-
Undevelopable Land	.62	-	-
# of Max. Potential Lots	477	1,209	3,249

Growth

As is evidenced by Table 2, Hardwick has not seen since 1960 tremendous amounts of growth. That trend however has been more recently changing. Table 2 shows the Regional Population Growth for Hardwick and 7 surrounding communities. (Borrowed from the 1996 Open Space Plan)

**Table 2:
Regional Population Growth**

Town	1860	1920	1960	1980	1990
Barre	2973	3357	3479	4102	4546
Hardwick	1521	3085	2340	2272	2385
Hubbardston	1621	1045	1217	1719	2797
New Braintree	805	393	509	617	881
Oakham	959	477	524	994	1503
Petersham.	1465	642	890	1024	1131
West Brookfield	1548	1281	2053	3026	3532
Ware	3597	8525	7517	8953	9808

**Table 3:
% of Growth 1980-1990**
(borrowed from the 1996 Open Space plan)

Barre	10%
Hardwick	5%
Hubbardston	55%
New Braintree	31%
North Brookfield	13%
Oakharn	51%
Petersham	10%
West Brookfield	16%
Ware	10%

Table 4 compares the percentage of tax rate increase over the last 5 years (1994-1998) as compared to the number of new residential buildings in Hardwick and seven (7) surrounding towns. As one can see the taxes increase as the residential homes increase. A large portion of this increase is related to education.

Table 4:
Showing the 5 year (1994-1998) % tax increase as compared to
residential growth
(number of new residential buildings)

Town	5 yr. tax increase	# of New Homes
Barre	22%	116
Hardwick	18%	58
Hubbardston	25%	172
New Braintree	27%	30
Oakham	13%	31
Petersham	15%	20
West Brookfield	-	-
Ware	24%	96

Build-Out Analysis

A build-out analysis is a technique which shows hypothetically the resulting development in a community if it were to be fully developed under the existing zoning. The statistics give the Hardwick resident basic information about the ability of the land to accommodate additional development, and to help identify significant issues which impact the towns natural, physical and fiscal capabilities. Once identified, these concerns can be considered in the formulation of policies and implementation of procedures designed to address them.

Methodology: Utilizing the Town's Tax Assessor's record for the total acreage reported for each zoning district, a build-out analysis was determined. To simplify the data, the build-out analysis relied on the following assumptions:

- the existing zoning map was used (1996)
- maximum permitted development is anticipated for all buildable land, including existing developed residential sites and "back land"
- past trends in growth rates remain constant and indicate future trends;
- only residential zones of R-20, R-40 and R-60 were considered.

The following steps were taken to complete the build-out analysis:

Step 1: Determine Acreage's by Zoning District

Information was obtained through the Tax Assessor's office in regards to the amount of acreage in each zoning category. Each zone was then subdivided using standard Land Use Code categories.

Step 2: Select "Vacant" Land Use Classifications and Determine Acreage's by Zoning District.

For the intention of the build-out, vacant lands were defined as those without buildings or other improvements. The following land use code of 130 was used to determine vacant land in a residential zone that is designated as developable land. Available land was also calculated from the developed residential land, by subdividing the remaining land in a lot after the square footage requirement was met for that particular zone.

Step 3: Determine the Extent and Type of Unbuildable or Committed Lands and Deduct From Vacant Land by Zoning District.

The following acreage was defined as unbuildable or committed:

- 10% for roadways and utilities;
- 20% for development constraints;
- all land zoned commercial;
- all land zoned industrial;
- all land zoned mixed commercial;
- all land that has been designated under Chapters 61, 61A, 61B;
- all-zoned land that is committed to governmental use;
- all other non-Public zoned land committed to conservation (APR land, MDC land, DFW land and N.E. Forestry Foundation).

**Table 5:
Summary of Vacant Developable Land by Zoning District (1998)**

Zoning District	#of Residential Single Family Units	Residual Acreage after square footage requirement	Vacant/developable Land
R-20	161	238	170
R-40	169	1,163	596
R-60	231	3,940	2,718

Step 4: Calculate the number of potential building lots.

For each Zone's acreage amount, determine a 20% deduction and subtract out of total for development constraints. Next, determine a 1-% roadway/utility deduction and subtract this out from previous answer. This final number will give you the acreage that is buildable. To determine the number of potential lots, multiply this number by the square footage of an acre (43,560 sq. ft.), then divide by the required square footage of the zone. The resulting number is the maximum potential building lots.

Step 5: Calculate Year of Build-out

This is computed by the following formula:

$$N = \ln(\text{Future year}/\text{Baseline year}) / \ln(1 + \text{growth rate}) = \text{number of years to build-out}$$

$$n + \text{Baseline year} = \text{Year of build-out.}$$

Notes:

\ln = natural logarithm

Baseline year = existing number, variable, or measure at a given point in time.

Future year = baseline year (i.e., number of existing dwelling units) plus additional number of dwelling units that could be built given existing zoning.

Growth rate = average annual rate of change in a number or variable over a period of time.

Calculations for Year of Build-out

As of 1998 Tax Assessor's information, there are 561 Single Family Residences.

To calculate the future year add potential maximum lots for all three zones:

R-20	477	Base line: 561
R-40	1,209	Future: 561 + 4935 = 5496
R-60	<u>3,249</u>	Average annual growth rate during 1990-1997 = 2.50%
	4,935	

$$n = \frac{\ln(5496/561) = 9.797 = 2.282}{\ln(1.025) = 0.0247} = 92 \text{ years}$$

$$1997 + 92 = 2089$$

Issues and Concerns

If the trend of residential growth without a balance of commercial or non-residential growth continues, in addition to the loss of valuable open space and farmland, Hardwick could become an expensive bedroom community. It's important that the children who grow up here are able to afford to live here as adults. Equally important is the ability of the people who raised 'em, to enjoy their golden years here.

Between 1990 and 1995, the towns of Blackstone, Boxboro, Douglas, Hopkinton, Hubbardston, Millville grew in population by more than 14 percent; 31 more towns grew between 6 percent and 14 percent. (Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research)

The projected population change between the years 1990 and 2000 is greater than 20 percent for Charlton, Douglas, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Oakham, and Phillipston; between 15 percent and 20 percent for Ashburnham, Ashland, Blackstone, Hardwick, Mendon, Millville, Pepperill, Sturbridge, Uxbridge, and Winchendon. (Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research)

The projected growth for Worcester County between the years 2000 and 2110 is 53,229. (Mass Audubon Society/Worcester County-Winter 1998 newsletter)

Thirteen thousand (13,000) acres of land have been converted from agriculture or open space to residential use between 1985 and 1996 in Central Massachusetts. (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission)

The 13,000 acres cited previously were costing their communities approximately \$34 in services for every \$1.00 in revenue as lands in agriculture/open space. In residential use, those same 13,000 acres are costing their communities approximately \$1.11 in services for every \$1.00 in revenue. (American Farmland Trust)

When developers come to town, they often promise to boost the local tax base by building subdivisions. The new homes may not be for current residents but for people who work in surrounding towns and cities. Thinking that a rural acre with new houses will generate more revenues than an acre of corn or trees, local officials are often persuaded to approve sprawling developments at the expense of valuable natural resources. (Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc.)

Approach

Hardwick is in a unique and enviable position to manage its future growth to enhance the quality of life for all of its residents. The Town will take a proactive position to guiding growth to its existing village centers, providing for their enhancement and sustainability. Surrounding areas of countryside which together with the village centers define the charm and character of the town

will be areas protected from the adverse affects of conventional forms of residential and commercial development. Here the Town will promote creative forms of development that enhance the open space, agricultural, and forested nature of the countryside by blending into the features of the area, minimizing sprawl, and limiting the extension of costly community services.

Action Items

Set in place a mechanism to monitor all growth and development in town in accordance with an established, acceptable, yearly rate of growth which the Town deems it is able to accommodate with the requisite services and facilities normally provided. When it becomes clear that in the near future a threshold is reached beyond which the Town will not be able to meet its obligations without substantial tax increases and stress to the existing systems, the Town should take action to meter-out or phase subdivision lot approvals and/or study a growth phasing mechanism.

Develop a Future Land Use Map which will graphically show how all areas in town will be developed according to the goals and action items of the Master Plan.

