

CHAPTER III: EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an evaluation of the opportunities for Weymouth to guide its own future. Based on this evaluation, it then advances recommendations for policies and actions. These recommendations were developed in concert with the Goals and Objectives which are contained in this Report.

A distinctive quality of Weymouth is the diversity of its districts, neighborhoods and villages. The organization of this portion of the Master Plan reflects the geographic structure of the Town. Town has been divided into its component areas for evaluation and discussion, based on the following breakdown of its constituent parts:

Part 1. The Village Centers and Neighborhoods

- The four main village centers, Columbian Square, Jackson Square, Weymouth Landing and Bicknell Square; and,
- The neighborhoods, as grouped around the village centers by North Weymouth, East Weymouth, Weymouth Landing, and South Weymouth.

Part 2. The Special Areas

- The commercial corridors, which are the main highway crossings that serve as the principal economic engines of Weymouth;
- The waterfront area, which provides great opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of the coastal resources; and,
- The Naval Air Station, which is a unique resource with redevelopment options.

Part 3. Public Properties and Public Facilities

The analyses highlight issues that are specific to each separate area. This allows the discussion to then turn to strategies that the Town could use to address those issues on an area-specific basis. The recommendations suggest how the Town can support the land uses that it finds beneficial and should remain stable, and encourage the direction of other land uses through the Town's infrastructure, regulatory, and funding processes.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of several town-wide issues:

Part 4. Transportation Infrastructure

- The connection between land use and transportation infrastructure is presented. This includes discussion on how land use influences traffic concerns and in turn, development can demand traffic management responses. Included are recommended approaches to handling transportation as a management approach; and,

Part 5. Land Use and Zoning

- The implications of zoning are reviewed in terms of the role zoning plays in land use and development decisions. This includes consideration of zoning as a land use management tool, how it has been used in Weymouth, and recommended amendments to match the Goals and Objectives of this Plan.

Last, descriptions of the options for four sites to evolve under the guidance of the Master Plan are included in Part 6. Focus Area Studies.

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

PART 1. THE VILLAGE CENTERS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

THE VILLAGE CENTERS

The village centers evolved in the tradition of small New England town crossroads, with public spaces and public activities that draw people for business, social and recreational activities. They help define the physical orientation and cultural sense of the community. With their mix of uses and activities, they can serve several purposes. They can serve as picturesque civic places with attractive architecture that reinforces the identity of an area. They can provide a concentration of office and service uses, or serve as a special or convenient shopping center, or provide a family-oriented activity area. Finding the best balance among these roles must be found in order to maintain the village's vitality and its importance to the community.

Weymouth's village centers remain identifiable within the larger development pattern that has emerged around them. However, they are not stable in terms of their economic viability or image. The traditional role of the village centers within the community has been diminished due to changing preferences for shopping and entertainment and the shifting patterns of daily life. Consumers no longer rely on the businesses in the village centers to serve many of their needs, as they have many choices for shopping and services that are easily accessible by car. The uses that often survive in the village centers have become increasingly specialized, or reach out to markets that are far beyond the original neighborhood in order to be successful. While Weymouth's village centers need to be reinforced through the provision of goods, services and amenities that will appeal to contemporary life. At the same time, there are substantial advantages to retaining the small town atmosphere within a fast growing and highly diverse region, which is losing such distinctive locations.

Note: This discussion covers some key issues and findings for each of village centers. Some of these findings were discussed with the local merchants from these village centers, in meetings with the Master Plan Steering Committee. The sections that follow bring those ideas forward and discuss how they might be addressed in this plan.

Generally, local business owners and government officials have worked well together to support the village atmosphere. But if the villages are to remain as core elements in Weymouth's future, additional support through public policies and actions will be required. This section of the Report evaluates each village, and lists recommendations for reinforcing their role in the economic and civic life of Weymouth.

The four village areas that are defined for evaluation are:

Columbian Square – Located in South Weymouth and east of Main Street, this busy confluence of roads and businesses has been the most stable of the four village centers. The Square has a varied architecture anchored by the historic Fogg building. It also has a number of small retail businesses, food service, and other service-oriented businesses. It is surrounded by single family residences and apartment units. With a major intersection feeding regional points and connecting to schools and the South Shore Hospital, the traffic center is typically busy during many times of the day. As change and growth continue,

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there are key issues that must be addressed to ensure the future vitality and character of this village.

Jackson Square – Geographically, Jackson Square is the largest village center. It is very active, but is one of the two village centers that may experience the most significant pressures to change. Perhaps the most important influence on change will come from altered activity and circulation patterns as a result of the new ‘T’ station on the proposed Greenbush Line. A second source of change is the potential pressure to expand commercial uses along Broad Street westward toward Weymouth Landing. Zoning to distinguish and delineate Jackson Square appears critical to its success.

Weymouth Landing – This is a smaller village district but will be equally impacted by the second proposed Greenbush Line ‘T’ station and accompanying changes to circulation. Located along both sides of a regional arterial road, the combined Route 53 and Route 18, this village area must be carefully protected by zoning and land use controls to ensure it does not become another highway commercial area.

Bicknell Square – This is a classic example of a village center that has already been significantly impacted by the highways and the highway-type commercial businesses dependent upon easy vehicular access. Important influences also include the regional malls and big-box retail centers that encourage the motorized, one-stop customer. These can be found elsewhere along Route 3A at the Harborlight Mall in Weymouth, and in the neighboring communities.

Following are expanded discussions on each of these areas including the complete descriptions and evaluations.

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

A. Columbian Square

Columbian Square holds the greatest number and complexity of public and non-profit properties of the four village centers. As a result, Columbian Square generates a high level of activity that encourages related business activities and supports the village as a neighborhood social center (See Map III-1- Columbian Square Opportunities and Constraints).

Influences

Significant architectural influences in Columbian Square include the highly visible Fogg buildings; i.e., the Fogg Library and Opera House, and the nearby Old South Church. Also adding dominance is the former shoe factory at the corner of Pleasant and Union Street that now serves as a retail and service center that houses several businesses. This building anchors the opposite side of the street from the Fogg Library.

Useful Facts: Major Public Properties and Institutions
Fogg Library
Fogg Opera House
Old South Union Church
Town Fire Station
Knights of Columbus
U.S. Post Office
Municipal Parking Lot
Stella A. Tirrell Playground
St. Francis Xavier Church and School
South Shore Hospital



The one-story attached retail businesses across the Square provide multiple storefronts, but do not necessarily add to the architectural style of the other buildings. Around the corner the older, well defined architectural feel returns with the Fire Station and South Shore Bank building. However, the Fire Station, as an operating substation, will soon be moved north to the beginning of Talbot Street and the existing building must be re-used for other purposes. The South Shore Bank building opposite the Fire Station maintains the historic aspects of the block.

While not directly on Columbian Square, South Shore Hospital is the dominant land use in the immediate vicinity of the Square. Even though job growth at the hospital could potentially bring more activity into the Square, discussions with the hospital administration and business owners from the Square revealed that the Hospital has a limited influence on the Square other than a shared parking problem. However, it was also determined that the nearby schools on Pleasant Street and the adjacent residential areas do provide a market base for the Square's businesses.

Transportation impacts – principally traffic congestion – and design of the main intersection are the primary issues influencing public perception of Columbian Square. The wide expanse of open pavement is not a particularly inviting aspect of the

Useful Facts: Columbian Square Access
Local Arterial: Main Street/ Route 18
Collectors: Pleasant Street, Union Street and Columbian Street

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Square for pedestrians or drivers, nor does it add to the aesthetic quality of the Square. The two existing traffic controls are stop signs, which allow relatively uncontrolled vehicle movements within the large expanse of pavement. Concerns over pedestrian and traffic safety were consistently raised by every person interviewed and overwhelmed the discussion of all other issues regarding this area and South Weymouth, in general.

Historic Properties and Major Land Uses

The following section summarizes some of the historic and current land uses and buildings around Columbian Square that help define the character of the location. Historical information comes from the Town's Open Space Plan and the Comprehensive Historical Survey both completed within the last year.



Photo: Fogg Library

Fogg Library - The Fogg Library built in 1897, was Weymouth's first public library. The library is often photographed as a defining element of Weymouth's architectural heritage. The library's architectural style was described as combining Dutch and Classical elements in a style approaching Italian Renaissance. The exterior is constructed with Weymouth granite, Redding, Baird, and Co. made the stained-glass windows, and the interior is spacious and graceful.

Fogg Opera House - Built several years before the Library, in 1888, again by the Fogg family, the Opera House's architectural style is Richardson Romanesque. It is a large building and is a dominant feature in Columbian Square. Its most distinctive feature is the tall octagonal tower at the junction of the two main facades. The building was originally built for an Opera House with a hall for public assemblies on the second floor and shops and banks on the first floor. The Opera House has been converted to apartments with the ground floor altered to accommodate retail businesses.

South Shore Hospital - The authors of this report consider South Shore Hospital to be one of the reasons that Columbian Square is so active. It is a regionally recognized institution with clientele from a broad market region. However, an important aspect of the relationship between the Town, and the Hospital is that the Hospital, as an exempt land use, does not have to pay taxes. Instead, the Town receives payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT program fees) under agreements with the Hospital.

In addition, six older homes in the Columbian Square neighborhood have been recommended for the National Register of Historic Places.

Zoning and Development Potential

A special zoning district, the Medical Service District, was created in 1990 to allow

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expansion of ancillary medical uses adjacent to the hospital. The area so zoned extends across Route 18 (Main Street) and up to the edge of Columbian Square. As such, the hospital directly influences the potential for commercial development on Main Street, and generates traffic through out the area.

The hospital is currently completing an expansion for new maternity and surgical units. Information from the Hospital's Traffic Impact Study (source: VHB August, 1999) notes parking for the whole facility is handled by 835 parking spaces on the property and 400 spaces in a satellite parking lot in a Hingham industrial park. The main parking lot is fully used during the day, but peak activity was found to be at 1:00 in the afternoon. To control impacts of employee parking, the Hospital proposed leasing an additional 50 parking spaces at the off-site parking lot and adding shuttle bus capacity to transfer the employees.

Local traffic improvements proposed in support of the development were not significant with the finding that the Hospital had a negligible impact on the local street system. The only change was an alteration in the timing of the traffic signal at the Columbian and Main Streets intersection. This change in timing would increase the level of service at the intersection from 'LOS F' to 'LOS D', an improvement. However, the intersection is still ranked as one of the highest accident intersections in the State, as well as the Town.

The zoning of Columbian Square is General Business, B-2, with adjacent areas zoned for Medical (MSD) in support of the South Shore Hospital, Limited Business, B-1 on the south and Residential, R-1 for adjacent residential uses. The MAPC Buildout Analysis did not identify any potential for new commercial development in this area. Because of a number of constraints, any significant increase of hospital-related uses is also limited. The adjacent residential area is stable and almost fully developed. No significant residential change is anticipated.

One significant change could come from the reuse plan for the existing Fire Station. Reuse options for this building include another public facility to support Town programs (e.g., a South Weymouth Town Hall annex, or a community center), a new business activity (retail is generally a strong market in Weymouth) or residential units. Of these, the community center meets the goals for the surrounding neighborhood to have family-oriented, public activities in the Square. The sale for retail redevelopment could include restrictions to require historically accurate architectural features and would provide a revenue source for the proposed intersection improvements. It would also reinforce the retail focus of the village.

Businesses and Land Values

Businesses in the Square are mostly local, family-owned businesses, but also include regional entities such as the South Shore Bank. The regional level of business activity directly influences the volumes of traffic in this area and the value of the commercial properties.

Per square foot land values for the Hospital properties, as recorded in the Assessor's records, are fairly low in comparison with commercial properties around the Square, but this does not accurately reflect the influence of this land use.

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The boundary defining Columbian Square was shown in Figure III-1. It includes twenty-three parcels, covering about 7.3 acres of privately held land. Although typical of an older business or village area, the values are unique in comparison with the other village areas of Weymouth. A comparison of land values in all the village centers is included at the end of this section on the villages.

Table III-1 Average Land Values: Columbian Square

Average	Parcel size (SF)	Total value/parcel	Total value/SF	Land-only value	Land-only value/ SF
Mean	13,840 sq.ft.	\$283,300	\$21.76	\$93,000	\$6.87
Median	12,509 sq.ft.	\$291,500	\$22.66	\$94,000	\$6.93

Source: Town Assessor

B. Jackson Square

Jackson Square is the largest of the four village centers. It extends north and south along Pleasant and Water Streets and to the east and west along Broad, Commercial and High Streets. Because of its topography, street layout, and zoning, the Square presents the most complex set of conditions of the four villages (See Map III-2- Jackson Square Opportunities and Constraints).

Influences

The most significant existing influence on the Square is the transportation system. The most significant future influence may also be the transportation system.

Parallel, on street parking in support of the small retail businesses is at a premium. In addition, the street layout presents a potentially confusing situation for the casual visitor. This will change to some extent with the proposed Greenbush line 'T' station, which will be sited north of the Square, off Commercial Street. The street layout will be changed to ease the flow of peak hour traffic to and from the station.

The architecture of Jackson Square varies considerably from the shingle-style retail shops of Broad Street to the more modern design of the large retail center on Commercial Street, to the industrial style, auto-oriented businesses on the perimeters of the Square. With this eclectic mix, it is difficult to define the character that distinguishes the Square. On the other hand, the Korean War memorial is one of the latest additions to the Square and has been well received by the neighborhood. This type of high visibility public project helps define the Square as a destination.

Useful Facts: Access in Jackson Sq.
Arterial - MBTA station (future)
Collectors - Broad Street through to High Street, Commercial Street, Pleasant Street
Scenic Road - Randall Avenue leading into Jackson Square

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A major issue to consider is the potential for future development pressures extending and intensifying commercial areas along Broad Street towards Weymouth Landing. A proposal for an Osco pharmacy was recently presented to, and rejected by, the Town on a location including six homes within the historic district surrounding the intersection of Broad and Middle Streets, known as Central Square. This potential intensification of existing business areas is not limited by the commercial zoning. However, the area proposed for the drug store has now been rezoned to residential R-1.

Useful Facts: Major Public Properties and Institutions
East Weymouth Congregational Church
Lawrence W. Pingree School
Lovell Playground and Park
Robert S. Hoffman Park
Korean War Memorial Park
Herring Run
Skateboard Park
Immaculate Conception Church and School
United Methodist Church
Municipal Parking Lot
Pratt Library
U.S. Post Office
Central Fire Station (to be relocated)

Several other initiatives are influencing the connection between Weymouth Landing and Jackson Square along Broad Street:

- The proposed development of the Greenbush ‘T’ Line, with stations in Weymouth Landing and Jackson Square,
- The potential closure and reconfiguration of streets at each station with increased traffic on the local streets and,
- The possibility of Broad Street becoming a more important cross-town connector than it is now.