For the Future Land Use Map

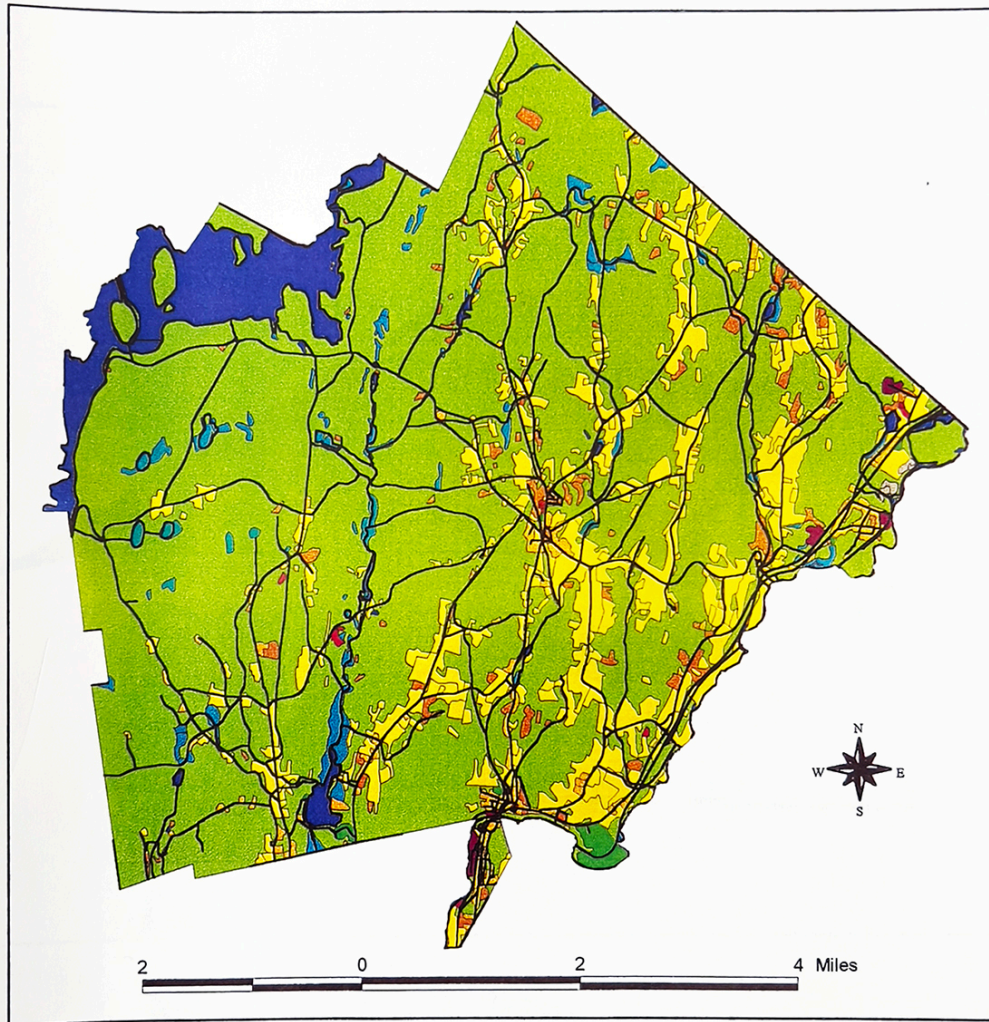
- Identify Priorities for Protection—Watersheds, Wildlife corridors, Unique Historic/Cultural sites, Outstanding Views. These areas should be considered as the basis for overlay protection zoning districts.
- Designate specific village area(s) for Controlled and Guided Growth where infrastructure exists already (roadways, electrical service, town water/sewer). Areas in Gilbertville, Wheelwright and Hardwick Center are candidates for designation. The standards developed to guide new growth should promote only growth that enhances the character-defining qualities of these areas. Such growth should relate to the pedestrian quality of these areas, their historic architecture and visual character and the natural amenities and assets that exist in these areas.
- Specific Zoning action items
 - ✓ For the purpose of preserving the feel of distinct villages, keep the village zoning as it is with small lots but include large lots between the villages. Consider adjusting zoning densities (see Housing) to create buffer areas around the villages, to curtail sprawl, and to preserve agricultural lands, viewsheds, and important natural features. As such agricultural lands should be considered for zoning that recognizes that agriculture is the primary and preferred (or by right) use. Such zoning would inherently promote conventional and innovative forms of agriculture over residential conversion.
 - ✓ In the regulations for subdivision of more than two lots, require plan review to maintain farmland, good woodlot or views as much as possible. Such regulations would promote creative forms of land development that preserve important character-defining natural and historic features rather than inappropriate

conventional development. Consider creative and flexible standards for development within important character-defining areas of the town. Such standards are set forth in Rural By Design.

- ✓ Include more commercial zoning within village areas (not along major roadways outside of the village centers) with restrictions perhaps on square foot area with the intent of attracting small businesses to these areas.
- ✓ In out-lying areas consider additional cottage-industry, cottage commercial standards to allow for small scale, unobtrusive occupations to co-exist with residential uses in the rural areas.
- ✓ Discourage strip commercial development on major arterial routes between villages. Consider innovative ways to curb repetitious frontage development along roads in general outside of village areas, either commercial or residential.
- ✓ Our values as well as our agriculture will change and so will our ethics, our laws. We can learn from looking at the past but stability and sustainability come from equilibrium and equilibrium is balance not a constant.

Hardwick Master Plan 1999

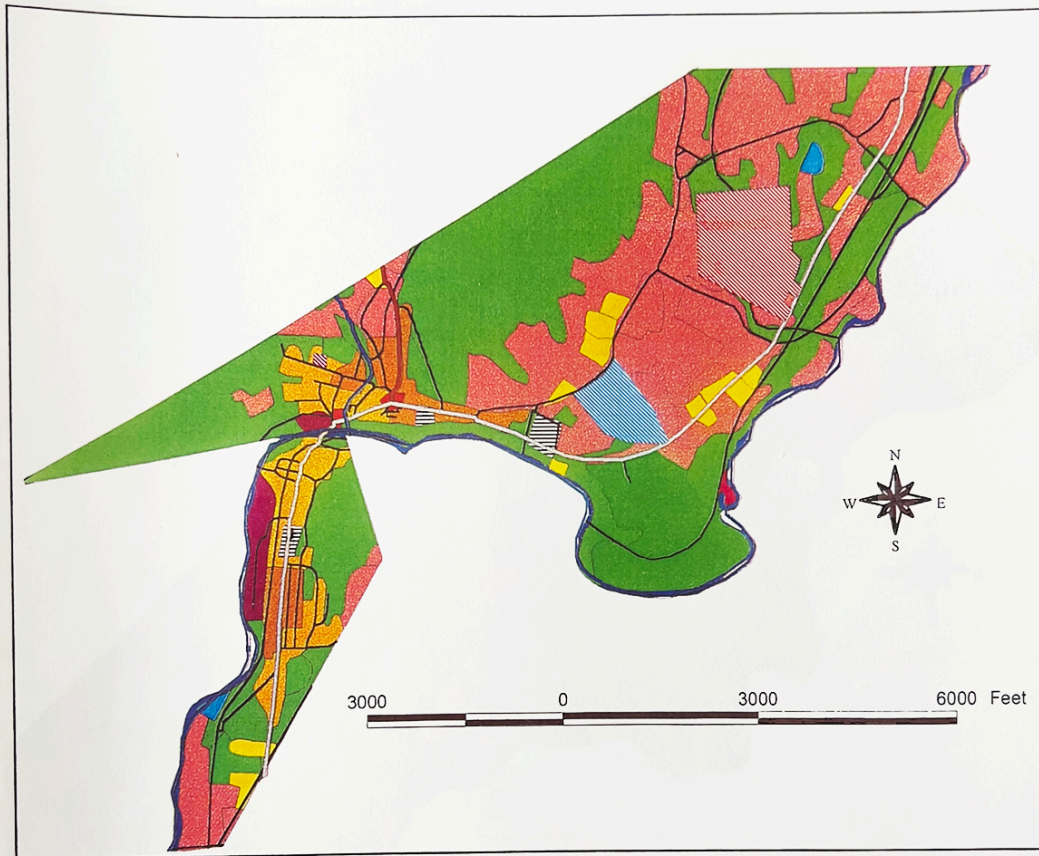
Current Land Use



Produced by the Center for Community Character for the Town of Hardwick using MassGIS data.
These data represent the efforts of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and its agencies to record information from the sources cited in associated documentation.

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Gilbertville



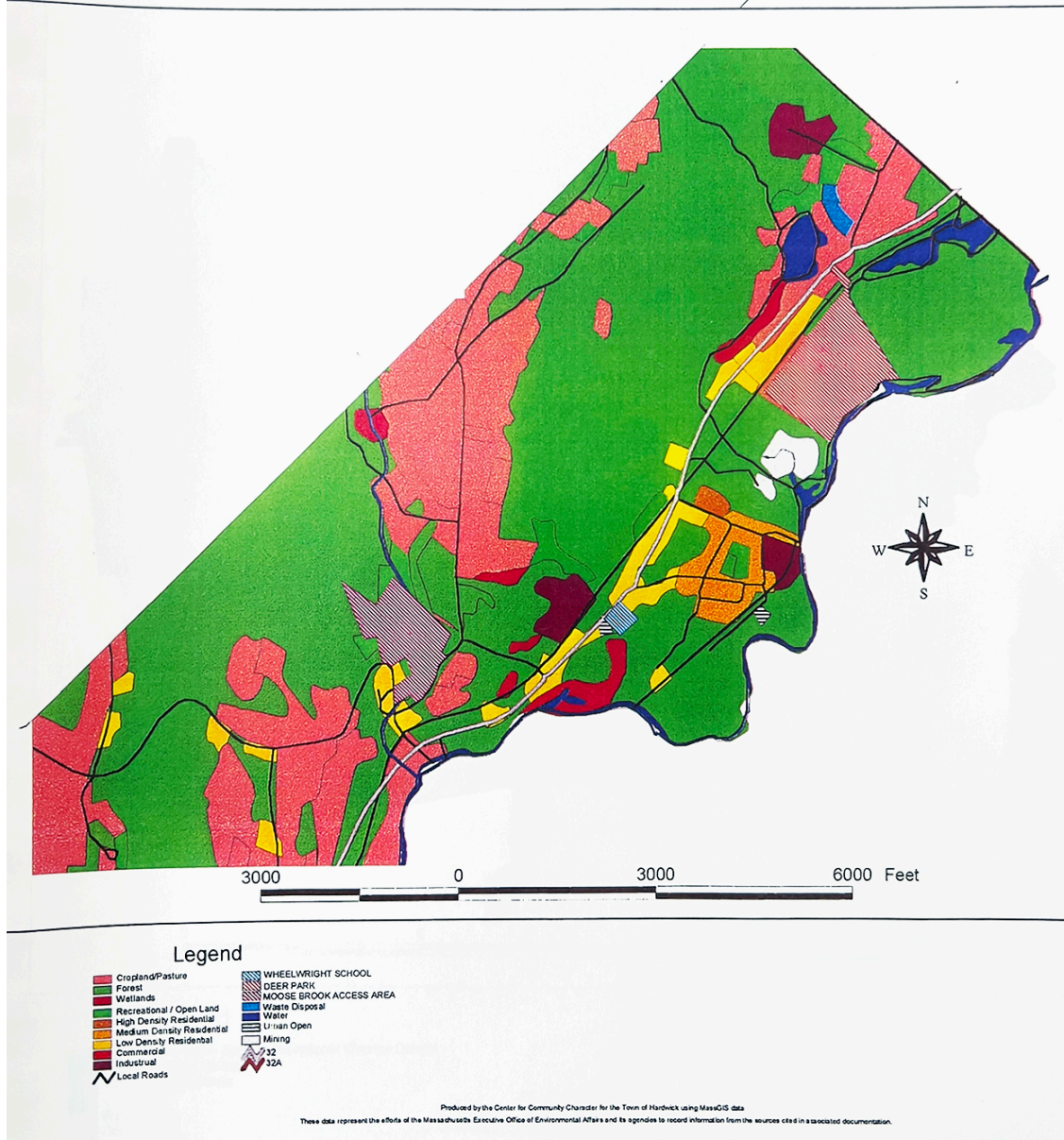
Legend

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cropland/Pasture | SAINT ALOYSIUS CEMETERY |
| Forest | HARDWICK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL |
| Wetlands | MEMORIAL FIELD |
| Recreational / Open Land | Mining |
| High Density Residential | Waste Disposal |
| Medium Density Residential | Water |
| Low Density Residential | Urban Open |
| Commercial | 32 |
| Industrial | 32A |
| Local Roads | |

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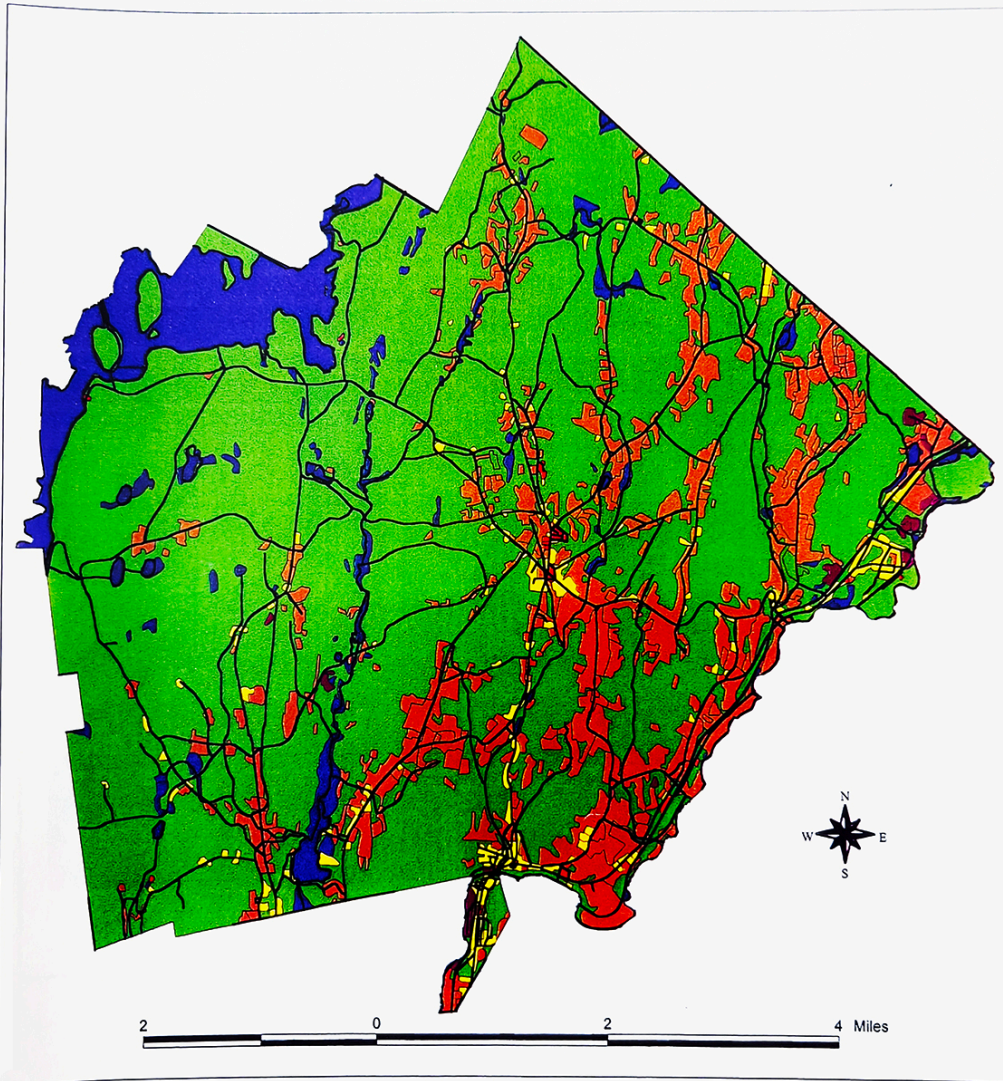
Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Wheelwright Village



Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Future Land Use

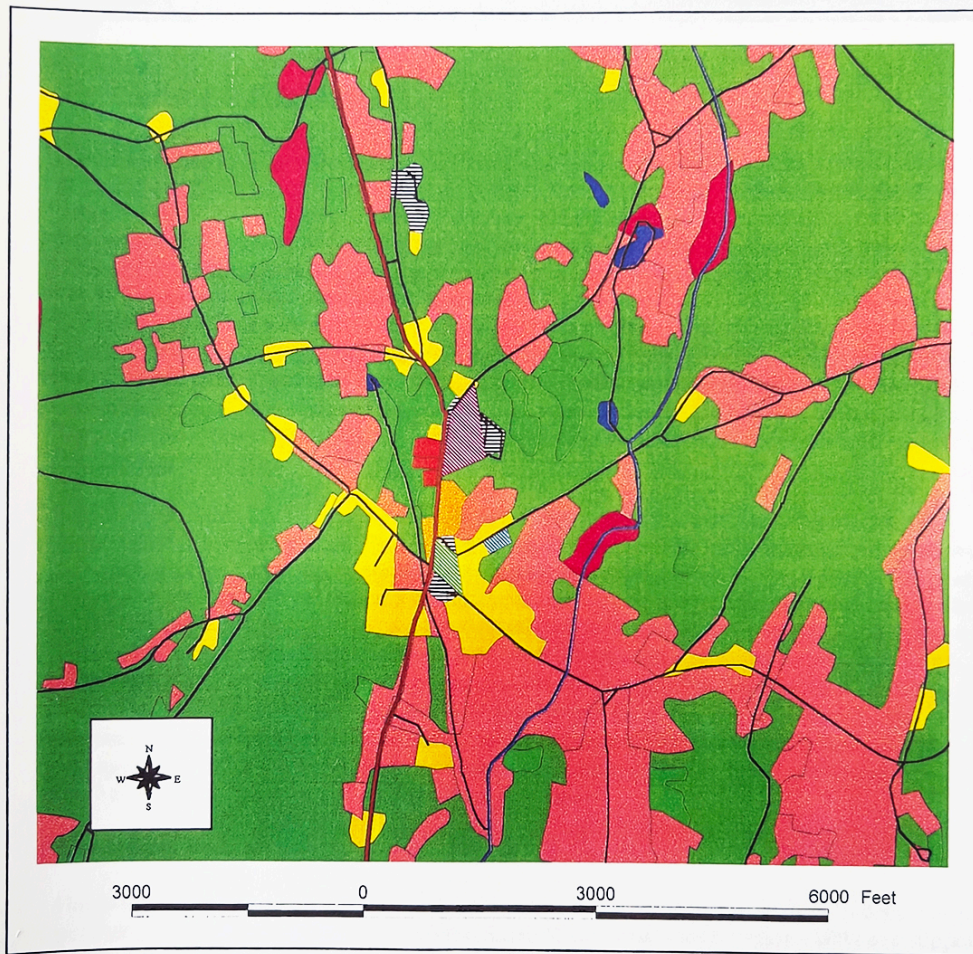


Legend

- Agricultural, Open Space, Recreational Overlay District
- Forest Overlay District
- Water and Wetlands
- Residential
- Commercial
- Roads

Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Hardwick Village Center



Legend

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cropland/Pasture | High Density Residential |
| Forest | Medium Density Residential |
| Wetlands | Low Density Residential |
| Mining | HARDWICK CEMETERY |
| Recreational / Open Land | HARDWICK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL |
| Commercial | RUGGLES SCHOOL |
| Industrial | SAINT ALOYSIUS CEMETERY |
| Waste Disposal | TOWN COMMON |
| Water | TOWN POOL |
| Urban Open | 32 |
| Local Roads | 32A |

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NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

Agriculture & the Land

Agriculture has been an important part of Hardwick's character and economy since the inception of the town. While various agricultural enterprises have operated in Hardwick throughout the town's history, dairy farming has been the principal farm business. As an industry, dairy farming has experienced a steady decline over the past three decades in Massachusetts. This trend is no different in Hardwick. In fact, just thirty years ago there were approximately 25 dairy farms in town. Today that number has dwindled to four.

In addition to the farms still active in dairying, a number of other dairy farms have diversified and continue to be involved in agriculture raising replacement livestock, animals for slaughter, and crops such as hay, corn, and vegetables. Still other landowners in town maintain part-time farm enterprises raising animals, hay, and fruit crops and maintain open space through various recreational enterprises.

Residents in Hardwick are overwhelmingly in favor of preserving working farms within the community. The recent Master Plan Survey found 438 respondents agreeing that the preservation of working farms was either important or extremely important versus 31 who felt the issue was not important. While most residents would like to see farming continue in Hardwick, the realities of this are quite different. As the costs associated with milk production continue to rise, greater efficiencies must be developed to remain profitable. Those dairy farms that remain in business must continue to increase their herd size to gain the efficiencies. The result is the need for additional land, which is usually rented. With the demand for rental land increasing by the remaining farmers the price goes up adding to the expense of the operation. Unless local, state, and national policies are formulated to preserve agriculture in the northeast, open land is put "at risk" as a greater return can be received from developers.

Issues and Concerns

Hardwick needs to support state programs that assist in the preservation of farm land such as the purchase of development rights through the Agricultural Preservation Rights (APR) and support reduced land taxation through Chapter 61 A. Also state support in the form of grants to help farmers broaden their markets and improve efficiencies must continue.

Working with various agricultural organizations there is a need to encourage and promote profitable farm enterprise within Hardwick and assist farmers in gaining value from their farm products such as processing facilities or the exporting of products outside the area where a higher price can be received.

The town's trees are valuable resources worthy of protection. Trees provide Lumber, Shade, Jobs, Income, Wildlife, Beauty, and benefit Tourism. Hardwick's forests are considered Prime Timberland producing some 85 Cubic Feet of biomass per acre per year. Hardwick can boast some 19,141 acres of forested land in which only 1230 acres are in 61 or 61A protection programs.

The greatest cause for concern for the future of the tree resource in Hardwick is more commonly called Diameter Limit Cutting or High Grading. Under this program, to cut all marketable trees a certain diameter - say-12-14" inches is required. The use of this term is confusing because it can legitimize agricultural practices when applied in appropriate situations. Our DEM Forester for Worcester County reports 60% of all cutting plans represent this approach. This cutting leaves our forests with some species gone and other beleaguered trees longer to reach commercial size and in poor quality. Finally in current practice, a forester or logger is not obligated to tell a landowner about the long term development and conditions of a wood lot at the time of timber sale. But this may change soon through consumer protection forester licensing which is expected to go into effect this year. New standards of professional conduct will require a licensed forester to advise the client of the long and short term consequences of management alternatives. This may help some to make a decision that best fits the personal needs of the landowner and can assure the protection of the tree resource.