These could have a combined affect that increases the value of business properties and their potential for redevelopment. As a result, the Town must take care to not only identify and maintain the particular characteristics that it desires for Jackson Square, but also the commercial land along Broad Street before these pressures are realized. If the intent is to maintain the village centers and not allow new auto-oriented business, than the zoning and land use controls should clearly define these as requirements.

Historic Properties

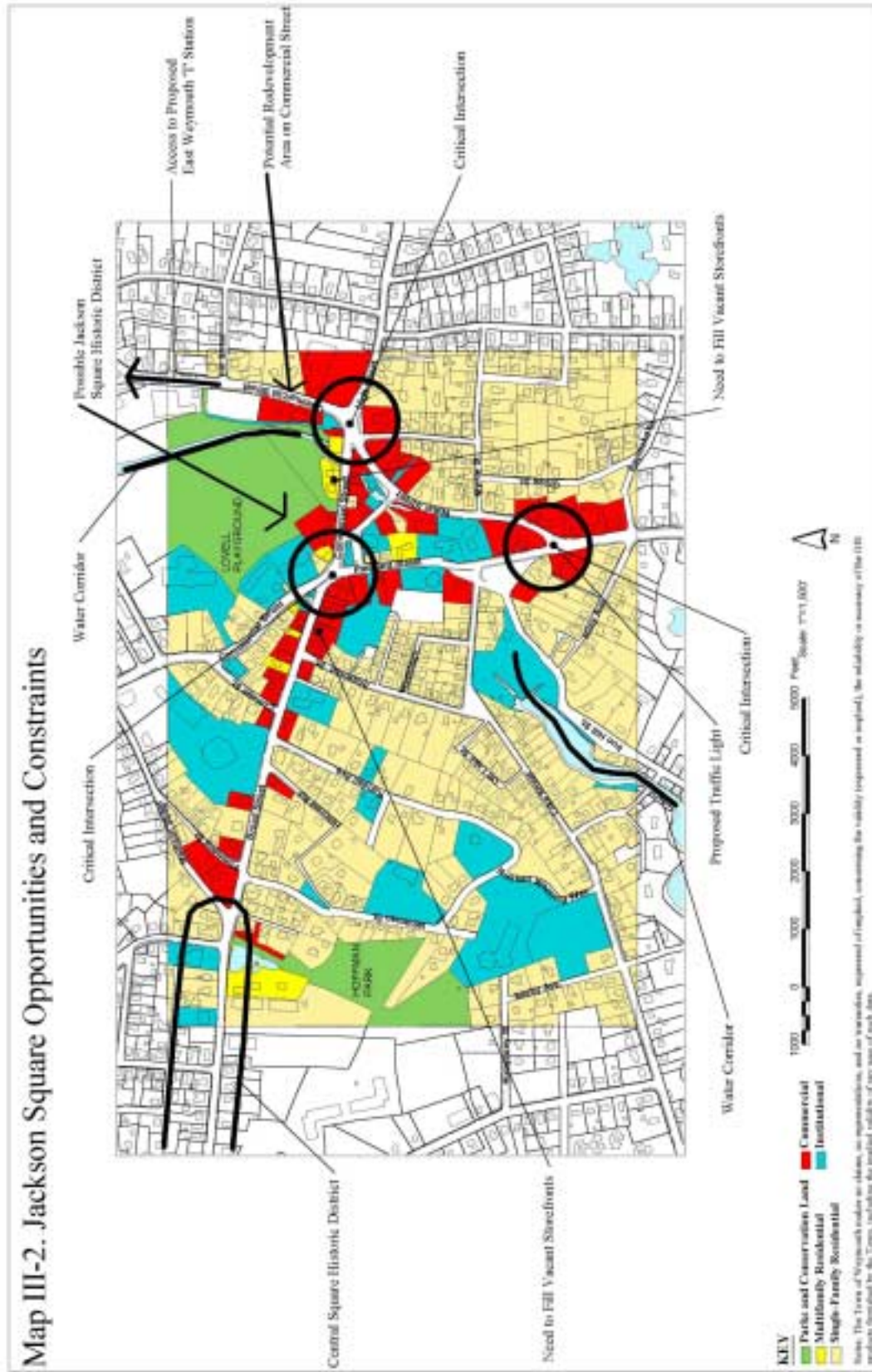
The key historic structure identified within Jackson Square in the Town’s Open Space Plan is Washington School.

“Built in 1887 at Burrell’s Corner in Jackson Square, the architecture of the two-story structure reflects Queen Anne style that was popular at the time. Detailing on both the interior and exterior have been well preserved. The school is a rare survivor being a virtually intact wood-frame example of a late 19th century educational facility. In 1984 the school was rehabilitated for use as office space.”

Source: excerpt from the Weymouth Open Space Plan.



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Outside the boundaries of Jackson Square at the intersection of Broad and Middle Streets is one of the Town's historic districts. Two properties, the Tirrell House at 691 Broad Street, and the Canterbury-Libbey House at 707 Broad Street, have been recommended for the National Register of Historic Places. Although considered separate from Jackson Square, the connection along Broad Street provides some benefit to this entrance into Jackson Square.

Zoning and Development Potential

The Jackson Square village center area is all zoned as B-2, Business. The MAPC Buildout Analysis identified areas of potential new growth along Commercial Street north of the village center. Development in this area could be impacted by environmental issues related to Herring Brook and its associated wetlands running from Whitman's Pond to the Back River. However, with the proposed 'T' station off of Commercial Street, just north of the railroad tracks, the pressure to develop these areas may be sufficient enough to justify the mitigation measures necessary to build there. *This suggests that the Town take an active role in the management of development in this area.* Because of the conditions of the properties and roads in this area, the creation of a rezoning project in this district may be appropriate.

The existing businesses are active and the only changes expected are the normal changeovers in retail operations. One issue that clearly indicates the potential for broader change is the Bargaineer store. This larger discount retail store is unlike the other village storefronts. It is a stand-alone building, offset from the street. It is an early prototype of the larger retail operations that are changing the face of retail. Although the store provides a valuable outlet to the community, its design does not support the historic village-like character of the rest of Jackson Square. The assemblage of a number of the small business lots could allow new development projects to occur in Jackson Square. New zoning to preserve the existing qualities of the Square is recommended.

Businesses and Land Values

Retail businesses in the Square include both small storefronts and the large discount store. The business mix also includes industrial uses near the edges of the Square, which combine to create a highly active mix of uses catering to a broad range of consumers. This mix is considered an overall benefit that adds to the vitality of the village.

The boundary defining Jackson Square contains fifty-five parcels and covers about 11.8 acres of privately held properties. Average assessed values are shown in Table III-2. Typical of an older business or village area, the values are comparable with the other village areas of Weymouth. A comparison of land values in all the village centers is included at the end of this section.

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Table III-2. Average Land Values: Jackson Square

Average	Parcel size (SF)	Total value/parcel	Total value/SF	Land-only value	Land-only value/ SF
Mean	11,451	\$ 219,345	\$ 25.70	\$ 79,245	\$ 8.93
Median	9,000	\$ 197,900	\$ 20.08	\$ 82,000	\$ 8.16

Source: Town Assessor

C. Weymouth Landing

Of the four village centers identified for this study, Weymouth Landing is the most impacted by traffic (See Map III-3- Weymouth Landing Opportunities and Constraints). This is because it is bisected by a major regional arterial, Route 53 and Route 18, also known as Washington Street. The traffic causes severe limitations against pedestrian street crossings during peak hours. For small, retail storefronts, the ability to attract pedestrians within the district is very important. Consequently, the impact of the traffic is probably impacting business.

The traffic also makes it difficult to create the continuity needed for social interaction. Planning studies have shown that the most highly social districts within a community are ones that allow easy and frequent street crossings. Heavily traveled roadways were shown to have a negative impact on the cohesiveness of a district. With Washington Street bisecting the Landing, the village struggles between the maintenance of the Landing as a village center and the pressures to develop as an auto-oriented commercial area. The latter has occurred just outside the village area along the highway corridor.

Influences

As noted, transportation issues have significant influence on the current and future conditions within Weymouth Landing. Washington Street (Route 53) is a major arterial connecting a large portion of Weymouth to the region including areas north in Braintree, Quincy and beyond, and south and east to the interior communities of southeastern Massachusetts.

Useful Facts: Weymouth Landing Access

Arterial - MBTA station (future)

Regional Arterial - Route 53/Washington Street

Collectors - Commercial Street, Broad Street, Front Street

Scenic road - Front Street

Here again, the Greenbush Line could have a significant impact on the Landing due to the proposed 'T' station to be located off Commercial Street and north of the village center. However, the impact may not be a direct improvement for business, but rather a change in the traffic circulation within the village area. The currently suggested plan for the 'T' station includes the closing of Commercial Street to control the traffic associated with the station. This would direct traffic from the station towards the north before again intersecting with Route 53/18. The resulting change in routing of local and station-related trips will not necessarily reduce vehicular traffic through the Landing.

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Another issue is Front Street, the residential area to the west of the Square. As noted below, some of Weymouth's oldest residences can be found on Front Street. However, because Front Street parallels Washington Street, it is used to bypass some of the traffic back ups on Washington Street.

Useful facts: Major Public Properties and Institutions
Weston Park
Sacred Heart Church and School
U.S. Post Office
Fire Station (closed)
Ashwood Cemetery
Tufts Library
South Shore Christian Academy

Also, as discussed previously, the connection of Weymouth Landing with Jackson Square along Broad Street, intersecting at the southern end of the village, may also influence future development in the Landing. The extension of businesses and traffic along Broad Street should be understood as a potential result of increased traffic running parallel

with the Greenbush 'T' Line. Typical of the blocks within the other village centers, a well-defined area of public open space can be found within the district. In the Landing, the block to the west of Washington Street is dominated by Weston Park. This park provides both a buffer and a logical pedestrian connection between the surrounding residential areas and commercial businesses on Washington Street.

Another important influence is the Sacred Heart Church and School (Archdiocese of Boston) and the South Shore Christian Academy. These religious and educational facilities are physically dominant in the Landing and help identify the location. They also add an important cultural component to the activities in the Landing. In addition, because of the student population, it is important that traffic calming and controlled street crossings are available for the children's safety.

Historic Properties

Weymouth Landing Post Office - The post office was built in 1941 in the Colonial Revival style with local seam-face granite. It was the first Federal building in Weymouth. The



Weymouth Landing Post Office contains a mural by Guy Pene du Bois, which depicts the landing of Pilgrims on Weymouth's shore in 1622. This is one of the most prominent buildings along the street after the Sacred Heart and South Shore Christian Academy buildings.

Photo: U.S. Post Office

Front Street – Seven of the homes along Front Street were identified in the Comprehensive Community-wide Survey Project prepared to catalog Weymouth's historic features. The Whittemore House, as the oldest in this group, is dated sometime prior to 1830.

Zoning and Development Potential

The Landing is zoned B-2, Business, but the MAPC Buildout Analysis did not identify any development potential in this area. However, redevelopment is possible and likely as a result of new development pressures starting after completion of the proposed Greenbush T Station. The limitations on development stem from the restrictions of the existing lots

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that form the basis for considering redevelopment; e.g., if the parcels are not large enough, parcels must be assembled in the right configuration to create a new project. Also restricting the development potential are the Landing's institutional uses. The Church of the Sacred Heart and Archdiocese of Boston properties are positioned on both sides of the intersection of Washington Street and Commercial Street. However, as noted, these provide a different type and level of activity that is complimentary to the village and neighborhood. In addition, they add a defining element on the north side of the Landing's commercial center.

One way to help strengthen the identity of the Landing is with reuse of the closed fire station at the corner of Washington and Broad Street. Because the fire station is closed, it suggests limited activity in the area to the casual viewer. However, the fire station presents itself in several directions, which if properly used could become a 'gateway event' that helps define the Landing on the southern side. If used as a community center, with programs for seniors, who live at the adjacent apartments, and programs for children from the nearby schools, activities here could add another beneficial element to population of the village.

Businesses and Land Values

The businesses along Washington Street vary from retail to service-related businesses. The retail operations vary from freestanding businesses using older and historic buildings, to the blocks of storefronts on the western side of Washington Street. Signage varies significantly such as the unique clock sign overhanging the sidewalk and the freestanding internally-lit sign at another business further south.

The boundary defining Weymouth Landing was shown in Figure II-3. The area includes forty-nine parcels, covering about 13.48 acres of privately held land. Typical of an older business or village area, the values are comparable with the other village areas of Weymouth. A comparison of all the village centers is included at the end of this section on the villages.

Table III-3. Average Land Values: Weymouth Landing

	Parcel size	Total	Total	Land-only	Land-only
Average	(SF)	value/parcel	value/SF	value	value/ SF
Mean	11,981	\$228,612	\$26.02	\$77,251	\$8.89
Median	9,857	\$208,800	\$20.13	\$78,000	\$7.32

Source: Town Assessor

D. Bicknell Square

Similar to conditions in Weymouth Landing, the vitality of Bicknell Square as a village commercial center is impacted by a major transportation route, Route 3A (Bridge Street). Bicknell has also been impacted by the auto-oriented commercial developments along Bridge Street to the east and west of the Square. The more intensive and active businesses in the area are situated along Route 3A within the Business zoning districts outside Bicknell Square. Still, the Square has the elements that have been successful in creating the other three village centers; e.g., a strong surrounding neighborhood, public open space

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and public uses, and a mix of different service and retail businesses. Consequently, along with the other villages, Bicknell is considered as a potential focus for business and social interaction (See Map III-4- Bicknell Square Opportunities and Constraints).

Influences

The Bicknell Square village is recognized in a different context from the other villages because it is zoned as a Neighborhood Commercial (NCD) rather than the Business zone; i.e., B-2, that has been applied to the three other villages. But the Square also has fewer commercial activities within the business district than the other village centers.

Useful facts: Bicknell Sq. Access
Regional Arterial: Route 3A
Local Collectors: Sea Street,
North Street

As in Weymouth Landing, Bicknell is significantly impacted by a major roadway, Route 3A, cutting through the village. Route 3A is the regional arterial connecting Weymouth to communities up and down the South Shore. However, the overall visual character of sidewalks, utility lines and poles, and the adjacent development on Route 3A is considered by many to be of low quality. Consequently, the influence of Route 3A is negative from the viewpoint of aesthetics and local circulation, but possibly beneficial with the high volumes of pass-by-traffic.