Earth Resources

Topsoil, Borrow, Rock, Sod, Loam, Peat, Humus, Sand, Clay, Earth, or Gravel

Some nine open gravel pits grace Hardwick's landscape. They provide the topsoil, borrow, rock, sod, loam, peat, humus, sand, clay, stone, and gravel as a commercial product. Some gravel pits provide jobs Others provide needed income for the owners. A few offer agricultural improvements.

Issues and Concerns

How many gravel pits, whether beneficial or not, have permits? Should those in question be called in for review? Are the Bureau of Mines or Occupational Safety and Health Administration watch-dogging the larger operations? Safety? Fences? Danger of cave-ins? Erosion? Possible contamination of ground water in sensitive locations? AQUIFER REGIONS - Possible tightening of all Development over and around such regions? Removal of New England's stone walls and foundations? Question and research past by- law? Historic dam and mill sites warrant possible protection? Permit process needed? Conservation commission review? APR land restrictions prevent sale or removal? These are concerns that have arisen on gravel-mining operations.

Soils and stone piled at field's edges in town are numerous. Many thousands of tons of stones lie wasting by inefficient land-clearing. Possible separation of the two by tax brake to land owners would provide work, income, and the resources for all to benefit?

Water Resources

Water is an important natural resource within the town of Hardwick. The importance of this resource is not only for the residents of the town but for those Massachusetts residents who receive their drinking water from the Quabbin Reservoir. Additionally, the Ware River, Hardwick Pond and the many streams and wetlands in Hardwick provide an important habitat for fish and wildlife that are found throughout the community. Finally, two major aquifers in the Ware River valley and Muddy Brook valley provide the town with a substantial source of clean drinking water for current and future use.

Issues and Concerns

Protection of Hardwick's water resource is a concern of many residents based on their responses to the Master Plan Survey. When asked if it was important or extremely important to protect environmental quality (i.e. air, streams and ponds) 455 respondents said yes while only 13 felt it was not important. The response to the question asking about the importance of protecting water supplies (public & private wells & aquifers) was even more emphatic with 467 responses stating it was important or extremely important versus 5 feeling the issue was not important. Additionally, 385 residents placed a high priority on improved recreational opportunities which in many instances can be equated to clean waterways and ponds.

Wildlife Habitat

Hardwick contains large blocks of unbroken mixed forest, especially adjacent to the Quabbin Reservation. Hardwick also has open farmlands streams wetlands, and ponds. This makes for a diversity and abundance of wildlife habitat that includes some rare and endangered species. some of which are: Great Blue Heron, spotted turtle, common loon, and king rail. A species of special concern is the wood turtle.

Hardwick has two ecologically significant natural communities. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage Program has identified the upper muddy Brook basin as an area of "High Priority Sites of Rare species and-Exemplary Natural Communities".

Types of Habitats

Forests/woodlands: 73% of land base in Hardwick is forest. There is a great diversity of species including Northern red oak, white oak, and chestnut oak, sugar maple, beech, yellow, white, and paper birch, hemlock, and white pine. Also included are scattered red maple swamp stands. Rare and endangered species include black maple and purple clematis.

Wetlands: Wetlands contain a large diversity of resources. They provide water supply, purification in their use as an aquifer recharge area, and a rich biological diversity as well as being of critical importance in flood control.

Major water resources of Hardwick: Ware River (containing two distinctly different river habitats), Muddy Brook, Moose Brook, Danforth Brook, Ellwell, Canterbury, and Newton Brooks, Broadmeadow Brook, Pine Hill Brook, Hardwick Pond, and Hemmingway Swamp. Some of the wildlife associated with these resources include a diverse fish population including bass, pickerel, perch, sunfish, brook, brown, and rainbow trout, minnows, among others beavers, otter, mink, wood ducks, hooded mergansers, kingfishers, green and blue heron, owls, ospreys occasionally a bald eagle, and a great variety of songbirds small mammals. There are also larger mammals such as deer, fox, coyotes, and probably moose and bear, etc.

Issues and Concerns

One of the major concerns expressed by the general population is loss of habitat including open space by way of land sold for any kind of development. The 1985 aerial mapping shows a significant decrease in wetland acreage in Hardwick i.e. from 1,936 acres in 1951 to 1,477 acres in 1985.

There is a non-point source pollution in Hardwick. This is pollution that enters from a variety of sources which are difficult to identify. They include:

- 1) Motor oil, gas and salt from roadways
- 2) Agricultural runoff from animal manure, fertilizers, pesticides and eroded sediments.
- 3) Homeowners' runoff which may include (1) and (2)
- 4) Runoff from golf courses Many streams, rivers and ponds suffer the negative impacts of non-point source pollution (increased algae bloom or cultural eutrofication)

Approach

Natural Resources are defined as Earth's products or features that support life or are used to make food, fuel, or raw materials. They are those items that can be used by humans for their own purposes but cannot be created by them.

There are renewable (but NOT INEXHAUSTIBLE) and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources are those that can be regenerated by natural processes, and include soil, air, water, and sunlight. It also includes plant and animal life or wildlife. Although renewable, there are limits to how fast we can make a forest or cornfield grow and bodies of water can become so polluted that they can't cleanse themselves.

The main concern with renewable resources is to match the rate of use with the rate of production or repair.

Non-renewable resources are resources that are NOT replaced by natural processes or those whose rates are so slow as to be non-effective include mineral resources, fossil fuels, and LAND. Land is a nonrenewable resource once developed. Land includes wildlife habitat such as forests and open land. Water in the form of lakes, rivers, ponds, swamps etc. includes wildlife habitat as well.

Habitat type and availability regulates wildlife diversity and abundance. Diversity of wildlife and plants is greatest where large tracts of unfragmented forest meet open farmlands, wetlands, streams, and river valleys.

There are basically three types of environmental ethics. The developmental ethic espouses extensive use of resources with minimal concern for environmental degradation. The preservationist ethic considers nature to be special and worthy of protection for a variety of reasons. An equilibrium ethic recognizes the practical need of people to use resources and the importance of using them wisely. Which will the people of Hardwick adopt? Will we preserve and protect what we have BEFORE it's gone?

Action Items

Agriculture & the Land

- Support for APR and 61A
- Encourage profitable farm enterprise
-

Forests

- Woodland owners need to be aware of Diameter Limit Cutting practices
- Educate landowners about various cutting practices

Earth Resources: Stone & Gravel

- Insure all gravel removal operations are properly permitted
- Monitor gravel removal near water sources and aquifers to prevent contamination .
- Permits for the removal of stone walls and field stone
- Reclaim soil and field stone deposited by land clearing operations

Water

- Ensure proper permitting and oversight takes place whenever natural resources are removed from Hardwick to prevent damage to waterways and aquifers.
- That all laws and regulations whether local, state or federal applicable to the protection of all aquifers, public and private drinking sources, waterways, and wetlands within the town of Hardwick be properly enforced.
- Prevent damage to water sources and aquifers whenever natural resources are removed
- Enforcement of all laws and regulations applicable to the protection of water sources in Hardwick

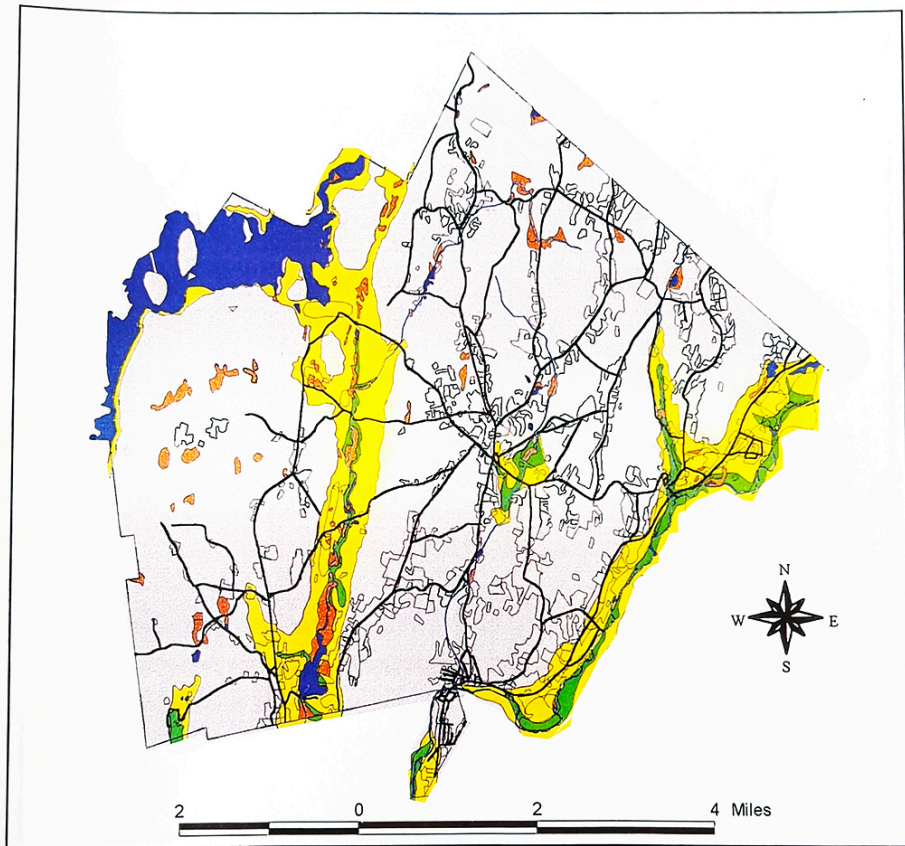
Wildlife Habitat

- Hardwick citizens should be involved to help reduce this impact by learning responsible use of chemicals, reduction of chemical use, erosion control practices, and proper storage of animal manure.
- Protect Muddy Brook and Moose Brook drainage for purposes of providing wildlife habitat.
- Minimize non-point pollution sources.
- Identify and protect vernal pools.
- We need to recognize that natural resources are finite.
- By educating forest landowners in agricultural methods and long term forest management as well as identifying and protecting contiguous tracts of forest, we can encourage practices that help maintain bio-diversity, preserve wildlife habitat, and protect endangered species.
- Identify and protect contiguous tracts of forest.
- Create and use a land trust and other creative methods to allow for the preservation of important forest tracts.



- ✓ Protect wildlife habitats from various pollution sources
(Wetland habitat has been declining in Hardwick over the past 40 years)
- ✓ Foster educational programs on habitat protection and pollution control to reduce further losses of habitat.

Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Soil Types and Wetlands



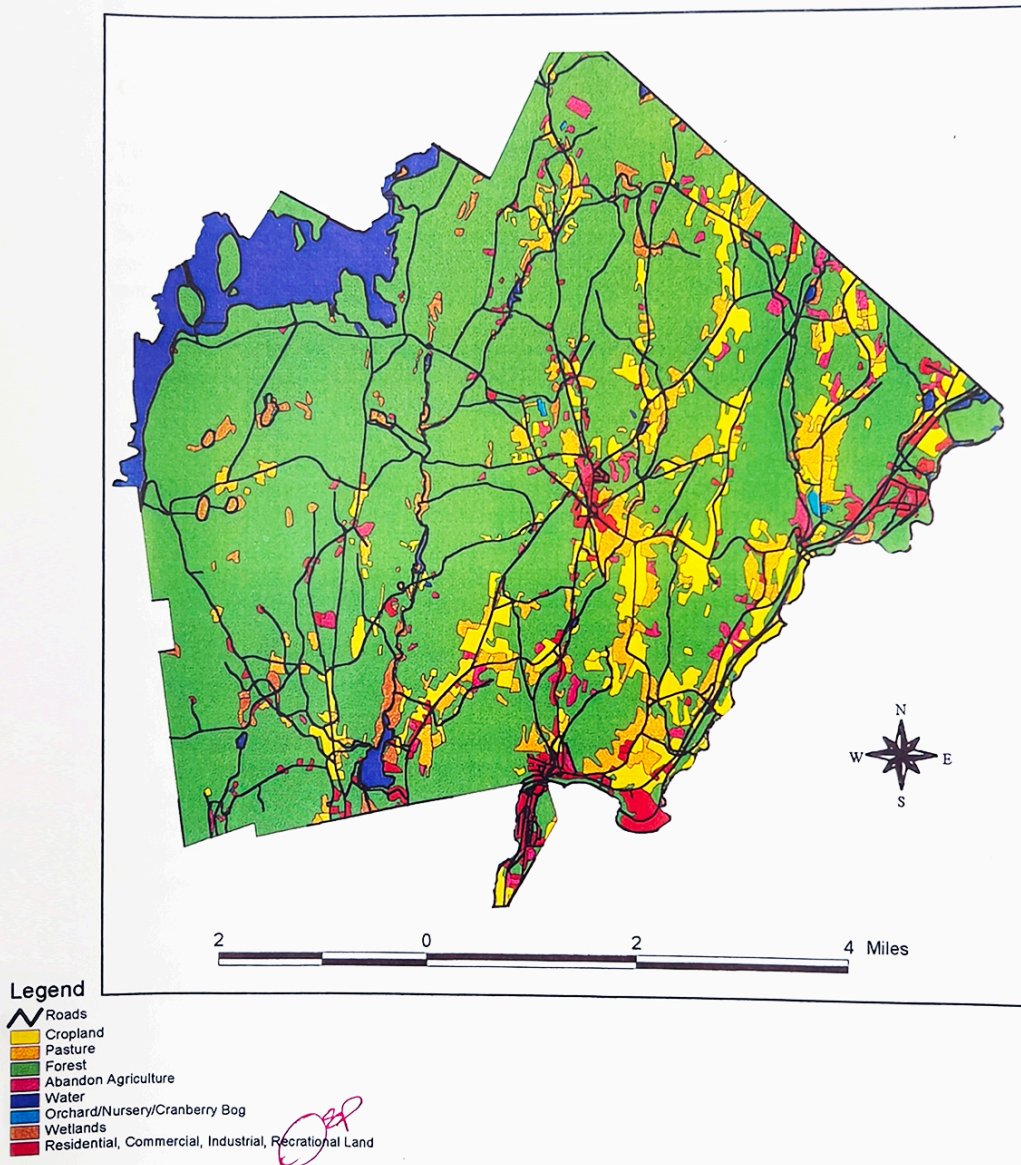
Legend

-  Roads
-  Sand and Gravel Deposits
-  Till or Bedrock
-  Floodplain Alluvium
-  Wetlands
-  Water

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Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Agricultural Resources



Produced by the Center for Community Character for the Town of Hardwick using MapGIS data.
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OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT

Open Space

The Town recently adopted a comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan (1996) which spells out an extensive list of goals and policies over a range of focus areas including historic preservation, growth management, water resources, fisheries and wildlife, forest and vegetation, agriculture, soils, scenic qualities, recreational activities and general environmental protection relating to Open Space and Recreation in Town. This list is incorporated within the Master Plan within the Goals and Objectives Element. In addition are the following action items:

- Support proactive Land Trust acquisition of open space—develop a priority list of properties to acquire, include important farmland/forest land, areas of historical significance, areas of visual or scenic value.
- Work with land owners continuously to save open space lands. Create within the zoning and land development bylaws more detailed standards for cluster or more creative agricultural/flexible development on the lines of Randall Arendt’s Rural By Design.
- Implement a greenbelt plan designating areas for open space protection and areas of development potential. The greenbelt plan should designate the villages for additional in-fill development and other small village open space/recreational enhancements while designating the surrounding areas for open space protection. The greenbelts will help define the character of the town as it grows and help preserve the character that exists today.
- Protection of important natural features, including wetlands, the Quabbin watershed, other watersheds/aquifer areas, floodplains, rivers, streams ponds and other important environmental features should be fully programmed in the zoning and land development bylaws as well as a functional part of Land Trust acquisition activity. The zoning and land development by-laws should be reviewed and rewritten (where appropriate) as soon as possible.
- The Ware River should be made more accessible and should become a focal point for recreational use in town, particularly within the villages that flank the river such as Wheelwright and Gilbertville.

Agriculture should also be promoted throughout all town policy including within the zoning and land development bylaws. Agricultural zoning which favors agriculture and the primary zoning use should be promoted and adopted. There are many incentive programs that have been outlined in the element that go along with this, including tax incentives, promoting alternative agriculture, protecting large tracts of agricultural land. This would be a mix of zoning, land development regulations, tax programs, Land Trust activity and activity of a future economic development committee (as proposed within the economic development chapter).

Recreation

Recreational options and activities within Hardwick are important to understand, retain, and enhance as factors in the town's quality of life.

Hardwick has two forms of recreational activity: White lines recreation with active sports such as soccer, football, baseball, and basketball, and all other recreation including hiking, biking, boating, fishing, and the like.

White Lines Recreation

The white lines recreation in town consists mostly of youth sports leagues. There are four parks throughout the three villages in Hardwick; Hardwick Center, Gilbertville, and Wheelwright.

- 1) Goddard Park in Hardwick Center consists of a baseball field and tennis court.
- 2) Gilbertville Memorial Field in Gilbertville has two baseball fields.
- 3) Wheelwright School Field in Wheelwright has a baseball field and a basketball court.
- 4) Roach Memorial Field in Wheelwright consists of a baseball, softball, soccer, and football fields.

There are many active men and women's leagues that use these facilities in addition to school children and young adults.

These parks are maintained by the Hardwick Parks and Recreation Department which has three elected or appointed board members. The budget of the department needs to be increased to support the growing number of leagues who use the fields. There is also a need for an annual maintenance program. The parks are a direct reflection of what Hardwick has to offer with regard to white lines recreation.

The four town parks are funded from separate accounts . Funds need to be put back into the accounts so the fields are not neglected. Individuals, families, and local businesses have helped build and maintain work on these fields and parks.

Other Recreation

Hardwick has many major hiking and biking trails. In the west part there is the Quabbin Reservoir with miles of roads and trails, but some places in the Quabbin are restricted. West Hardwick has one of the three major gates, Gate 43, to access the Quabbin Reservoir fishing area. Gate 43 is located on the Greenwich Road with boat launchings and rentals. Some of the best fishing in all of New England is here in Hardwick.

In Gilbertville there are old train tracks and also the bugle area. The tracks head northeast to the Wheelwright section of town where the new canoe landing area is located. There are places to build a multi-use path along this route.

Hardwick also has beautiful trails in the Moose Brook area as well the “shaft” trail which is part of the aqueduct which supplies metro Boston with water. These trails are used by horses and ATVs.

The Ware River which flows from Barre through Wheelwright into Gilbertville now has an official canoe launching and landing area. Years of planning, hard work and dedication have seen this project through.

Hardwick Pond has an access boat ramp with plans to make it handicapped accessible. The pond is a local spot for year round fishing and boating.

Hardwick has several active year round Rod and Gun clubs. The large numbers of members for these clubs think it is land for fishing and hunting. This area is privately and State owned.

Recreation is an important part of Hardwick which keeps our youth busy, active, and young at heart. We need to continue to support all of our recreational needs. As new development proceeds in town, existing recreational facilities will see more use, without an adequate inflow of tax dollars to provide expanded or new facilities. Developing regulations that allow the developer of additional residential lots to pay a fair share for recreation facilities has become widespread in permitting throughout the region.