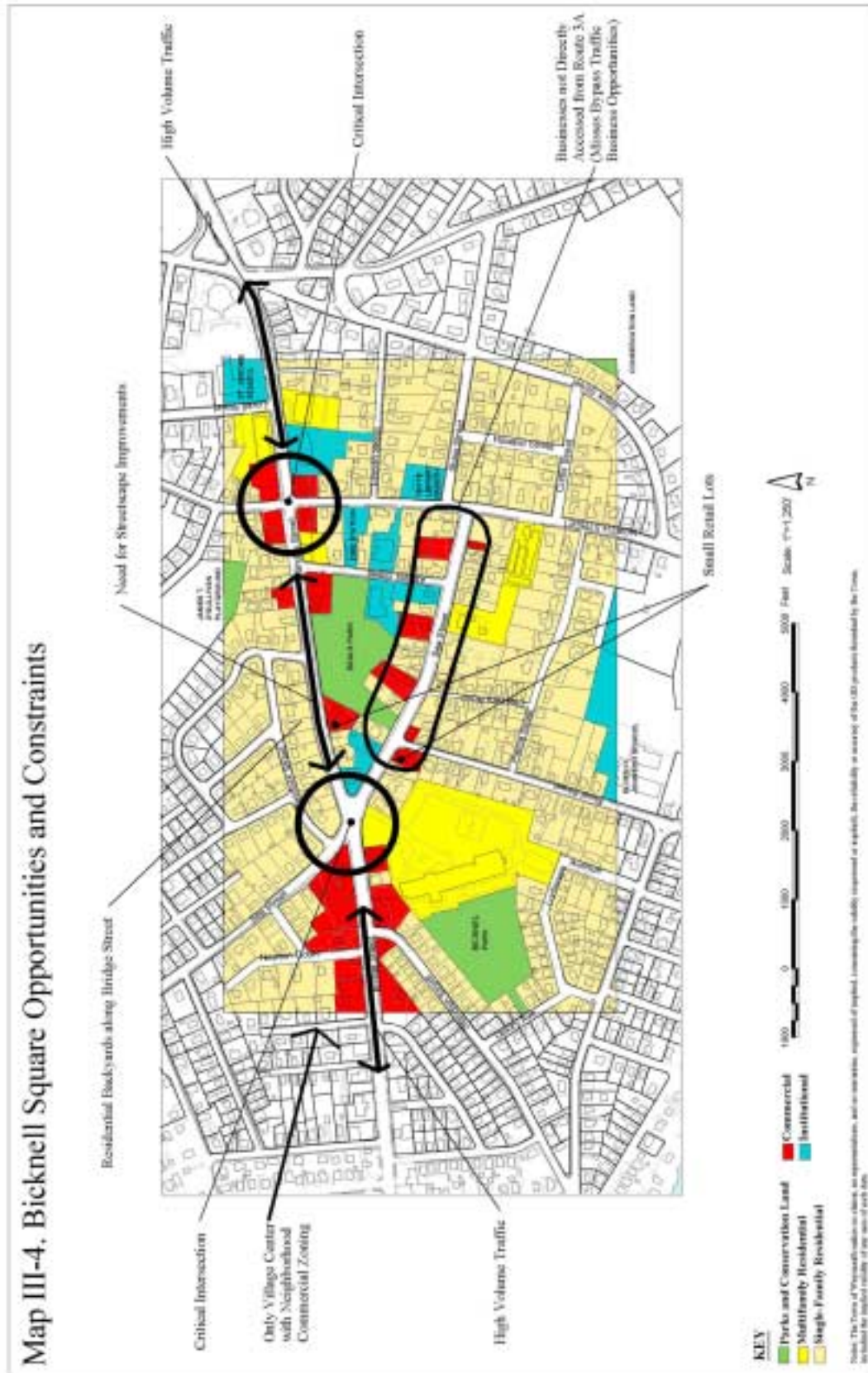
Useful facts: Major Public
Properties and Institutions
Beals Park
U.S. Post Office
Pilgrim Church
Fire Station
Tufts Library
James T. O'Sullivan Playground
Bicknell Junior High

Bicknell Square has all of the elements that help define the other villages; nearby public open space, public buildings, including a school, the surrounding, established residential area, and more than one major access road crossing the village. Supporting public policies designed to increase the vitality of the Square must take advantage of the traditional village elements and not be over-ridden by the influence of highway and auto-oriented design.

Zoning and Development Potential

Bicknell Square is zoned for commercial, but no new development was projected for Bicknell Square in the MAPC Buildout Analysis. In fact, the study indicated that Bicknell Square was predominantly a residential area. Interestingly, no significant development potential was identified in the buildout study for any of the other commercial areas of Bridge Street, either. However, the Harborlight Mall to the east of the Square is clearly under significant change with the proposed redevelopment of the existing shopping center. Under the right economic conditions, new use of the commercial-zoned properties in Bicknell Square is also a possibility. Consequently, real zoning controls for both design and use are needed to maintain the village qualities. More on zoning options is discussed in the Zoning section at the end of this chapter.

There are several ways to influence and encourage high-quality commercial development as well. Key for encouragement of new businesses would be for the Town to upgrade the streetscape with new sidewalks, sign controls, and removal of overhead utility lines. These actions would also show support to the residents of the area who expressed concern over the condition of some of their sidewalks and streets in the public meetings. More on streetscape improvements is included in the section on Zoning.



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Businesses and Land Values

The businesses at Bicknell Square are small retail and service operations with limited options for expansion on their existing lots. The boundary defining Bicknell Square for this planning project shown in Figure II-4 includes thirty-one parcels, covering about 7.7 acres of privately held land. Typical of an older business or village area, the values are comparable with the other village areas of Weymouth. A comparison of all the village centers is included in the next section.

Table III-4. Average Land Values: Bicknell Square

<u>Average</u>	Parcel size (SF)	Total value/parcel	Total value/SF	Land-only value	Land-only value/ SF
Mean	10,773	\$218,090	\$24.01	\$88,639	\$8.23
Median	9,528	\$205,800	\$20.78	\$93,200	\$9.78

Source: Town Assessor

E. Comparison of Village Land Values

There are some interesting observations to make about the land values from the four commercial Village Centers just reviewed. These values are culled from properties listed by the Town Assessor as commercial properties (codes C3 and C4). However, note that these values are collected from the *assessed* values as listed in the Assessor's records. Although they do not necessarily reflect current sales, the Town's assessments are based on previous sales of record, zoning, and existing land use, among other factors. So, the values listed tend to reflect a relative value for the purpose of municipal taxation. There are a few observations that could help shape discussions on public policy options in affecting change or providing support to each village area.

The dollar values in the tables are based on value per square foot of land area for the average parcel. This allows comparative analyses between the different village centers. In the chart below, and as listed in the sections above, there are columns for Total Value and Land Value. The difference between Total Value, which includes both the land and building values, and Land Value, which gives the value of the land alone without the building improvements, gives a sense of the value of the improvements on the property. Comparing land values provides a more accurate comparison of the relative value of the particular location regardless of the improvements.

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Table III-5. Comparison of Land Values of the Village Centers

	Total value/ sq.ft.	Land value/ sq.ft.	Number of parcels	Total area (acres)
Columbian Square				
Mean	\$20.47	\$6.72	23	7.3
Median	\$23.30	\$7.51		
Jackson Square				
Mean	\$19.15	\$6.92	55	11.8
Median	\$21.99	\$9.11		
Weymouth Landing				
Mean	\$19.08	\$6.45	49	13.5
Median	\$21.18	\$7.91		
Bicknell Square				
Mean	\$20.24	\$8.23	24	6.7
Median	\$21.60	\$9.78		

Notes: The above information was taken from the Town Assessor's records. Total values should also be considered when fully comparing properties. Mean is the mathematical average. Median is the middle value of the range.

In summary, the villages have some distinctly different valuations.

- Though land values are fairly consistent within the other village centers, Columbian Square has a significantly higher average total value than the other three squares. This may be partially a result of the high level of commercial activity there.
- Of particular interest is that the next highest total property value and the highest *land* value area is Bicknell Square which implies that some of the highest value village commercial properties are found in this vicinity. This is interesting in that the square as a village center is not considered as successful as the other four areas. However, Route 3A provides a high volume of traffic that may provide support to the businesses in terms of volume of customers.
- Washington Street, Route 53/18 has not had the same affect on Weymouth Landing. The Landing has the lowest values of the four village areas. This suggests that if public policies are to be instituted to maintain all the villages, a significant effort must be made in support of the Landing.
- Jackson Square seems to have a strong market, where the appraised land values are reflective of actual sales and business activity.

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VILLAGE CENTERS: RECOMMENDATIONS

To review, there are different conditions found in each village area, and they require different actions to ensure their long-term viability and vitality. Below are summary comments on the recommendations for each of the villages. The recommendations include both public sector actions, typically for infrastructure improvements, and private sector actions, which include compliance with the defined zoning standards for redevelopment. The villages will also benefit from the Town-wide strategies for traffic management, land use and other recommendations included in this Plan.

A. Colombian Square

Colombian Square is considered one of the more successful and stable village business centers in Town. The village can nevertheless benefit from two key improvements. **Reconstruction of the main intersection in the Square should receive highest priority to make it safer and easier to cross and improve the image of this central location.** This recommendation has been the subject of a special study that is included at the end of this chapter. **Secondly, the Town should proceed with a redevelopment initiative for the reuse the Fire Station.** If feasible, reuse of the Fire Station as a community center would provide an important amenity that would expand the activity and vitality of the Square. As an alternative, it could be offered for sale for other uses that would be compatible with community goals. Such a sale could raise funds that could help offset costs of the improvements to the intersection.

B. Bicknell Square

Bicknell Square has distinct land use issues because it is zoned Neighborhood Commercial, while the other village areas are zoned Business, B-2. However, Bicknell Square is adjacent to Route 3A/Bridge Street and is accessible from a regional arterial, and so could reasonably attract a significant volume of pass-by traffic. **Bicknell Square should be supported with a revised Neighborhood or Village Commercial zoning district that recognizes its strategic location and establishes standards that will preserve the village character.** This is especially important in light of the alternative potential for large footprint, “big box” or mall-type development within the area, such as the Harborlight Mall. This type of development would have negative traffic impacts and erode the village qualities, contradicting the Plan’s Goals and Objectives.

The other recommendation is to **initiate streetscape improvements including sidewalk, landscape, and signage improvements. This should include placing utility lines underground, on Bridge Street at Bicknell Square.** This effort will reinforce the positive investment climate and civic qualities of the Square, and can be followed with further improvements along Bridge Street.

C. Weymouth Landing

The traffic congestion and image of Washington Street/Route 53/Route18 detract from Weymouth Landing as a village center. This means that if public policies are to be

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

instituted to maintain all the villages, a significant effort must be made in support of the Landing. There are three possible actions.

The first is to reinforce the attractiveness and access to the village center for neighborhood residents. This can be accomplished, in part, by the **reuse of the Fire Station at the corner of Broad Street as an active community center and a defining ‘gateway’** to the Landing. Providing activities for neighborhood residents will reinforce the activity within the village and expand its civic identity. Town commitment to reuse the building will also convey a commitment to the success of the village. In addition, **Weston Park should be improved to provide an easy pedestrian connection to the businesses on Washington Street.**

The potential addition of the Greenbush line station creates related potential to realize positive changes within the village center, and results in two other major recommendations for Weymouth Landing. **Infrastructure and access improvements associated with the MBTA station should be designed to reinforce the pedestrian character of the village center, as well as directly serving commuter rail patrons.** This means creating safe pedestrian connections across Washington Street with crosswalks and signal timing that allow easy crossing movements for all people. **The closure of Commercial Street associated with the MBTA project could provide a significant area of public land to create a pedestrian mall.** The linkage of this location to a bikeway along Commercial Street could provides access for school children, an alternate access connection to the ‘T’ station, and a possible connection to the coastal area for recreation.

D. Jackson Square

Jackson Square is a diverse commercial area with many different business types and a diverse pattern of streets and parcels for that have been developed. It appears to maintain a high level of commercial activity. The addition of the MBTA station will have a significant impact by further increasing the general level of activity in the Square. The potential benefit of increased activity could be more business for the retailers and service businesses catering to the needs of commuters using the train. **Infrastructure and access improvements associated with the MBTA station should be made with the village as a focus.** This should ensure that any traffic congestion into the ‘T’ parking area does not create a back up into the Square. Connections to the businesses should be indicated with signage and access design. In addition, the off-peak use of the parking area should be permitted by the MBTA as part of the mitigation package for patrons of local businesses and visitors to the nearby environmental resource areas. **In addition, the zoning should be reviewed to ensure that the related supporting businesses could be developed under the zoning.** However, the zoning should be structured to reinforce the village scale and character through design guidelines and other measures. This can be achieved in part by applying Neighborhood Commercial District Zoning to land along Broad Street and outside of the Jackson Square. This concept is discussed in more detail as part of the Zoning section in this chapter.

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NEIGHBORHOODS AND DISTRICTS

Neighborhoods are geographically defined districts that are predominately residential in character and provide a sense of connection and identity. They range from a small cluster of homes along a street, to large areas that have developed an identity over time. There are several of these large areas identified as key neighborhoods within Weymouth for the purposes of planning, including:

- North Weymouth
- East Weymouth; including the Birches and Weymouth Heights
- Weymouth Landing; including Idlewell and Homestead
- South Weymouth; including Pond Plain and Pine Grove

A. North Weymouth

North Weymouth is strongly defined by its well-established residential neighborhoods and its relationship to the coastal edges to the east, north and west. This section of Weymouth has the most limited potential for new single-family housing development compared to all the other residential areas (source: MAPC Buildout Study). The planning focus, therefore, is largely on steps that will reinforce the value and quality of the neighborhood. Planning also recognizes the Town-wide opportunities for access to open spaces along the coast.