Recreation

Goals:

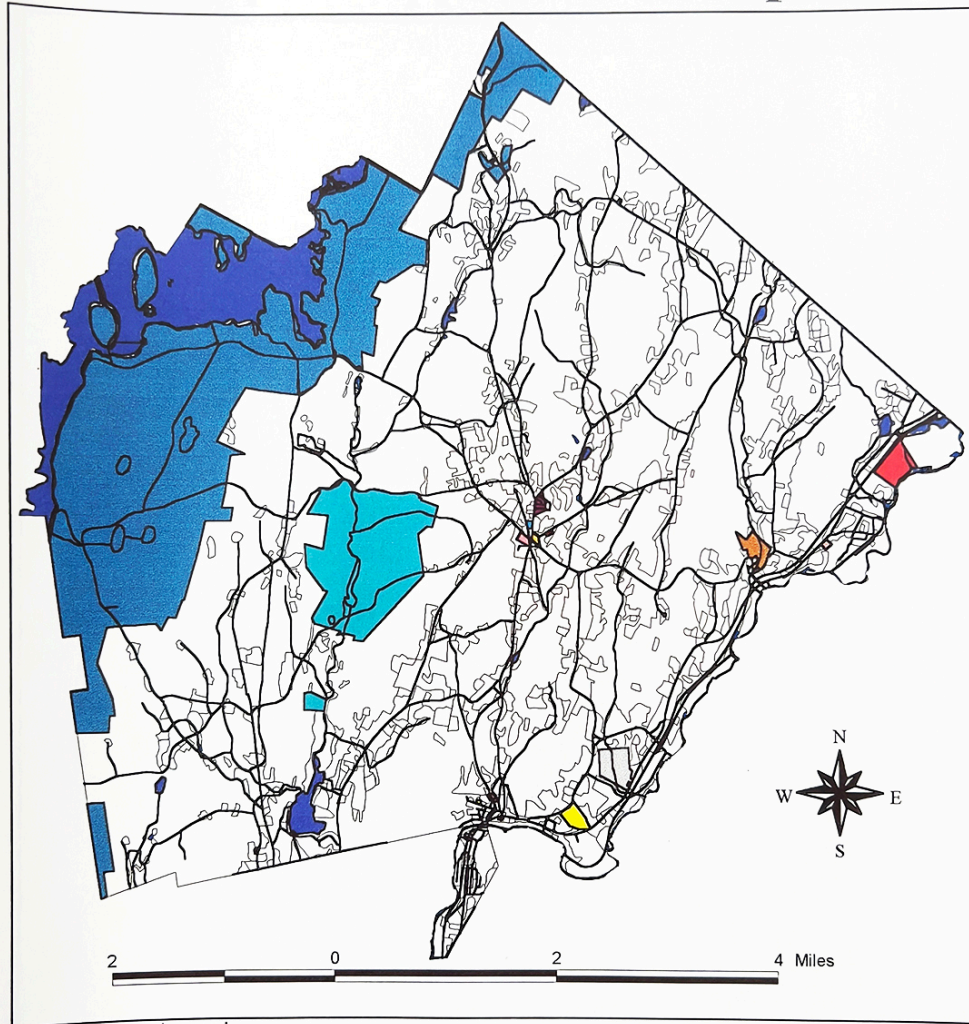
- 1) Encourage the development of public access to lands of “passive” recreation interests.
- 2) Foster creative land protection methods.
- 3) Maintain existing level of service for both active (white lines) recreation and passive (other) recreation.

Action Items:

- 1) Acquire shoreline at Hardwick Pond for recreational purposes.
- 2) Encourage protection on areas such as Muddy Brook and Moose Brook valleys.
- 3) Investigate water quality and the feasibility of reconstructing a dam on lower Danforth Brook to provide a safe swimming on the brook.
- 4) Improve public access to the Ware River for recreational use.
- 5) Develop a “Greenway” between Wheelwright and Gilbertville along the Ware River. Include multi-use trails, pocket parks, river access & scenic views.
- 6) Incorporate into the Quabbin area passive recreation land needs.
- 7) Establish a recreational donation for all new subdivisions and land development that would be applied to maintain the current or planned level of recreational service.

Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Protected Recreational and Open Space



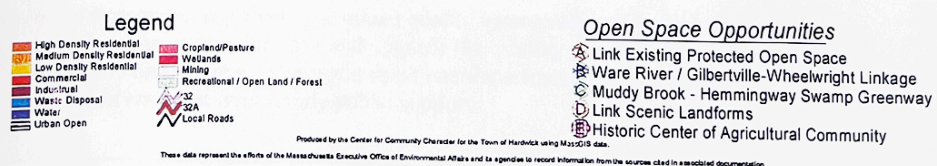
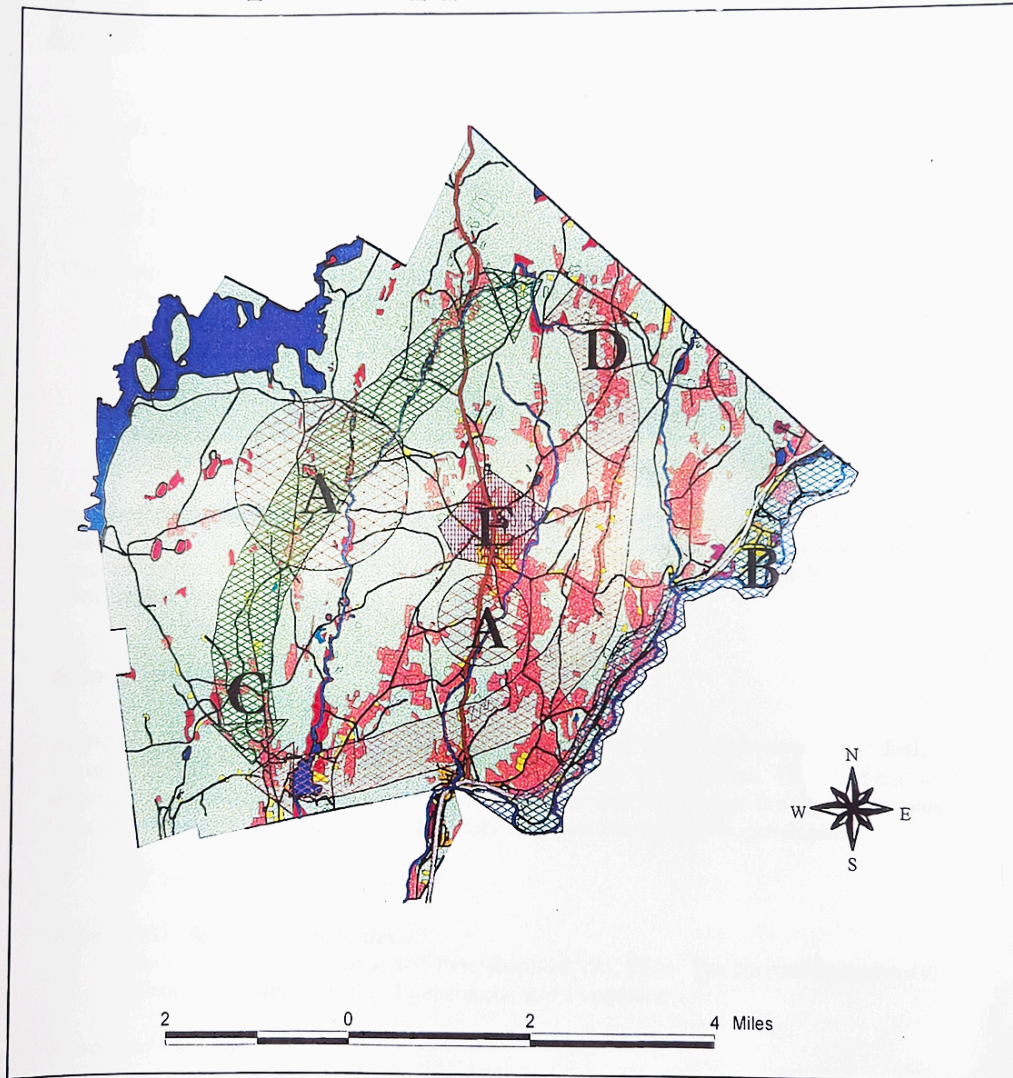
- Legend**
- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| ROADS | MUDDY BROOK WMA |
| PAIGE FARM | DEER PARK |
| QUABBIN RESERVOIR | GODDARD PARK |
| RUGGLES SCHOOL | HARDWICK CEMETERY |
| SAINT ALOYSIUS CEMETERY | HARDWICK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL |
| TOWN COMMON | HARDWICK POND LANDING |
| TOWN POOL | MEMORIAL FIELD |
| WEST HARDWICK CEMETERY | MOOSE BROOK ACCESS AREA |
| WHEELWRIGHT SCHOOL | WATER |

Produced by the Center for Community Character for the Town of Hardwick using MapInfo data.

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Hardwick Master Plan 1999

Open Space Opportunities - Action Plan



SERVICES AND FACILITIES ELEMENT

Introduction

This plan element presents a description of the municipal services and facilities provided by the Town of Hardwick.

This component addresses issues regarding the following services:

Protective Services - Fire, Rescue, Police, Civil Defense, Animal Control

Public Works - Highway, Recycling, Water, Waste Water Pollution Control

Municipal Government - Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Accountant, Assessors, Tax Collector, Building Department, Planning Board, Town Clerk, Board of Health

Educational - Schools, Libraries

Social Services - Council on Aging, Youth Commission, Veterans' Services

Members of the Services and Facilities element drafted a questionnaire and divided the above listed services among the 4 members. Each member met with the department head and using the questionnaire as a guideline conducted his or her interview. The results of which are incorporated in this chapter

Fire Department

Approximately 21 people serve the Hardwick volunteer ("call") fire department. The Chief, Deputy Chief and Clerk are appointed annually by the Board of Selectmen. The Chief appoints volunteer firefighters. Volunteers must have First Responder, CPR, basic fire fighting course, Mass Driver's license, Driver training & Safety Program training and/or certification.

FY 99 operating budget \$30,000.

Existing Fire Department facilities:

The fire station is located at 165 Petersham Rd. (Rt. 32A). The current departmental inventory includes 5 trucks, 3 generators, and a computer.

Issues and Concerns

While the department is providing a valued quality community service, the department also acknowledges the need to improve and upgrade the existing services it provides. Meeting the Town's future needs will be contingent upon interdepartmental communication, local appropriation and most importantly public support.

Police

Approximately 13 Police Officers serve the Town of Hardwick. Three (3) full-time, ten (10) part-time with one (1) civilian Police Clerk. All are appointed annually by the Board of Selectmen. The present number of officers may not be adequate to serve the Town's current and projected population. The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Federal Investigations Standards, cites that for New England communities, an average of 2.9 patrolmen serve each one thousand residents. Our present population of approximately 2800 already puts the Town far behind the federal standards.

Police Officer qualifications include but are not limited to: H.S. Diploma or equivalent, valid Mass. Driver's license, graduation from a police academy, and other mandated training (i.e., First Responder, weapon qualification).

The FY 99 operating budget \$175,000.

The Police Department is stationed at the Municipal Office Building (lower level) 307 Main Street (Rt. 32), in the Gilbertville section of Town. Most of the municipal Town Offices are also located within the building. Space conditions are inadequate and need to be improved. Additionally, security conditions for the Booking Room are inadequate, with other Town employees and the general public conducting business within the building.

Current departmental inventory includes: office equipment and furniture; 3 cruisers and a mountain bike; communication system (14 portable, 3 mobile and 1 base); 1 generator; computer system; records; and weapons.

Issues and Concerns

The department is presently in the second year of a five-year Improvement Plan. The department is providing a valued quality service to the community and strives to continually maintain and improve services with limited financial resources.

Rescue

The Hardwick Rescue Squad is comprised of a seven (7) member Board of Directors and approximately ten (10) Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). The role of the Directors is to ensure that proper funding is available for any need that the EMTs may have in order to perform their duties. EMTs are responsible for responding to emergency medical calls that are initiated. It should be noted that all members, directors and EMTs volunteer their time and are not compensated. FY 99 operating budget \$20,000.

All EMTs are required to complete the course prescribed by MGL in order to obtain the designation of Emergency Medical Technician. Continuing education is also required. Inventory includes one (1) 1996 ambulance and various medical supplies.

Issues and Concerns

Presently, the Rescue Squad is involved in negotiations to purchase real estate. Acquiring additional staff is a difficult and an on going task.

Currently, the Rescue Squad is having difficulty providing coverage between 6AM and 6PM. Expansion of services may be an option but there are too many variables at the present time that need to be addressed.

The Hardwick Rescue Squad strives to provide the fastest and most efficient medical service that they can. However, the Board of Directors acknowledges that additional EMTs are needed to ensure round-the clock coverage.

Civil Defense

The Civil Defense department is under control of the Emergency Management Director who is appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Director coordinates, directs, and manages all aspects during the emergency. There is also an Emergency Management Planning Committee comprised of the Director, Deputy Director, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Chairman of the Board of Health, Building Inspector and Highway Surveyor. Training includes Civil Defense Training courses, Radioactivity Fallout training, First Responder, and Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA). There is no direct inventory. All equipment is obtained through various emergency departments. In the event of a disaster (natural or otherwise) residents are instructed to go the Hardwick Elementary School to seek shelter.

FY 99 operating budget \$690.

The Civil Defense Department maintains an office on the lower level of the Municipal Office Building and has no posted hours of operation.

Issues and Concerns

In summary, the Civil Defense Department is functioning adequately at present and works in conjunction with other emergency service departments to provide necessary related services as needed.

Tax Collector

One (1) person elected to a three-year term. Qualifications include Tax Collector certification, computer knowledge, Massachusetts General Laws, bookkeeping, banking and billing procedures. Inventory includes computer equipment, office equipment, public records, and office safe.

FY 99 operating budget \$18,200.00.

Issues and Concerns

The tax department is functioning adequately at present and works in conjunction with the other financial departments.

Board of Selectmen

Three (3) members are elected to three-year terms. Members must be voters and residents of the Town. The Administrative Assistant (full time) appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Inventory includes computer and office equipment.

FY 99 operating budget \$27,500

Finance Committee

Presently undertaking personnel plan including job descriptions, wage and classification and performance appraisal system.

The six (6) members are appointed by the Moderator. Qualifications; financial experience suggested. Certification is not required., Members cannot be Town employees. The Finance Committee has no inventory.

FY 99 operating budget \$200.

Highway Department

The Highway Department consists of one (1) elected Highway Surveyor, one (1) foreman, three (3) equipment operators/laborers, one (1) mechanic/equipment operator/laborer and one (1) clerk. Employees, with the exception of the clerk, must have a CDL license and a Class B Hoisting Engineer License.

FY 99 operating budget \$276,393.40.

The Highway Department is located at 179 Petersham Road (Rt.32A) in Hardwick Center. Inventory includes: one (1) barn; one (1) storage barn; one (1) sand & salt barn; two (2) dump trucks with all season bodies; one (1) full-time sander; one (1) dump truck; two (2) pickup trucks; two (2) front end loaders; one (1) roadside mower; one (1) sidewalk snow-blower; one (1) road grader; one (1) street sweeper.

Issues and Concerns

The Highway Department maintains approximately 100 miles of roadway, of which approximately 33 miles are gravel. There is a potential for 10 more miles of gravel road development. If this occurs, current man-hours would be stretched. With current Town services fragmented (not under DPW) it is difficult at times to set priorities on how to service when multiple needs exist. However, a DPW with control responsibilities of all services in Town would be measurably more difficult and complicated to manage, as well as add to the fixed costs of operation.

The Highway Department is providing a good quality service to the community. The department acknowledges the need to continue to educate personnel in the areas of safety and hazardous waste regulations in order to comply with state (DEP) regulations. This year the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission conducted a comprehensive study of the roads, their conditions, and the cost to meet minimum expected good condition standards. The plan also prioritized the work to be done.

Water Pollution Control Facilities (WPCF)

The Town of Hardwick has two (2) water pollution control facilities. The Gilbertville plant built in 1974 is located off Rt. 32 on Mill Road. The Wheelwright plant built in 1978 is located off Maple Street. Two employees operate both plants and are appointed annually by the Board of Selectmen. One (1) serves in the capacity of superintendent the other is the assistant operator. Qualifications include Grade IV Treatment license, DEP training (minimum 10 hours per year re-certification). Inventory includes one (1) pickup truck, and 2 plants and contents.

FY 99 operating budget \$103,350.

Facilities: 1998 Sewer Rates- Gilbertville: \$233.55, Wheelwright: \$300.08.

Users: Gilbertville- 238, Wheelwright-118

Issues and Concerns

At present the plants are running at approximately 50-70% capacity. Areas of concern, however, are sewer lines running through private property. The Town is responsible for the lines in the road but not in homeowner's back yards. As lines age, this "back yard/under cellar" distribution leading to the road lines is becoming a serious problem.

Water

Currently, two private water districts in the villages of Gilbertville and Wheelwright serve the Town's residents. Hardwick Center Water District is owned and operated by the Town.

1. Hardwick:

Hardwick Center Water District consists of two (2) part-time employees (Superintendent and Asst. Superintendent) who are responsible for the maintenance and operation of the public water system. Qualifications require certification to operate a public water system. Inventory includes two (2) rock wells and three (3) holding tanks. Presently, there are 25 users of which 6 are Town buildings.

FY 99 Budget \$4,380.

Rates 1998: Fixed: \$72.08 Usage: 0.0013 per gallon

2. Gilbertville:

New Water Source and New Distribution Lines have been installed. Currently 207 users comprise the Gilbertville Water District. Three (3) commissioners, one (1) treasurer, one (1) clerk, one (1) billing clerk, and one (1) collector oversee the operations of the district. Members are elected annually by the users. One (1) member is designated superintendent and is certified (class 11 license) to operate a public water system. Inventory which includes one (1) pickup w/plow, one (1) mudsucker, and one (1) structure which house the pump and telemeter system and inventory of valves and pipes.

FY 99 operating budget approximately \$24,000

Issues and Concerns

The Gilbertville Water District is providing a quality service. Recently the water district acquired grant funding for an engineering study (Phase 1). The District will attempt to secure grant funding to repair major water lines (Phase 11). The district is concerned about the impact that state mandates have on cost.

3. Wheelwright:

There are currently 84 users on the Wheelwright Water District plus Quabbin Estates. Three (3) commissioners, one (1) treasurer and one (1) collector oversee operations of the district. All members are elected annually by the users. Officers must be District users and registered voters. The District must comply with IVIGL 464 (1951). A flat rate fee of \$140.00 is imposed. User fees pay for maintenance and provide limited capital improvements. There is no Town funding.

Issues and Concerns

Service has improved significantly in the last 5 years. Current service is very good, and the water quality excellent.

Building Department

The Building Inspector oversees the Town's building department. The department consists of two (2) Plumbing Inspectors, two (2) Electrical Inspectors and one (1) Gas Inspector. All are appointed annually by the Board of Selectmen. Personnel qualifications include state license in field (must maintain certification). The Building Inspector attends meetings twice monthly to stay current on the building codes and interpretation of the codes. There is no departmental inventory with the exception of a computer purchased in 1998.

FY 99 operating budget \$15,000.

Issues and Concerns

The Building Department is providing a good quality service the Town. The state building codes and regulations are vague in many areas which could result in unfavorable interpretations, and conflict. The current average workload for the Building Inspector is 15 hours per week. As technology changes and regulations adjust, the scope of the position will change. The tools and support to do the job will also need to change. A strategic plan for keeping current with training on the new regulations and technologies is needed.

Board of Health

The Board of Health consists of three (3) elected officials. One (1) member is designated by the state to serve as the Hazardous Waste Coordinator. Qualifications include knowledge of requirements and compliance to Department of Public Health and Department of Environmental Protection. The Board of Health is in charge of enforcement of sanitation and is also responsible for legal citations in the housing court.

FY 99 operating budget \$1850

The Board of Health has recently acquired a computer that enables the board to identify failing septic systems and provide financial assistance to homeowner's for repair or replacement of the system through a low interest loan program. This program was made possible through the Title V Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Massachusetts Water Pollution Abatement Trust.

Issues and Concerns

Increased demands and regulatory requirements, and greatly increased legal interests have heightened the workload considerably. A strategic plan for keeping current with training on new regulations and technologies is needed.

Recycling Commission

The Hardwick Recycling Commission consists of seven (7) volunteer commission members appointed to three (3) year terms by the Board of Selectmen. Paid staff includes one (1) part-time supervisor and four (4) part-time (two each bi-weekly) counter help.

Qualifications and skills required include DEP training in waste oil, and hazardous materials, valid driver's license, computer skills, administrative skills, knowledge and understanding of current recycling laws and regulations and the Massachusetts Solid Waste Master Plan.

FY 99 operating budget \$34,000

Inventory includes 1) Stake body truck; (1) Forktruck; (1) Baler; (1) Plastics grinder; (1) Storage trailer; (1) 500 gallon waste oil storage tank; (1) computer; (1) Hazardous materials storage cabinet; (1) 10 yd. Dumpster; (1) 30 yd. Rolloff; (4) 40 yd. Rolloff; (1) building. For 1999 purchase/ completion: (2) compactors; (1) newly completed pole barn.

Currently, the Recycling Center is located at 1703 Barre Road in the village of Wheelwright. The Recycling Commission is completing renovations and site improvements to transfer the recycling operations to the new location at 2011 Barre Road.