On average, properties in North Weymouth are typical of an older, established residential area. The homes are built on cottage-sized lots ranging up to one-quarter acre, but exhibit a fairly high property value, presumably influenced by the coastal views and access afforded to these neighborhood areas. This residential area holds some of the most

Useful Facts: Property Characteristics in North Weymouth

Average parcel size	11,360 sq. ft.
Mean parcel value	\$ 160,307
Median parcel value	\$ 134,700

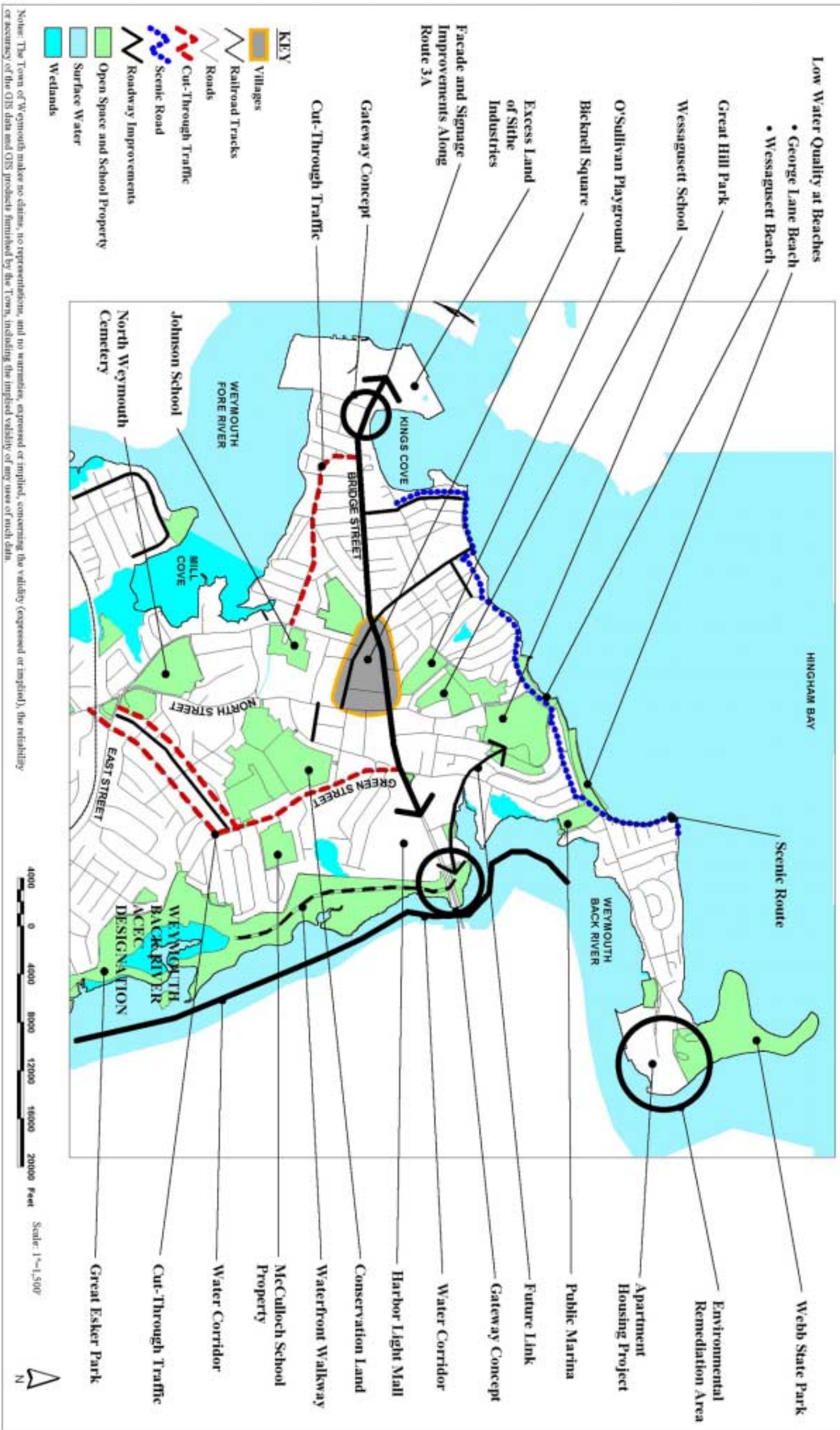
important open space and recreation land in Town – the coastal waterfront public lands.

North Weymouth's western waterfront is defined by the Fore River, which includes the active Mill Cove area, Kings Cove and Hingham Bay. Important components of this portion of the neighborhood are the Sithe company parcels, which are separately discussed in the Waterfront section and in a special focus study later in this chapter.

In contrast to the industrial and residential areas lining the Fore River, the eastern waterfront formed by the Back River below Route 3A is edged by Weymouth's Great Esker Park and Hingham's Bare Cove Park. These areas are included in the Back River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

North from there, the river wraps around Eastern Neck before also emptying into Hingham Bay. The district's northern waterfront stretches along a northeastern line from Kings Cove and is lined with residential areas, beaches and other public park lands including Wessagussett and George Lane Beaches, Great Hill Park, Abigail Adams Park and Webb Park, all of which add to the public experience of the coastal environment. Direct pedestrian and bicycle connections between these parks would be a desirable amenity for the Town, but have not yet been fully developed.

Map III-5. North Weymouth: Opportunities and Constraints



Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

Opportunities and Constraints

The planning opportunities and problems assigned to North Weymouth in this planning process are shown on Map III-5-North Weymouth Opportunities and Constraints. They represent the accumulation of input that has been translated into evaluation and ideas for improvement. Key issues are discussed below.

Transportation

Many of the problems confronting North Weymouth stem from the restrictions placed on the internal circulation networks by Route 3A. Bridge Street/Route 3A provides excellent regional access to areas along the South Shore from Weymouth. However, it also creates a significant impediment to intra-neighborhood movement within North Weymouth for all modes of travel. Congestion on Bridge Street places limitations on movement within the neighborhood and plays an instrumental role in making the following notable problems on connecting side streets:

<i>Useful Facts:</i> North Weymouth Access Regional Arterial: Route 3A Local Collectors: North Street, Green Street, Evans Street, River Street, Neck Street, Sea Street
--

- Green Street from East Street to Bridge Street, acting as a local collector, carries heavy traffic from the south and the neighborhoods surrounding it, to and from the south end of Bridge Street.
- In a similar fashion, Evans Street, from Pearl Street to Bridge Street, serves as a collector and allows bypass traffic to and from the north end of Bridge Street.
- At the convergence of Neck Street and Green Street with Bridge Street, the reported traffic problems are so significant that the local businesses feel something must be done to better organize the traffic flow.

One of the most common themes heard throughout this planning effort was the need for visual improvements to Bridge Street. These improvements should include upgrading sidewalks, road signage and lighting, and landscaping. Other beneficial changes could be made to the businesses that line the street including façade improvements, cleanliness of properties and signage, and the removal of billboards that dominate the townscape.

Open Space and Recreation

An important asset for North Weymouth is the scenic waterfront route along Ocean Street, Regatta Road and Fort Point Street from Bridge Street to Fort Point. This coastal route adds to the overall sense of connection to the waterfront and provides another important recreational opportunity for pedestrians, bicyclists and ‘Sunday drivers’. In addition, the parks are numerous and well enjoyed by the residents and visitors alike.

Several actions could add to the full enjoyment of these areas:

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- Overall, the park maintenance needs to be improved;
- Webb Park requires environmental remediation from the soil contamination created by the previous industrial use at the point;
- The parks are relatively close to each other but are not physically connected for easy bicycle and pedestrian access;
- The public marina is heavily used, which suggests that additional boat access is needed;
- In addition, stormwater events have been regularly causing the closure of the beaches due to contamination (coliform bacteria counts) and needs to be addressed (see section below on Waterfront).

Land Use

Two proposed and potential development sites will significantly affect the future of the area. A redevelopment plan for Harborlight Mall submitted to the Town proposes substantial changes to this commercial property. Improvements proposed for this location will establish an entrance gateway into the Town from the east. The proposed and potential new businesses will attract additional traffic to the area.

At the other end of Bridge Street is the Sithe property, straddling the west entrance to Weymouth. The southern half of the property is undergoing redevelopment for a new power plant. The northern half is being developed as the site of a new MWRA pump station, but will also provide a significant area for new water-dependent uses linked to the coastal location, including public access.

Both the Harborlight Mall and the Sithe company properties also represent obvious locations for potential gateways to define the entrance into North Weymouth.

Housing

As a fully developed area with relatively high average property values, the options for new affordable housing are limited in this portion of Town, except under redevelopment plans that could include affordable units as a regulatory requirement if the Town adopts and inclusionary housing ordinance. Redevelopment may change certain characteristics of the areas.

Two strategies are possible to address the housing needs. One is the use of the commercial zoned properties in place of higher traffic generating uses on those same lands. The other is allowance for accessory apartments within existing structures. This means that small additional units could be added to existing homes without increasing lot area. Neither option is expected to provide significant improvements to the availability of affordable units, but could provide some increase in smaller rental units.

North Weymouth has one public housing site, Cadman Towers. Originally built with 71 units, it is presently under rehabilitation with funds only available to redevelop 30 units.

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B. East Weymouth

Property characteristics in the central areas of Weymouth include a high number of relatively small lots of about one-quarter acre, with values from the Assessor's records close to the median value for the area. These figures also apply to the Weymouth Landing residential areas discussed in the next section.

Useful Facts: Property Characteristics in
East Weymouth/Weymouth Landing
Average parcel size: 10,660 sq.ft.
in 1367 parcels
Mean parcel value: \$ 142,651
Median Parcel value: \$ 137,000

East Weymouth displays the characteristics typical of older residential neighborhoods. The infrastructure provided by the Town's sewer and water systems allow relatively small lot sizes that would not typically be allowed in newer residential developments.

Within East Weymouth are a notable concentration of natural resources, cultural resources, commercial districts, transportation options, recreational areas and government offices. These important resources include the historic district along Broad Street, historic buildings at Central Square, and historic sites. Adjacent to Jackson Square is proposed the new MBTA station. The complex of Town Hall, Veterans Memorial Wall, Cross of Grey and Ralph Talbot Amphitheater, which all add to the Civic Center Historic District, is a center of community resources and activities. Whitman's Pond and its connecting rivers and streams are environmental resources with town-wide importance. The southern part of this waterways system is now the proposed location for restoring a Town water supply well and bringing it on line to meet the Town's projected needs.

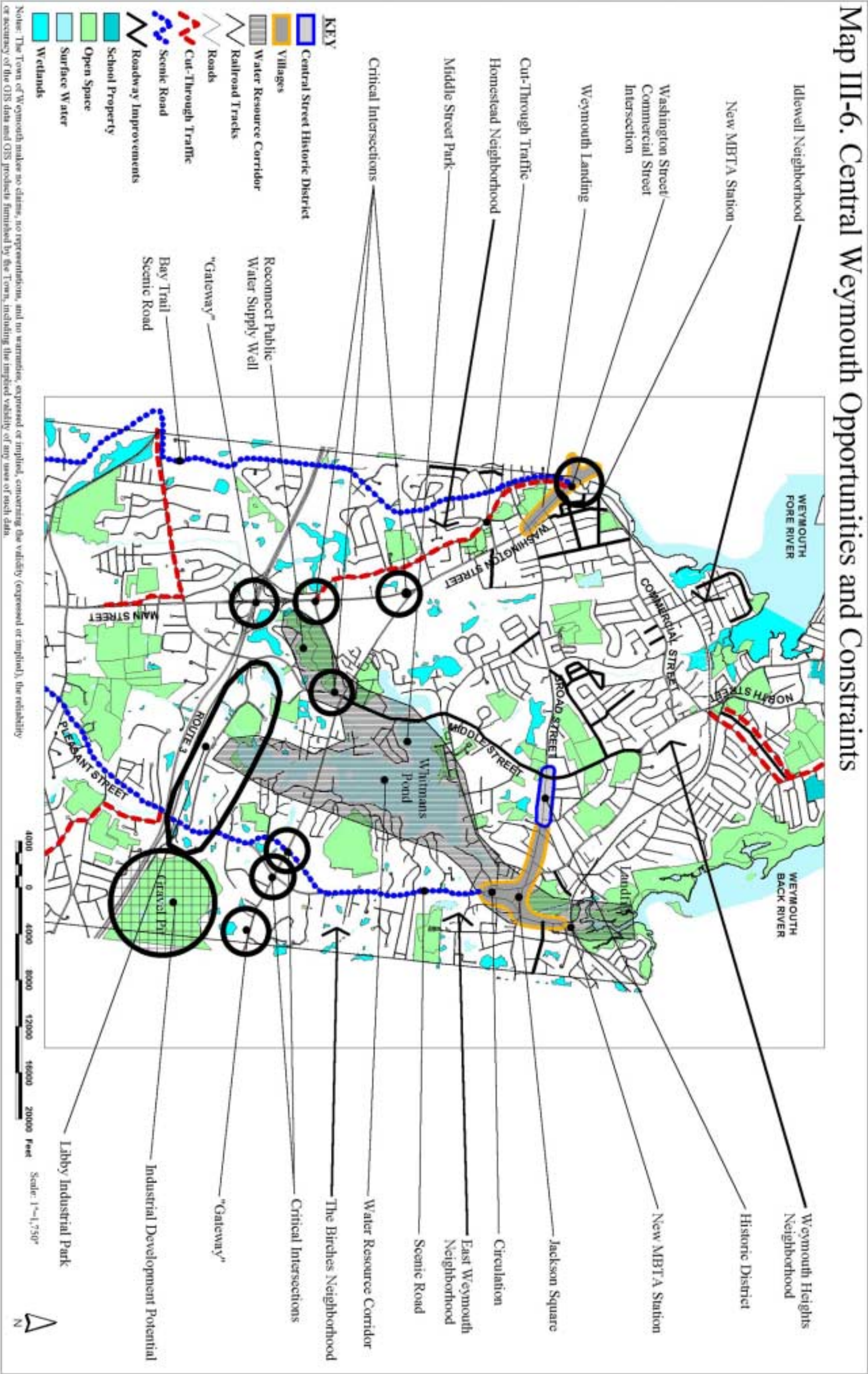
Opportunities and Constraints

Several useful evaluations applicable to East Weymouth in this planning process are shown on Map III-6 Central Weymouth Opportunities and Constraints. They represent observations that have led to ideas for improvement. Key issues that have been the focus of planning are discussed below.

Transportation

The major roadways providing connections throughout East Weymouth include Washington Street/Route 53 and Route 18, Pleasant Street, Middle Street and Broad Street. These roads provide a high degree of relatively easy access. In addition to these vehicular connections is the proposed Greenbush line that would provide easy regional access in addition to Route 3. Consequently, East Weymouth could easily become a central focus for future redevelopment in Town.

Useful Facts: East Weymouth
Access
Regional Arterial - Washington
Street/ Route 53 and 18
Collectors -Pleasant Street, Middle
Street, Broad Street



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One aspect of the major collector roads in the area is the excessive width of paved area in some locations. Pleasant Street, Commercial Street and Middle Street were widened many decades ago by the Town. Restriping can be employed to improve the circulation patterns. These roads can easily be relined to provide substantial bicycle lanes connecting the Town's neighborhoods. The Town Highway Department is currently providing painted lines on Middle Street to control and direct the travel lanes and improve conditions on this street.

Open Space and Natural Resources

Natural resource issues and their resolution are a focus of planning for the future character of East Weymouth. East Weymouth includes some of the Town's best inland water resource areas. These resources support active recreation and the herring run, a portion of the Town water supply, and a natural drainage corridor with high resource values.

Whitman's Pond lies centrally within a drainage system that extends to the existing Town water supply wells in the south and to the Area of Critical Environmental Concern in the north. As a result, this area rivals Great Pond in importance as a natural resource and provides recreational opportunities that are not available at Great Pond. While the potential for additional water supply is being realized now, the options for additional recreational opportunities along those same waterways should not be missed, so long as the important natural functions and values are protected.

With a relative lack of open public land and park areas as compared to other neighborhoods of Weymouth, these water resource areas become critical to the quality of life in this area. Consequently, programs developed for protecting and restoring water quality in the pond and stream complex, and eliminating point source discharges into the wetland resource areas are important to the region's environmental health. The multiple values that the natural resources provide include flood storage, wildlife corridors, and pollution attenuation, as well as recreational opportunities.

Also to consider are coastal access points that connect the neighborhoods to the Back River. The MBTA line will change access points, but the Town-held property on the upper Back River and access through East and Wharf streets provide a direct link with Great Esker Park, which could help Jackson Square as well as the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods. Access to the herring run is another opportunity to increase historic, recreational activities.

Land Use

The sites with the most significant development potential within the Town of Weymouth, other than the Naval Air Station, are located in East Weymouth. One such property is the quarry, which is located in an industrial zoning district. The other is Libbey Industrial Park, which lies within the Planned Office Park zoning district. Development within these properties will be highly visible to the people travelling on Route 3. Immediate and long-term development within this area could have both a positive fiscal impact supportive of the tax base as well as significant visual impacts along the Town's Route 3 'face'.

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The MAPC Buildout Study suggested that up to 1 million square feet of commercial space could be developed in the Libbey Industrial Park and that the industrial zoned area has a potential for several million square feet of additional commercial space. A problem with this development scenario is that neither property has direct access to Route 3 within Weymouth, which places all of the traffic generated by these projects onto internal Town roads. Concepts to deal with the potential traffic are included at the end of this section.

Housing

Relatively substantial land area is still available within East Weymouth for new housing development. This would allow the application of mandatory, affordable housing requirements onto the projects that move forward. This type of regulation requiring affordable housing is also called inclusionary zoning. The reason mandatory requirements are suggested is that voluntary standards have not been found to be effective in increasing affordable housing.

East Weymouth holds three of the Town's five public housing developments, Lakeview Manor Tenant's Association with 208 family units, Pope Towers with 60 units, and Pleasantville with 40 units. There are also CDBG target areas that allow the Town to apply federal funds towards affordable housing in these areas.

C. Weymouth Landing Neighborhood

The Weymouth Landing neighborhood, as defined for the purposes of this planning effort, is the area extending southward from Mill Cove and Idlewell through the Homestead area to Route 3. While the area does not include a high proportion of open space, it does contain a particularly valuable riverfront area along the Fore River. Several of the Town's noted historic homes can also be found in this area, particularly along Front Street.

Weymouth Landing also has the largest relative percentage of commercially zoned properties in Town. It has also been reported to be one of the busiest business districts in the region. However, the high level of business activity puts pressure on the adjacent residential neighborhoods and strains the relationship between them.

Opportunities and Constraints

The issues within East Weymouth can be organized as opportunities and constraints and shown on Map III-6 Central Weymouth Opportunities and Constraints. They have been assembled from site observations, meetings and discussions with the community and Town staff. Key issues for Weymouth Landing are discussed below.

Transportation

Washington Street/Route 53 and Main Street/Route 18 converge in East Weymouth, creating one of the busiest traffic areas in Weymouth, with all of the attendant problems as well as business opportunities. Cut-through traffic is intense along Front Street and Summer Street because they parallel Route 53 and Route 18 and can be easily reached when traffic along Washington Street or Main Street is perceived as too congested.

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Consequently, the Homestead residential area is subjected to continuous by-pass traffic. This additional traffic negatively impacts the scenic and historic values of Summer Street and Front Street.

Open Space and Recreation

Improving access to the Fore River and Mill Cove was a common hope raised during discussions with the residents. However, several actions have been taken to ensure public access to these resources. The proposed 'T' station and Greenbush line will bring additional access by transit and associated opportunities and potential problems. In their role to establish the best position for the Town regarding the proposed Greenbush Line improvements, the Weymouth Mitigation Committee is actively pushing for waterfront access at the Weymouth Landing "T" Station.

Further down river, the Sithe Energy Company properties on the riverfront will be providing public access to the waterfront to King's Cove on the North side parcel and to Lovell's Grove on the south side. This access will include waterfront parks, walking paths and fishing points. A more detailed analysis of these and other opportunities at the Sithe company properties is included in the Implementation Chapter of this report.

Land Use

One of the most significant potential development impacts in Weymouth Landing could have come from the commercially zoned (Business and Planned Office Park) areas that lie north of and along Route 53, north of the intersection with Main Street. The estimates of buildout by the MAPC suggested this 57-acre area could have been developed for some 800,000 sq.ft. of commercial space in the planned office park district. However, as of August of this year, this parcel has been approved for a mixed rate and affordable 304-unit apartment building complex permitted under the State Chapter 40B process.

The area north of Route 3 also has large residential zones that could be developed more intensively. They are presently zoned for single family units and are not considered adverse to the Town's interests. However, these areas could also provide some of the open space and recreation areas that would balance the needs of this area of Weymouth.

Housing

The Landing has an affordable housing project under way with the 304-unit Avalon project off of Washington Street. There are other options for potential market-rate housing development south of the Landing and adjacent to Route 3. This second land parcel holds some wetland resource areas that would be better protected with a cluster development plan. Any of the sites could potentially provide reasonable options for inclusionary affordable housing projects that would expand the supply of affordable housing in Weymouth.

An existing public housing development, Joseph Crehen Elderly housing is located in this area. It is a 156-unit facility for the elderly and disabled. Additional discussion on the Housing Authority's developments can be found at the end of this chapter.

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D. South Weymouth

For this planning process, the area of Weymouth south of Route 3 is considered as South Weymouth. Not only is this area the largest of the four neighborhood districts, it also faces the largest potential impacts associated with development. The redevelopment of the Naval Air Station is not only the most significant development proposal in terms of local impacts, but is potentially the most important project of regional importance along the South Shore.

The typical residential lot in South Weymouth is slightly over one-quarter acre according to the Assessor's records, with a value comparable to the region.

Opportunities and Constraints

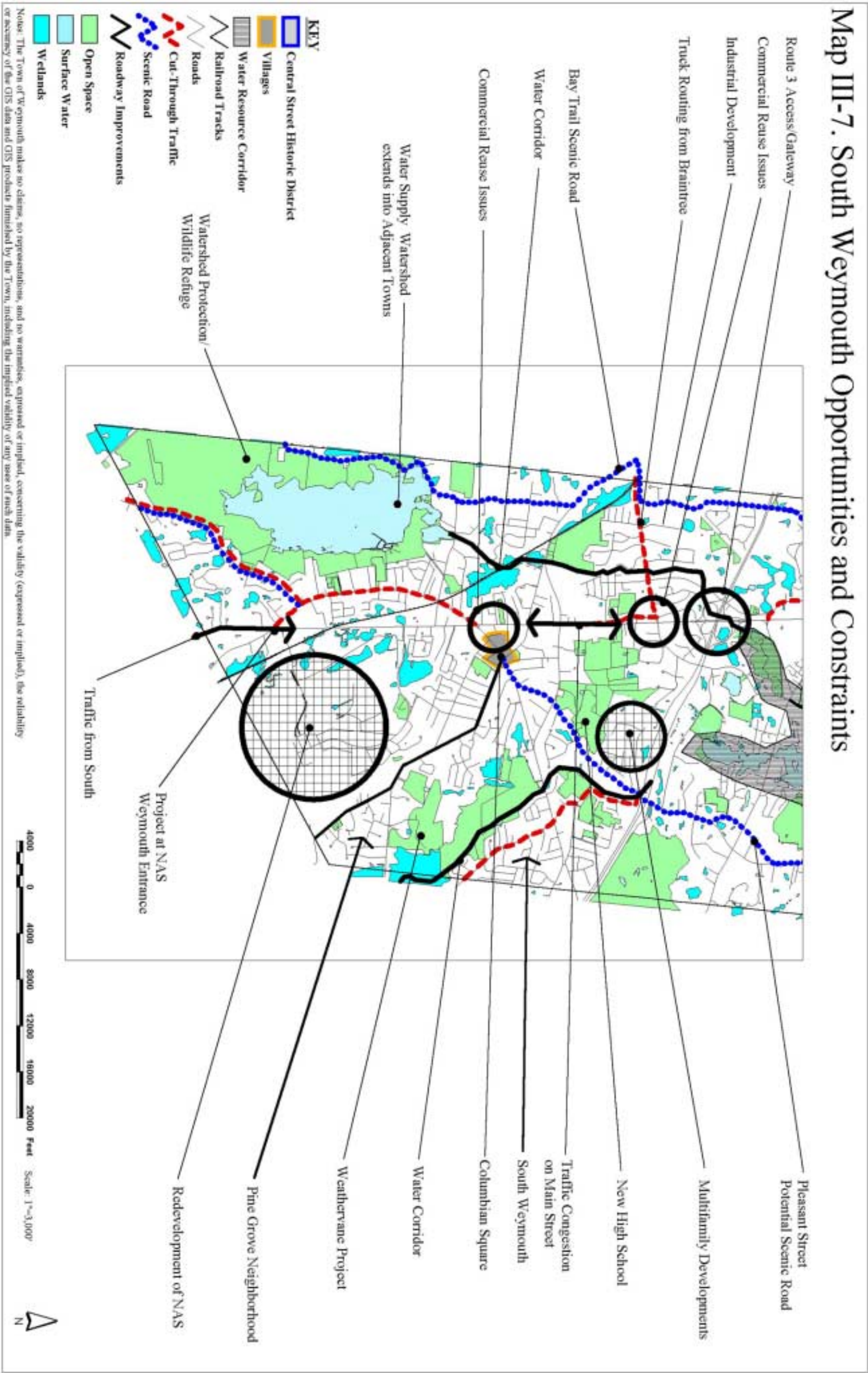
Some of the key opportunities and constraints identified as important to the South Weymouth area are shown on Map III-7- South Weymouth Opportunities and Constraints. These ideas have been taken into account in the discussion of key issues for South Weymouth that are discussed below.

<i>Useful Facts:</i> Property Characteristics of South Weymouth Average parcel size: 14,732 sq.ft. in 3,626 parcels Mean parcel value: \$ 156,044 Median land value/sq.ft. \$ 137,48

Transportation

The major issues for South Weymouth's traffic flow stem from Main Street/Route 18, with its frequent congestion and cut-through traffic using the side streets to bypass this congestion. Through traffic creates certain conflicts in the residential neighborhood areas:

- Traffic from Abington moves along Thicket Street and along Pond Street as north and south alternatives to Main Street (Route 18).
- Through traffic, including trucks come in from Braintree onto West Street and run the east- west route to access the entrance to Route 3 at Main Street.
- The short length of Front Street that parallels Route 18 is used for even short movements to bypass traffic backed up at the West Street and Middle Street traffic lights.
- Truck traffic also uses Pleasant Street and Ralph Talbot to access Route 3 at the Derby Street exit in Hingham.



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Some relief is possible from the widening of Route 18, which was recently started by the State Highway Department. However, some peak hour congestion will still occur after this project is complete. In addition, further commercial development in South Weymouth and the adjoining towns will continue to increase the traffic accessing these roads. The most significant traffic impacts may result from the uses that are developed within the Naval Air Station. This issue is further discussed in the section of this chapter on the Naval Air Station.

Open Space and Natural Resources

Even though South Weymouth has the greatest relative percentage of open space compared to the other three neighborhood districts, access to open space is limited. This is because the majority of land is within the Great Pond, which is protected as a public water supply.

The importance of protecting the Town's water supply in Great Pond is a significant constraint on development in the surrounding neighborhood. But, by providing the highest level of protection, the Town is also providing itself with the greatest opportunity to protect its investment and control costs on maintaining and treating its water supply.

Land Use

Based on the zoning and available land area, the greatest amount of new residential development for the Town is possible within South Weymouth. This includes new senior and other housing combined with the existing Coast Guard housing along the north central border area within the Naval Air Station boundary. In addition, the Weathervane project off the Old Swamp River, as a residential subdivision and golf course project, provides a unique new housing product for Weymouth. With new residential development comes a new demography of residents. Consequently, South Weymouth's neighborhoods will experience the most significant change of any neighborhood in Town.

The significant change proposed in the redevelopment of the Naval Air Station was planned through the efforts of the towns of Weymouth, Rockland and Abington in the Naval Air Station Planning Committee and the resulting Reuse Plan is to be implemented by the Tri-Town Development Corporation. The development of this project is programmed to provide as many benefits as possible to the towns. Consequently, mitigation is programmed in as a necessary part of this project.

Housing

There are no current public housing developments existing in South Weymouth. However, the proposed NAS housing project segment could significantly increase the supply of affordable units for the elderly with its proposed 500-700 units. The Reuse Plan also includes up to 100,000 sq.ft. of institutional (homeless) housing.

In addition, there are significant areas of residential land with development potential as determined by the MAPC Buildout study. The creation and application of an inclusionary housing ordinance to the development of these lands could also ensure an equitable distribution of affordable units within all the neighborhoods.

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E. Comparison of Residential Property Values

As with the commercial village centers, a comparison of sizes and values for the residential areas provides a relative indication of certain characteristics that may have implications for public policies. The properties included in these analyses are properties denoted as 'C1' single-family residential properties. Consequently, not all residential properties are included. However, with the majority of land use taken up by single-family dwellings, this provides a basis for further discussion.