Issues and Concerns

Current service provided is very good and receives constant and strong public approval. There is a need to increase participation. The State is working toward a 46% recycling rate by the year 2000. The Town is at about 20%. As many other towns have done, Hardwick should pass a recycling by-law as well as require independent haulers to provide minimal recycling. The offering of trash transfer along with recycling is expected to increase the recycling participation rate.

Schools

There is one (1) public elementary school (K-6) centrally located in the Town of Hardwick which services all of the villages. Grades 7-12 is bused to the Quabbin Regional Jr.-Sr. High School located approximately 7 miles north in the Town of Barre.

The public schools are administered by a regional school committee, of which Hardwick has three (3) elected representatives. The five- (5) Town regional district has one superintendent, supported by Principals and Administrators.

All personnel who are hired to serve the children of the Town and district must have the appropriate certifications required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Inventory consists of buildings and their contents.

FY 99 assessment \$1.2 million (Hardwick)

Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School District

In June 1998, the Town joined the PRVTHSD. The vocational school is administered by a regional school committee, of which Hardwick has one (1) elected representative.

FY 99 assessment \$188,000 (Hardwick)

Eagle Hill School is housed within the Town of Hardwick, and operates in a private (non-profit) capacity.

Currently, the Town has no operating preschool. However, plans are in place to re-open the Hardwick Pre-school Cooperative which is housed in the former Paige School located on Ruggles Hill Road. Interested community members have also identified the need and are exploring avenues for a Preschool or Head Start program in the village of Gilbertville.

Issues and Concerns

No major changes are envisioned in the next 10 years. However, a population increase could have a dramatic impact on existing services and facilities. Adequate support for the schools exists in the community in terms of programs and policies. However, support for the maintenance of the facilities is needed.

Libraries

Gilbertville Public Library and Paige Memorial Library

The libraries are a department of town government overseen by elected boards of library trustees who have responsibility for library management, collection development, and provision of library services to the public. The libraries maintain collections of adult and child fiction and non-fiction books, periodicals, audio and video recordings, and reference materials for circulation. Through grant programs and/or with other local resources, the libraries offer various children's programs, including story hours and craft workshops, and some adult programming. The libraries serve as information centers. The libraries serve as important resources for the increasing population of home-schooled children in Hardwick.

The Town has two (2) separate operating libraries. The Gilbertville Public Library is centrally located along Rt. 32 in the village of Gilbertville. The Paige Memorial Library is located along the Hardwick Common on Rt. 32A.

FY 99 operating budgets: Gilbertville: \$5400, Paige: \$16,600.

Board of Assessors

Board of Assessors is comprised of three (3) elected officials, two (2) part time and one (1) full-time. Assessors are required by law to take Assessing 101 which acquaints them with the office

procedures needed to perform their job. Presently, two of the members are Massachusetts Accredited Assessors. Inventory includes, computers, and maps. All files are stored in fire proof file cabinets.

FY 99 operating budget \$48,700.

Issues and Concerns

At this time there are no plans to expand the department. However, a need has been identified for a part-time qualified individual to provide office (clerical) support to the board.

Town Clerk

One (1) person elected to a three-year term. Qualifications include certification as a municipal clerk, knowledge and expertise in the area of municipal law and local bylaws, computer knowledge and basic office skills. Inventory includes computer equipment, office equipment, public records and office safe.

FY 99 operating budget \$17,000.

Issues and Concerns

The Town Clerk oversees all elections and serves as member of the Board of Registrars. At present there are no plans to expand the department. However, a need has been identified for a part-time qualified individual to provide office (clerical) support.

Planning Board

The Planning Board consists of seven (7) elected members, two (2) alternates appointed by the Board of Selectmen and one (1) part-time clerk. Planning board members are elected to five (5) year terms. Members take training modules to educate and up-date their knowledge in the area of zoning.

FY 99 Budget \$2,000.

Issues and Concerns

Ability to keep up with implementation of the plan and future development.

Veterans Department

The Veterans Agent is appointed annually by the Board of Selectmen. Pursuant to MGL the agent must be a veteran. The Agent receives most of his training “on the job”. However, in 1998 the Massachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services began a program that provides training in the area of filing paperwork and administering benefits to eligible veterans.

FY 99 operating budget \$4,300

Inventory consists of records and file cabinet.

Town Accountant

The Town Accountant is appointed annually by the Board of Selectmen. The Town’s annual independent audit is contracted out. Qualifications include a bookkeeping/accounting background. Inventory includes computer and office equipment.

FY 99 operating budget \$21,000.

Issues and Concerns

A concern that will need to be addressed in the future is that the present part-time hours will not adequately meet the Town’s needs.

Animal Control

Currently, the same person holds the positions of Dog Officer and Animal Control Officer. There is also an Assistant Dog Officer, Inspector of Animals and Asst. Inspector of Animals. All are appointed annually by the Board of Selectmen.

Although most training is provided through experience, efforts are under way by the present Dog Officer to attend specialized training seminars that will update skills and knowledge of state and local laws.

Presently, animals in need of shelter are housed at the Dog Officer’s personal residence. All vehicles are also personally owned. Inventory includes portable kennel and catch equipment.

FY 99 operating budget approximately \$3,600.

In 1997 the Board of Selectmen appointed a committee to review and recommend changes to the existing Dog Bylaws. A draft report of the committee’s findings and recommendations was submitted to the Board of Selectmen in the spring of 1998.

Issues and Concerns

The Animal Control Department is providing an important needed service that benefits the health, welfare and safety of the Town's residents. Opportunities for improvement are acknowledged in the areas of sheltering animals, bylaw updating and implementation and increase in hours to provide service.

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging (COA) was established in 1978 by acceptance of a bylaw, pursuant to MGL Chapter 40, section 8B. The Council consists of seven (7) members who are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Paid employees include (2) Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART) van drivers and a dispatcher. Through MART, the drivers and dispatcher receive training in the areas of CPR, First Aid, wheelchair lift operation, and bloodborne pathogens and drug and alcohol awareness. Council members must be voters and residents of the Town.

FY 99 operating budget \$18,175

The Council's primary function is to identify the Town's elderly needs and to provide services to meet those needs.

Presently, the Council provides transportation, nutrition, medical screenings, and social activities to the Town's elderly residents. In 1998 the Town received CDBG grant funding (\$50,000) which made renovations to the Senior Center possible. Renovations included carpentry, electrical work, installation of carpeting, flooring, new furniture, appliances, cabinets and shelves. COA Inventory includes a computer, office furniture, exercise and medical equipment.

Issues and Concerns

The COA is providing a good valued service to the elderly community but would like to expand its services in the area social activities. The members also like to collaborate with the Golden Agers on various projects.

Youth Commission

In June 1998, the town voted to establish a Youth Commission under pursuant MGL Chapter 40, section 8E. The commission is comprised of ten (10) members appointed by the Board of Selectmen, and a part-time Youth Center Coordinator. Commission guidelines are promulgated through MGL. Coordinator qualifications include strong social, educational, and interpersonal skills as well as managerial and office skills. Inventory includes a VCR, stereo, pool tables, air-hockey and office furniture.

FY 99 operating budget \$15,100.

Issues and Concerns

The Youth Commission is in the process of organizing and structuring a program for the Town's youth. Recently, the Youth Commission hired a part-time Youth Center Coordinator who will work in conjunction with the commission to establish and implement programs and services for the young people of the Town.

Approach

The planning strategy to meet community service demands by a growing population is to develop and action oriented agenda to meet future needs and develop a 6 year capital improvement plan and budget. The following items will be addressed:

Action Items

Fire

- Build a New Fire Station.
- A new fire truck,
- Training computer equipment for fire fighting strategies
- Full time Chief
- Fire Awareness Training
- Fire Prevention Week at School

Police

- Build a New Police Station
- More Qualified Officers
- Specialized Training
- Equipment upgrades

Highway Department

The Department maintains approximately 100 miles of roadway, of which approximately 33 miles are gravel. There is a potential for 10 more miles of gravel road development. If this occurs, current man-hours would be stretched. With current Town services fragmented (not under DPW) it is difficult at times to set priorities on how to service when multiple needs exist. However, a DPW with control responsibilities of all services in Town would be measurably more difficult and complicated to manage, as well as add to the fixed costs of operation.

The Highway Department is providing a good quality service to the community. The department acknowledges the need to continue to educate personnel in the areas of safety and hazardous waste regulations in order to comply with state (DEP) regulations. This year the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission conducted a comprehensive study of the roads, their conditions, and the cost to meet minimum expected good condition standards. The plan also prioritized the work to be done.

Wastewater Treatment

- Replace some existing sewer lines
- Extend sewer lines in certain areas
- Identify possible funding sources (i.e., FMHA, CDBG, UDAG)

Water Resources

- Upgrade and/or modify existing Gilbertville water services and facilities:
 - ✓ Install corrosion control chemical injector.
 - ✓ Replace/repair major water lines
- Upgrade and modify present Wheelwright water services:
 - ✓ New Tank, Well Pump, Pumping System
 - ✓ Distribution line improvements
 - ✓ Storage Tank and Distribution

Solid Waste - Recycling/ Transfer Station

- Upgrade existing recycling services and complete renovations and site work at the Transfer Station
- Additionally, identified is the need for closer alliance with town leadership whereby all town departments recognize and support the importance of recycling.
- Environmental education is needed not only for kids, but also for their parents and leaders as well.
- An open cooperative effort between town officials, recycling commission, landfill and local haulers is the only way to meet state requirements, increase recycling rates and save the environment.

Schools

No major changes are envisioned in the next 10 years with regard to schools. However, a population increase could have a dramatic impact on existing services and facilities. Adequate support for the schools exists in the community in terms of programs and policies. However, support for the maintenance of the facilities is needed.

Building Department

- Upgrade computer software to improve tracking of land parcels

Tax Collector

- Purchase Microfiche Equipment

Health

- Undertake a more proactive role in some of the Health Agent responsibilities such as inspection of eateries.

Town Clerk

- Purchase Electronic Ballot Tabulating Equipment (Purchased 1999)

Animal Control

- Provide New Catch Equipment
- Provide Municipal Animal Shelter
- Possible FT Position or PT Increase hours

Senior Services

- Increase Participation in Programs
- Re-hire COA Associate
- Implement more Social and Wellness Programs
- Outreach Program to identify elders at risk (medical, social, financial support and assistance)