Table. III-6 Comparison of Residential Property Values

	Average parcel size	Mean parcel value	Median value
North Weymouth	11,360 sq.ft. 2,881 parcels	\$ 160,307	\$ 134,700
Central Weymouth	10,660 sq.ft. 1,367 parcels	\$ 142,651	\$ 137,900
South Weymouth	14,732 sq.ft. 3,626 parcels	\$ 156,044	\$ 137,482

The information shows some interesting comparisons. The oldest areas of a community typically have the smallest lot sizes, which would make Central Weymouth the heart of the community. In comparison, the larger lot sizes in South Weymouth are indicative of two things. The first is that within South Weymouth are the Town's newest residential areas, which are typically on larger lots. With larger lots, the potential impact on the water supply is more limited. The highest average (mean) parcel value in North Weymouth may be skewed by the high value of coastal properties.

NEIGHBORHOOD AND DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the information summarized above, there are several opportunities to enhance the quality of life and the future of these neighborhoods. These opportunities are addressed in this section as recommendations for improvements and actions in a number of areas:

- Transportation
- Open Space and Recreation
- Land Use
- Housing
- Capital Program Implications

A. North Weymouth

Policies and actions must recognize that access to open spaces along the coast in North Weymouth makes it an important area for the whole Town. An important property exists on the Sithe company land, which is described later in the Waterfront and Focus Studies sections in this chapter.

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

Transportation Recommendations

Many of the problems confronting North Weymouth stem from the impact of Route 3A. The single most effective strategy for improvement of traffic congestion would be to initiate the MBTA's Greenbush rail line as a way to remove additional automobile commuters from this coastal area.

Because of the proximity of the school and the potential for more access at the Sithe property, a safe pedestrian crossing should be provided at the Evans and Bridge streets intersection. In addition, although reconstructed several years ago, the Neck Street and Green Street intersection with Bridge Street should again be reviewed for consideration on additional traffic controls.

Bridge Street improvements should also include upgrading sidewalks, road signage, lighting, and landscaping. For the businesses that line the street, improvements should include façade improvements, cleaning of properties and upgrades in signage, particularly the removal of billboards. The increase in property values from the private improvements could provide increased tax revenues to the Town to help support the project.

Open Space and Recreation Recommendations

The importance of the coastal resources in North Weymouth suggest that certain actions be taken to improve public access to the coastline:

- Park maintenance and security needs to be improved. The public land management options, discussed in the Public Lands section of this chapter include development of specific management plans and an adopt-a-park program to assist in oversight and maintenance;
- Pedestrian/bicycle links should be developed between Great Esker, Abigail Adams, Great Hill Park and the beaches. Another link would run from Beals and Sullivan parks through the Wessagussett school property and also to the Great Hill Park and lower beaches;
- Additional boat access is needed to relieve the burden on the public marina. Several options are available at the public parks and the Sithe / Edgar Station property;
- Links between the open space parcels should be provided with every redevelopment project near the coast. As an example, a connection between Abigail Adams Park and Great Esker Park is being negotiated now as part of the Harborlight Mall redevelopment project.

In addition, water resource protection strategies need to be developed including means to address coastal pollution and beach closures. The water resource policies are discussed under the Waterfront section below.

Land Use Recommendations

Two proposed and potential development projects will significantly impact the area. A redevelopment plan for Harborlight Mall submitted to the Town proposes demolition of

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

the old mall and reconstruction of a new 264,000 sq.ft. shopping center. At the same time, the Sithe property reuse plan is also under discussion. 'Gateways' within the community should be established through site planning and landscape treatments at both ends of Bridge Street as part of these projects. These could be conditions on development approvals for the redevelopment projects. Both the Harborlight Mall and the Sithe company properties are locations for potential gateways to define and announce the entrance into North Weymouth.

A two-stage strategy for streetscape improvements should be undertaken along Bridge Street. First, streetscape along Bridge Street between North and Sea streets should be designed and implemented to improve the visual quality of the village center. This will support Bicknell Square as part of the overall economic development and village preservation strategy. A second phase would extend streetscape improvements along Bridge Street.

Housing Recommendations

In an area that has been previously built out, the options for new or expanded housing are limited. The options are in redevelopment and additions to existing structures. Redevelopment projects can create more significant change in established neighborhoods. Additions and accessory units within existing properties then become reasonable options to consider.

Zoning should be revised to allow accessory apartments for any existing dwelling unit that can meet building code standards, including an allowance for the extension of the structure. The improvement in property values will ensure the tax base is sufficiently expanded. With fewer children in these smaller units, their value should provide reasonable tax balance to their demand in services. Control of the quality of construction and layout through building code and zoning controls can help ensure that the living conditions are acceptable, and the impacts to the neighborhood are also acceptable.

In addition, for the potential new projects, the Town should adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance that will require all new residential development above a certain scale to include 10% of the units to be subsidized for low income and another 10% to meet the median income standards based on the Governor's Executive Order 418. At present growth rates this would add approximately 8 to 10 low-income units and 8 to 10 medium income units per year within the community as a whole.

Capital Program Implications

Capital program needs are significant, although some of the costs may be shared with private developers and landowners. The program includes the streetscape improvements for Bridge Street, intersection improvements for the collector roads, and investment in coastal access ways. Because of the potential improvement in business activity along Bridge Street and within Bicknell Square, the streetscape improvements are considered a first priority. There are several ways in which these improvements could be phased. The planning for these improvements needs to take into account the high cost of some elements. The construction costs for moving utility lines or placing them underground, for example, could be approximately \$1 million per road mile.

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B. East Weymouth

East Weymouth contains a variety of planning issues and opportunities associated with historic sites, natural resources, commercial districts, transportation options, recreational areas and government offices. The following discussion suggests that new development might be best accomplished by concentrating change in designated areas and protecting the valuable resources that already exist. The focus of development should be around the village center of Jackson Square.

Transportation Recommendations

Broad Street traffic will increase when the Greenbush rail is developed because of commuters using this route. This, in turn, could negatively impact the historic district located along Broad Street if road improvements are necessary to accommodate the change in traffic. Essex, Lake and Commercial streets will also collect some of the traffic accessing the rail stations in Weymouth. The Town policies should seek to preserve the historic nature of the buildings and landscape values over the widening of roads necessary to accommodate traffic volumes.

The width of the pavement is an opportunity along some roads to provide bicycle lanes. Painted lines should be added to the pavement along the sides of Pleasant Street, Commercial Street and Middle Street (partly in progress) to provide bicycle lanes connecting the Town's neighborhoods.

Open Space and Natural Resources Recommendations

Water Resource Policies

Generally, water resource policies and programs are needed to maintain and restore degraded waters. For the Whitman's Pond complex of water resources, including the existing Town water supply wells in the south and the Area of Critical Environmental Concern in the north, the Town should apply water resource protection policies that address the condition and potential impacts to those waters.

Testing and Analysis

Understanding the resources allows better-informed decision-making on ways to manage them. Regular water quality testing, including within the adjacent stormwater drainage system can help pinpoint the sources of pollution that causes the closure of beaches and swimming areas, or otherwise degrades the resource values. The water quality testing reported by the Whitman's Pond Study Committee should be continued under a "Pond Watch" program carried out by citizen participants.

Best Management Practices

The State Department of Environmental Protection has prepared recommendations for designing and operating stormwater drainage systems called the Best Management

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

Practices. They are principally for new systems; however, some retrofits of existing drainage systems can also be installed and meet the goals of these management standards. Management Practices would eliminate point source discharges into the wetland resource areas such as piped outlets discharging directly in to the waters without prior treatment, including stormwater drains. Additional non-structural actions are recommended within this set of Practices, such as regular street sweeping to control polluting materials discharged by stormwater events.

River Access

Access points should be developed to connect the neighborhoods to the upper reaches of the Back River, Great Esker Park and the herring run. This should be part of the overall plan to develop a riverside walkway throughout the center of Town.

Land Use Recommendations

Two zoning and land use actions are recommended. The first action would correct the incongruity of the zoning compared with the need to protect key resources values within the area. The second action would encourage multifamily development in locations that link density to transit access and to maintain the vitality of the business center. More specifically, the Master Plan proposes the following:

- The industrial zoning along the Back River is not compatible with the intention to develop public access and protect the water quality. This should be changed to a low-intensity commercial or residential zoning district.
- The area is already largely developed with residential dwellings, so land use change must be accompanied by a stimulus to reinvest that will provide adequate returns. This can be achieved by targeting increased density that would provide for more intensive residential density that would benefit the Town, or the through the economic stimulus of a revitalized village center.

Housing Recommendations

To help the revitalization of the village center, the business zoned areas on the south end of Jackson Square and adjacent residential area to the east of the Square should be developed with medium to low density multi-family dwellings. In this way, the concentration of residents is connected with the new transit station and adds to the vitality of the Square.

In addition, the Town should adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance that will require all new residential development above a certain scale to include 10% of the units to be subsidized for low income and another 10% to meet the median income standards based on the Governor's Executive Order 418. At present growth rates this would add approximately 8 to 10 low-income units and 8 to 10 medium income units per year within the community as a whole.

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Capital Program and Cost Implications

The capital program necessary to achieve these recommendations includes potentially significant road construction for the purpose of economic development within the industrial park area. This cost could be justified by the return in new commercial growth. Land value increases would also be looked upon to help balance the cost of acquisition and improvements to the environmental resources around Mill River and Whitman's Pond. The creation of vehicle lane control and bicycle lanes by painting the streets with wide road pavement and installing signs would be among the capital costs, but are relatively small commitments. Maintenance for street sweeping and parking control represents operating cost commitments that would need to be undertaken.

C. Weymouth Landing Neighborhood

Weymouth Landing has one of the busiest business districts in the region. The high level of business activity puts pressure on the roads and adjacent residential neighborhoods. The recommendations are subsequently centered on these issues.

Transportation Recommendations

There are several recommendations to address the traffic volumes and the impacts of the traffic on the residential areas:

- The Town should develop a 'shopper's shuttle' bus to connect the neighborhoods with the business areas. Route the bus through areas of dense residential development and multi-family projects and complete a route past the major commercial areas on Route 53 and Route 18.
- The Town should complete traffic studies throughout the community so that the Town has a database of information for review and analysis of proposed land use changes. Specifically, complete traffic movement studies after construction to determine the success of the improvements in progress at the Route 53 and Route 18 intersections.

Open Space and Recreation Recommendations

This Plan supports improved access to the Fore River and Mill Cove through mitigation with the proposed 'T' station and acquisition of additional land along the river. Of highest importance is the acquisition of industrial zoned land on the waterfront to help protect water quality from the impacts of intensive land uses.

Also recommended is the development of the same water resource protection goals as proposed for East Weymouth, including water quality testing and best management practices.

Land Use Recommendations

The growth management recommendations are fairly diverse given the priorities seen for the area.

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

- An historic district should be created along Front Street. The homes along the road are very valuable to the Town and help maintain the history of the whole of Weymouth Landing.
- Commercial Street should be closed as part of the MBTA's Greenbush project to create a destination point in the remaining right-of-way. The space created can serve as a meeting and take-off point for bicyclists and pedestrians, or drop-off for the shuttle bus to provide an easy transition to the train and as a connection to the shoreline.
- The existing residents call for increased civic and social programs in the area, which will also serve a significant increase in residents within the completions of the Avalon apartment project. The Fire Station at the corner of Broad and Washington Streets might be reused as a community program center, with activities geared to several various age groups.
- The developable residential area just north of Route 3 on the west side of Town should be zoned for cluster, conservation development that respects the value of existing natural resources, or for mixed use such as permitted for the Weathervane project in South Weymouth.

Housing Recommendations

The Town should adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance that will require all new residential development above a certain scale to include 10% of the units to be subsidized for low income and another 10% to meet the median income standards based on the Governor's Executive Order 418. At present growth rates this would add approximately 8 to 10 low-income units and 8 to 10 medium income units per year within the community as a whole.

Capital Program and Cost Implications

Public subsidies may be needed for the recommended shuttle bus. However, successful models of shuttle buses in other locales suggest that the benefit to local businesses is such that private funds may offset most of these costs.

With the hiring of a transportation engineer by the Town Planning Office, the traffic study needs can be accommodated within the Town staff. Costs of traffic counters and computer models that can be attached to the Town's GIS system could provide a very powerful tool for analysis with relatively little investment.

The connection of the Weymouth Landing 'T' stop with other improvements for the neighborhood will be negotiated as part of the mitigation package with the State. However, potentially costly pieces of this plan of improvements could include land acquisition or easements along the coast and streetscape improvements within the Town's right-of-way at Commercial Street. Consideration could be given to the sale of all or some portion of the closed roadway easement to fund other improvements in the area.

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

The upgrading and maintenance of drainage systems could potentially be costly. However, these drainage improvements could be phased with road improvement projects that may occur within the area as a way to extend the project expenditures over time.

The speed humps recommended to protect residential neighborhoods from inappropriate cut-through traffic are simply asphalt platforms that cause a vehicle to rise unexpectedly and cause the driver to slow down. As such, they imply low cost investment.

D. South Weymouth

South Weymouth is relatively undeveloped and will require significant public and private investment to meet the Town's Goals and Objectives. Some of this investment has begun. Transportation improvements and the Naval Air Station dominate the planning recommendations.

Transportation Recommendations

Regional bus and train systems have been put into service by the MBTA within South Weymouth. But additional services are needed to prevent the further congestion of Route 18 and the need for costly expansion projects beyond the State Highway Department road widening project occurring at this time. The concept of a 'shopper's shuttle' bus was previously discussed and could be used for this part of the community as well, thereby linking the four village areas, and possibly the NAS. A more significant bus system investment is discussed in the Land Use and Transportation section below.

There are several improvements proposed for the roadways. They each have distinctly different costs:

- Improvements should be undertaken within the Columbian Square intersection (see Implementation Chapter).
- The most significant traffic impacts will result from whatever uses are developed within the Naval Air Station. The proposed access from Route 3 to be funded by the State will address many of the local street impact issues arising from that development. Consequently, this project mitigation component should be fully supported.
- Also, improved pedestrian and bicycle connections should be established across South Weymouth through the use of painted bicycle lanes on Pleasant Street and Pond Street and by utilizing the open space lands adjacent to the new High School (see the Focus Study on this opportunity later in this chapter).

Open Space and Natural Resource Recommendations

Actions should further protect Town's water supply in Great Pond as a regional resource for Weymouth and all neighboring communities within the MWRA district. The Town should initiate additional coordination with other Towns to work with Weymouth on protection of the watersheds. The assistance of the regional planning agency and state legislation should be sought to this end.

Part 1. Village Centers and Neighborhoods

Open space and river protections along the Mill and Swamp Rivers should be extended, considering that they contribute to the Town water supply and the Whitman's Pond complex. Easements or fee simple ownership should be acquired to ensure protection of the resources.

The Town should develop the same water resource protection goals as established for East Weymouth; i.e., water quality testing and best management practices.

Land Use Recommendations

Zoning should be revised to better protect open space and provide recreational opportunities. Conservation development options are highly recommended to establish special site planning criteria. Zoning could also provide for desirable mixed-use development such as permitted for the Weathervane project.

The redevelopment of the Naval Air Station should provide additional open space and recreational opportunities to the residents of South Weymouth, and the Town should ensure the provision of these needs through its role in the redevelopment process. The Town should seek ways to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle access into the NAS open space areas, directly from the adjacent neighborhoods. This approach should utilize existing rights-of-way where possible.

The Town should consider re-use of the old Fire Station in Columbian Square for a community center or a retail store to maintain the vitality of the area.

Housing Recommendations

As the area with the greatest potential for new development of single-family residential development, the Town can take an aggressive stance on the affordability of the new development to meet Town-wide goals. For all new residential development above a certain scale, the Town should require 10% of the units to be provided for low income residents and another 10% to meet the median income standards based on the Governor's Executive Order 418. At present growth rates, this would add approximately 8 low-income units and 8 medium income units per year within the community as a whole.

Capital Program Implications

The first recommended priority is the Columbian Square intersection improvements. If not used for public purposes, sale of the Fire Station on Pleasant Street for a new retail or service business that fits the new Neighborhood Commercial District guidelines could help defray the fiscal impacts of construction costs.

The most difficult project to fund may be the new access road for the Finnell Drive Industrial Park. This is because of the wetland issues that may impact the ability to develop more direct access to Route 3. However, with the widening of Route 3 in the planning stages, this is an opportune time to consider more radical improvements.

The other costly item is the acquisition of additional land or public access easements along the Mill and Old Swamp Rivers to continue the concept of the river walk throughout the Town. Because of the existing public holdings along the Old Swamp River, the land becoming available along the river should be given priority for acquisition.

PART 2. THE SPECIAL AREAS

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The commercial corridors have encouraged auto-oriented businesses to develop along the sides of the roadways because of traffic volumes and zoning. These areas encourage “sprawl” as the low-intensity land uses expand along the road, dominated by large parking areas. A lack of visual coherence or connection among properties emerges, and the automobile becomes favored above pedestrians. However, the areas are currently developed in keeping with the Town’s zoning both in allowed use and in geographic extent. The task for the Town is to define a hybrid land use regulation that recognizes the efficiency and need for automobile access, but creates a high design standard for these areas that ensures the Town obtains the best quality land use.

The main commercial corridors in Weymouth are: Route 53/ Washington Street, Route 18/ Main Street, and Route 3A/ Bridge Street. Following are the summary descriptions of these roads that are the centers of each commercial corridor. More complete descriptions can be found in Chapter 1.

A. Route 3A

This is a regionally important arterial road following the coast and running east-west in Weymouth, but serving north-south regional connections. It serves some commuter travel, largely serves as a local connector road. The commercial and business zoning along Route 3A dominates the frontage. However, lots are often relatively shallow, and have not consistently supported large scale, auto-oriented development as a result. This may be considered a reason that the commercial development along Bridge Street is not reaching its highest quality. The competitive advantage of the commercial properties along Route 3A is also limited by the existing zoning and property ownership patterns.

B. Route 18

This road acts as the north-south spine of the local circulation system. Strung along most of its frontage is greatest accumulation of local businesses and commercial properties within the Town. With its very high local traffic volumes, the Route 18 corridor can support many types of service and retail businesses. However, this type of development can cause problems for neighboring residential areas. Residential uses ‘break’ in the predominant land use pattern between Highland Place and Park Avenue, even though the traffic on the road can be persistent.

Part 2. Special Areas

C. Route 53

This route is also a major arterial road that serves regional and local traffic needs. It serves as a second spine for the Town, paralleling Route 3 before turning northeast as it joins with Route 18. There are a significant number of commercial properties that are oriented to vehicular access, and are characterized with broad curb cuts and parking lots. The zoning is similar to Route 3A in that almost the whole of the frontage is zoned for commercial uses (B-1 and Highway Transition (HT) zones).

Opportunities and Constraints

New commercial development oriented to the highway location and the traffic that passes along it could occur within the existing zoning framework. However, adding design guidelines specifically framed for Highway-Commercial uses could be used to allow commercial development and redevelopment and reduce unwanted impacts. Part of these guidelines would encourage increase pedestrian use of the area. In addition, the Town should initiate traffic management planning to improve circulation and the commercial success of the area.

Some transportation and roadway improvements can be funded and constructed through the public sector. However, roadway reconstruction and redevelopment of adjacent private properties requires Town diligence in exerting its control on the issuance of permits with the proper mitigating measures such as:

- control of the number and size of driveway openings,
- the size and location of signs,
- landscaping, fencing, and when possible,
- the control on the timing and direction of traffic flow from the use.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several program and improvement recommendations and regulatory standards to apply to the conditions found along the Town's commercial corridors.

Program and Improvement Recommendations

- The Town should establish a 'shopper's shuttle' bus route to connect the neighborhoods with the business areas. The bus should be routed through areas of dense residential development and multi-family projects and complete a route past the major commercial areas on Route 53 and Route 18.
- Following completion of improvements at the Route 53 and Route 18 intersection, traffic movement studies should be completed to determine the success of those improvements. The Town should be prepared to advance new solutions based on the results.

Part 2. Special Areas

- Weymouth should initiate a program of streetscape improvements. This should include uniform, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks along the roadways that allow safe passage. Establish a protective landscape strip or wall sufficiently high in some locations to encourage the pedestrian to continue on the walkway because they feel safer. This would apply to sidewalks into the properties as well. Part of the streetscape improvements should include a lighting fixture for each district that distinguishes the different areas and creates a consistent style and scale within each area.
- The Town should initiate a program to place utilities underground as a means to improve the aesthetics along major roadways.
- Improvements should use traffic calming techniques to provide a safer environment and as an economic development strategy. When drivers can read the business's signs, they are more easily attracted to the location. These should include narrowing lanes with curblines, medians or painted lines; textured or special pavements at crossings; extensions or bump-outs of curbs where crossings are located; and visual signs using landscaping to create a perception of a narrower travel lane.
- Operational changes should be undertaken to close the outside lanes of four lane road sections to through traffic during non-peak hours to allow additional street parking and to slow traffic when the roads are not heavily used.

Regulatory Recommendations

Regulations to advance better design and aesthetics along the commercial corridors could be reasonably applied in all Business zoning districts. Key for the highways are control of signage, the appearance of the front and side yards visible to the public, and the quality of the architecture.

The following is a list of basic ideas that might be expanded within such design standards. The design standards should be applied through a site plan review process by establishing special permit requirements for most projects.

- Signs are currently limited in size and number. However, new standards could be added. Internally lit signs and flashing signs should be prohibited. Indirect lighting or rear lit signs should be encouraged. Signs displaying product names and logos should not be permitted unless directly associated with the principal service or products of the establishment.
- The appearance of the front yards and side yards visible from the public way are very important, and should be attractive from both the pedestrian and roadway vantage points.
- Parking lots and paved areas in the front yards should be screened preferably with vegetation, fence, wall or landscaped berm.
- Utilities should be underground, at least on site.
- Lighting fixtures should be in contrast to the lighting fixtures chosen for the public streets in the area, and should consist of high cut-off fixtures set at low heights.
- Driveway cuts should be restricted in terms of number and width.
- The sizes, setbacks (minimum and maximum), building materials, façade design, roof lines and other features will all be considered in light of the location of the building

Part 2. Special Areas

within the district and its surrounding buildings as part of the design review. The submittals for project review and approvals should include photographs of the site context and drawings should represent the relationship of proposed improvements to adjacent buildings and land.

- To the extent practical, facades should be located at or near the street edge and be animated with architectural features, entrances, and windows that create transparency between the interior and the exterior.
- The use of “super graphics” should be used as a method to create image and interest. These could be large scale pictures unrelated to the businesses.
- Building color must be varied within any building façade, and strong or bright colors should be limited to decorative elements. Color schemes that are generic and associated with the logo or standard building designs of chain operations should be modified to provide a unique design more suited to the Town’s goals and objectives of creating a smaller scale, village-oriented environment.
- The architectural elements of the building should be articulated to create a complex sense of scale and proportion through changes in materials, variation in the façade plane through bays, articulation of structure, ornament, or roof forms.
- Reflective or darkly tinted glazing should not be permitted.
- Exterior materials must convey a sense of quality, and certain materials should be prohibited, such as concrete block or modular concrete panels.
- Special site design standards should be created to restrict the visibility of loading areas, trash receptacles and dumpsters, and equipment.
- Building siting and site landscaping should be combined to prevent unbroken expanses of parking.
- Parking lot design should require a maximum number of spaces that may be provided between landscaped islands, and should specify the minimum acceptable size for islands and minimum size of trees.

Capital Program and Cost Implications

The construction of street and underground utility improvements will be the most expensive of the improvements that would be associated with the corridors. Streetscape improvements can vary substantially in cost, depending upon the extent and character of improvement. A rule of thumb suggests that relocating or burying one mile of utility line would cost approximately \$1 million. Based on State projects, one mile of full road reconstruction would cost approximately \$2 million. However, full-scale reconstruction is often not required in order to meet planning needs. Traffic calming devices, such as speed humps, or closing lanes would be less costly depending on the extent of the programs.

In terms of operating costs, Town staff resources should be adequate to prepare the recommended traffic studies. The shuttle service might be developed in concert with other available resources, by establishing an approach that would attract multiple sponsors.

Application of the recommended regulatory standards would only add costs to the Town through the professional staff time necessary to ensure compliance with the regulations. However, with a well developed set of guidelines and criteria, the process of design and review would be made easier for both the Town and the applicants.

THE WATERFRONT

As in many other coastal areas, Weymouth's waterfront exhibits a complex interrelationship of natural resources, private land, public land and access, and a complicated regulatory framework linked to Town, State and Federal interests. As a Town asset, the waterfront serves as both a recreational area and as access to the water's edge. The Town completed a Waterfront Plan in August 1988. It noted a number of opportunities along the waterfront (See Map III-8 Waterfront Opportunities).

Useful Facts: Public Marina at the Back River
275 moorings, 300 slips, 575 boats total
\$5 administrative fee only – equipment/mooring purchased by boat owner
Average boat size is 25 feet.
There is a waiting list.

Over half of Weymouth's coastal area is devoted to parkland in two large public open spaces; Webb State Park and Great Esker Park, with the State's Abigail Adams Park lying in between. Newell Playground, located in the Idlewell neighborhood, also holds coastal frontage in Mill Cove. Conservation lands can be found along the Back and Fore Rivers. These parcels consist of wetlands, which have been acquired for the Conservation Commission to protect these fragile resources.

There is also private, undeveloped land on the waterfront. Within many individual privately held lots, the majority of these areas are salt marsh and in flood prone areas, making development on them very difficult.

Photo: Fore River Power Station/ Sithe



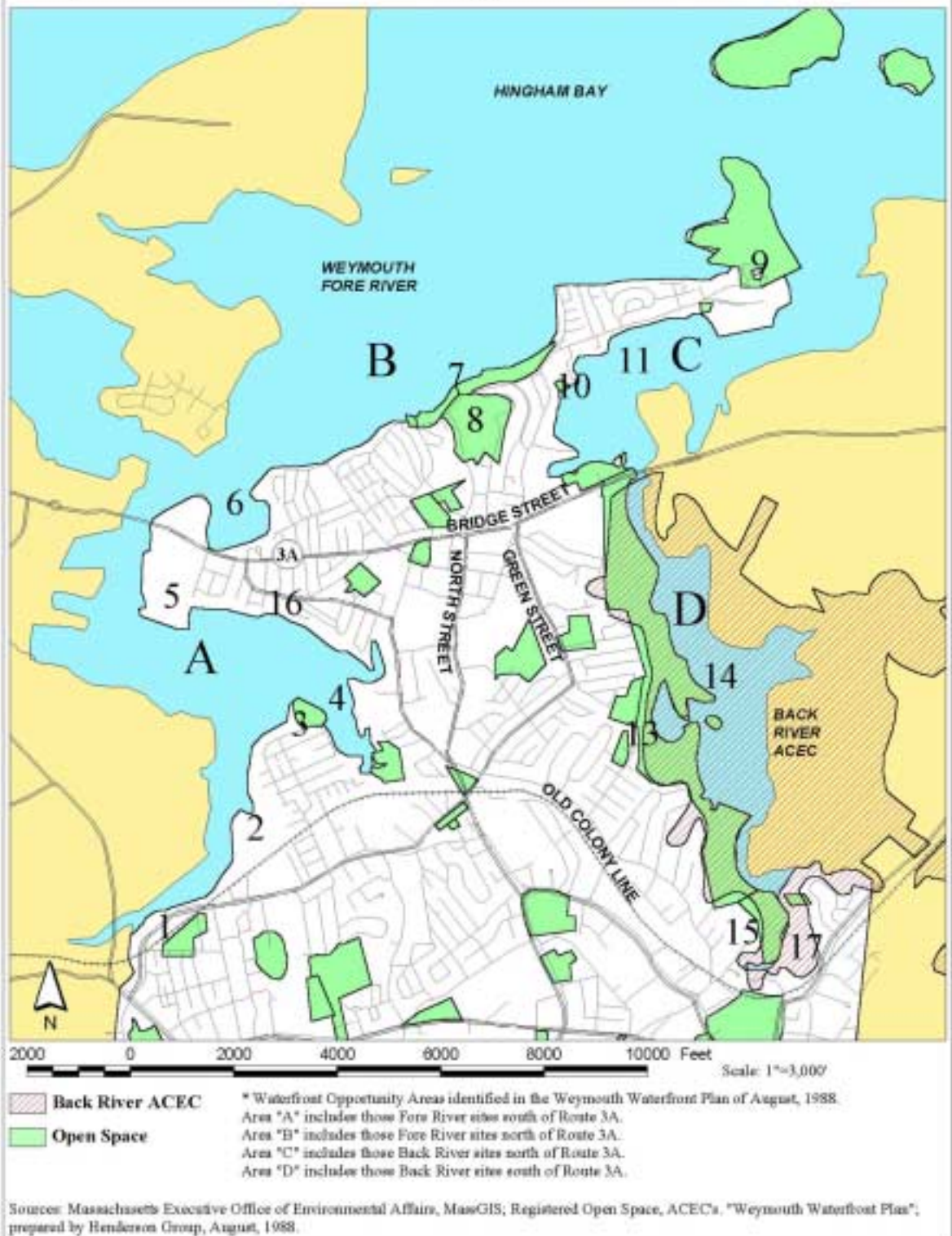
The largest industrial property is the former Edgar Power Station now owned by Sithe Edgar LLP and called the Fore River Power Station. The site has fifty acres of prime industrial-zoned waterfront property. The southern parcel, below Route 3A, is currently under development for a new power station. The northern, smaller part of the property is relatively open for some future use or uses. A portion has already been sold to the MWRA for a sewer pumping station, with easements also

granted for the underground pipe system and access to the station. On the opposite side of the Fore River are a number of industrial type uses, Twin Rivers Technologies, MWRA Pelletizing Facility, Clean Harbors, a Citgo Tank Farm and, the Quincy Shipyards. Other waterfront commercial/industrial users include town boatyards, a marine repair facility, two yacht clubs, a utility transfer station, a motel and retail uses.

A. Opportunities and Constraints

Four issues define the concerns regarding the waterfront. They are public access, land use and development, the overriding State regulatory standards, and water quality. Access and development are seen as integrated issues because land use helps defines the potential for access.

Map III-8. Waterfront Opportunities*



Access and Development

While the Back River and the northern waterfront have significant public access and open space, Fore River is presently very limited in terms of access points, even though the potential is significant. In addition, substantial areas of coastal land on the Fore River are zoned for General Industrial, which provides a wide range of use options for the future.

As shown on the Map III-8, several key issue and opportunity areas were identified in the 1988 Waterfront Plan. Note that the names of some of the sites have been changed from the listing in the study. These are the opportunity areas that were identified in the 1988 Waterfront study with a recommended activity or program goal. As can be seen, some of the actions have already been taken or are still in process.

1. Rhines Lumber Site – possible MBTA station site
2. Boston Edison – open lands that could be accessed by the public
3. Newell Playground – coastal park development
4. Mill Cove – an important multiple use access area
5. Sithe/ Edgar Station – boating and public access
6. King's Cove – public access and possible dredging for boating
7. Old Beach / New Beach – creation of a pedestrian link
8. Great Hill Park – completion of master plan improvements
9. Webb Park – protection of the park from adjacent development
10. State Boat Ramp – improvements for expansion
11. Back River Basin / mooring area – coordinated and expanded use of the river
12. MDC / South Shore Yacht Club – waterfront park connections
13. Great Esker Park – a State planning project
14. Back River ACEC – control of environmental impacts
15. Former Town Incinerator and landfill – reuse options
16. Right-of-way access points – finding and using existing public access
17. Wharf Street / possible MBTA Station – mitigation plans for access

Although many of the issues remain similar today, there are a number of changes that reinforce the need for a Harbor Management Plan update. An update would have the added advantage of advancing the Town's interests in the State permitting processes for some waterfront properties.

State and Local Coordination

Under State law, Weymouth's Waterfront Plan can be used to influence the development of private lands that fall within the jurisdiction of a set of laws and regulations collectively known as Chapter 91. This is because a plan, called a Municipal Harbor Management Plan, can be prepared and approved in accordance with the State's Chapter 91 regulations and serve to help guide State actions including the regulatory decisions of the Department of Environmental Protection. The regulations that articulate the specific State requirements for this land and for its planning are contained in 310 CMR 9.00 (Wetlands and Waterways Regulations) and in 301 CMR 23.00, which addresses harbor planning.

Part 2. Special Areas

The private use of the land and water resource areas is controlled by permits granted by the State for coastal projects under the Chapter 91 program. With the approved Municipal Harbor Plan, any project seeking a Chapter 91 permit from DEP must also be found in conformance with that plan. This mechanism also allows changes in certain regulations that govern uses, setbacks, height limits and other matters, if jointly approved by both the Town and the State through the planning process. One form of guidance could be to suggest the list of uses allowed by DEP on tidelands and filled tidelands be focused on those the community wishes to promote.

Water Quality

The concern for water quality in the coastal environment is linked, in part, to the uses near the water's edge. The most important area for concern is at the public swimming beaches where low water quality, as determined by coliform bacteria counts in the water column, can close the beaches. Information from the Health and Park Departments indicates that rainstorm events cause regular closures of the beaches for swimming. This has been found to be a typical occurrence in coastal areas where street drains often are found to be the critical factor in adding coliform bacteria and other pollutants to the coastal waters. Flushing during the storm events adds these pollutants to the receiving waters. The studies have also found that this is a treatable condition. Design improvements to the storm drain systems can significantly reduce the incidence and concentration of pollutants discharging from the system.

WATERFRONT RECOMMENDATIONS

Harbor Management Plan Update

This Plan strongly recommends that the Town undertake an update and revision of its Waterfront/Harbor Management Plan. This Plan should be completed for the coastal area to append and update the program to meet the Town's vision for the Fore River waterfront and particularly the Sithe property. The importance of the update of the Waterfront/Harbor Management Plan would be the increased local control over permitting for development at the Sithe property, the apartment project on the Back River, and any other development along the rivers and coastline which could impact public access and enjoyment of the coast. As part of the scoping process for the plan, the Town should confirm the possible advantages of meeting the State's Municipal Harbor Planning standards. In particular, the Town should confirm that it might wish to provide for expansion or substitution of provisions that may be modified through this planning process. It should also confirm that this approach is necessary to provide any additional desired guidance for the DEP Chapter 91 permitting process. Finally, it should consider whether there are advantages for seeking State funds by having an approved Municipal Harbor Plan. Should that review conclude that there are advantages to the Town for following the State approval standards, it should proceed in accordance with the Chapter 91 planning structure. If it concludes that there are no advantages to using the State process, it should then create a Harbor Management Plan that meets the Town's waterfront goals and objectives.

Water Resource Protection Policies

Generally, water resource policies and programs are needed to maintain and restore degraded waters. Weymouth's coastal area water resources are largely influenced by regional conditions. However, there are several actions that the Town can take to ensure it provides its own residents with a safe environment.

Testing and Analysis

Understanding the resources and their conditions allows better-informed decision-making on ways to manage them. Regular water quality testing, including testing within the adjacent stormwater drainage systems can help pin point the sources of pollution that causes the closure of beaches and swimming areas.

Best Management Practices

The State Department of Environmental Protection has prepared recommendations for designing and operating stormwater drainage systems, which should be followed by the Town. This includes design standards for new projects, regular street sweeping and litter control, and regular drainage system maintenance.

Structural Drainage Improvements

In addition to program development, structural changes in coastal drainage systems have been shown to be very effective in reducing the significant impact from stormwater drainage systems discharging into coastal waters. The State Coastal Zone Management program has developed the Coastal Pollutant Remediation project, a grant program that provides funds for treating runoff from municipal roadways and to educate the public on the problems created by storm drainage. The Town should approach the State for these funds to improve conditions at the beaches.

Public Access

Public access is a primary goal of many state and local coastal programs. The public has certain rights to the coastal water edge by virtue of the public lands, which are there, and by the rights of public access embodied in the Chapter 91 regulations. These are historic rights that generally prevail on all flowed tidelands, and well as within the historic and existing intertidal zones, even if there is private use or ownership of these areas.

Along Weymouth's waterfront there are some substantial public holdings. However, the ease of access between the parks and beaches makes it difficult to use links that might reduce the reliance on vehicle access to these locations. Therefore, connections between the parks are recommended. Key links would be between Great Esker, Abigail Adams, Great Hill Park and the beaches. Another link would run from Beals and Sullivan parks through the Wessagussett school property and also to the Great Hill Park and lower beaches.

In addition, assuming that the Sithe Company's northern parcel can be developed with active public uses, then a pedestrian/bicycle link should be made back into the residential neighborhoods and the collector roads that access the remainder of Town.

Part 2. Special Areas

For active recreational opportunities, additional boat access is needed because the existing public marina is so heavily used. This access may be available at the Sithe property but should also be available elsewhere on the Fore and Back Rivers. The opportunity may lie in the remaining private land for the apartments adjacent to William Webb State Park.

Waterfront Development

There are two areas where waterfront development is a potential significant issue. They happen to lie on each river, the Sithe property and the residential development below W. Webb State Park.

The redevelopment of the Sithe property is more fully discussed as part of a Special Study within this section. The conclusions recognized the opportunity for important public access and active use of its waterfront resources. The plan of development could be adopted within the Harbor Management Plan discussed above.

The development of apartment buildings on the waterfront beside W. Webb State Park is not in keeping with the desired use of the waterfront for water-related uses, or to increase the extent of public access along the waterfront. Therefore, it is recommended that the zoning be changed in the R-4 district to increase the inclusion of water-related uses and substantial public access. Another option is the purchase of this property to ensure the Town maintains full control over its use. One significantly limiting factor is that this is a contaminated "superfund" site. Ownership of the land brings on acceptance of the liability for that contamination.

Capital Program, Cost and Revenue Implications

The development of a revised Harbor Management Plan would consume Town resources in the form of staff time and availability and the likely use of consultants to complete the Plan. The water resource protection policies require a minimal investment for regular water quality testing.

However, improvements to storm drainage systems could ultimately be fairly costly, even with State grants. Acquisitions and facility improvements in the coastal environment are typically completed at a premium above inland development costs because of the permitting, access and natural environment.

Depending on the commercial uses of the land, the private development could also have an impact on either economic development or the Town's tax base. Shorefront properties and properties within the shoreline viewsheds, command a higher value. As a result, protection of these coastal resources and viewsheds that help create this value will maintain, if not increase, the community tax base.

PART 3. PUBLIC PROPERTIES AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

The largest public land holdings are the water supply reservations and conservation lands. Active public use areas are found on parklands and the school properties. Public investments in buildings are in library, police and fire, and general government facilities. Below are summary discussions on these properties and facilities.

A. Public Lands

There are several over-riding issues with the Town's parks and open space lands. One is the high level of protection that should be afforded to the water resource watershed lands to ensure the Town maintains a safe drinking water supply. Another is the demand being placed on the park and recreation system for all users, and the ways that the Town must begin to better manage and maintain the lands currently under its jurisdiction. The third issue is the identification of key acquisitions that will strengthen the Town's base of protected open space, provide potential linkages between the open space and other areas, or meet the goal of a new open space program such as a river walk.

Conservation and Water Supply Lands

The Town has three key areas of land held aside for the purposes of water supply. A significant portion of the land (522 acres) around the Weymouth Great Pond is a water supply reservation. There is another area of land along the Mill River, south of Winter Street, and a smaller area at the southern end of Whitman's Pond.

The importance of these holdings is underscored by the recent proposal of the Public Works Department to utilize the Winter Street reservation by reopening the closed well within the land to meet the current and projected demand for water supplies in the Town. By maintaining the land for its original purpose, the Town now has a lower cost option for water supply expansion. The Town has recently undertaken actions to implement this option within the Naval Air Station and Old Swamp River aquifer that is related to the redevelopment project there.

Significant conservation holdings can be found in North Weymouth covering the inland wetlands tributary to Fore River, around and including the Bradford Torrey Bird Sanctuary, around the upper watershed of the Plymouth River. Similar holding can be found along Old Swamp River in South Weymouth, and an area north of Weymouth Great Pond. Areas obtained for conservation are usually restricted to passive recreational uses. The land around the Torrey Sanctuary is one of the Focus Study Areas analyzed in the Implementation section. In that analysis, more active use of the land is considered to meet the needs of the schools and neighborhoods within South Weymouth.

Park and Open Space Demands

The Parks Department is dealing with several issues that have arisen as a result of increasing demands for use and enjoyment of the Town's parks:

- There is a growing demand for additional and upgraded active recreational areas. This includes improvements to playground equipment, lighting replacement, new watering

Part 3. Public Facilities

systems, and restrooms.

- There is a perceived need for a different, neighborhood-based management option, which would ‘decentralize’ the Recreation Department, or at the least add to its resources so that it could better serve the districts that compose Weymouth. Under this concept, individuals located in each neighborhood with facilities would be designated for some supporting role to the Parks Department staff.



Photo: Herring Run picnic area

In addition, although the most significant conservation land holdings are in South Weymouth, this area of Town lacks active recreational areas in comparison with the northern areas of Town. Consequently, the Naval Air Station redevelopment project is an important opportunity to provide active recreational and open space that serves the residential neighborhoods to the surrounding area.

B. School Properties

Weymouth Schools properties are the most significant, actively used land holdings of the Town. Although certain historic and modern school properties have been converted to other uses, the fifteen active schools are significant property holdings and are equally spread throughout the Town. The School Department is involved in the upgrading of the Junior High School off Pleasant Street to create a four-year high school. However, the School Department has found a demand for additional play fields, not only for school age children but also for adults who schedule times on the school properties.

Creating a new information resource base has been suggested, which would use the School Department’s information infrastructure, together with the Library and possibly Town Hall, to provide coordinated programs of community information. Multiple access points would be created to school and other town information so that students (and adults) can take advantage of electronic forms of communication. School assignments, text resources, schedules, and the like could be posted for simultaneous access from terminals. The connection to the libraries is particularly helpful during after school hours.

C. Libraries

The Library Trustees currently manage the main library in the Tufts Library in Weymouth Landing, and three branch libraries: the Fogg Library in Columbian Square, the Pratt Library in Jackson Square, and the North Weymouth Library off of Bicknell Square. The Trustees have engaged a building consultant to determine and address current and future needs, which include:

- Updating the technology based on recent donations;
- The age of the facilities and the need for interior reorganization for user spaces;

Map III-9. Public Facilities

- Town Administration
1. Town Hall

2. Town Hall Annex
- Schools
- Public
3. Wessagusset School

4. Elden Johnson School

5. Academy Avenue School

6. Abigail Adams Intermediate School

7. School Administration

8. Weymouth High School

9. Lawrence Pingree

10. Frederick Murphy School

11. William Seach School

12. Thomas Nash School

13. South Intermediate School

14. South Junior High School

15. Ralph Talbot School

16. Union Street School

17. Alice Fulton School
- Private
- A. St. Jerome School

B. Sacred Heart School

C. South Shore Christian School

D. First Baptist School

E. St. Francis Xavier School
- Public Safety
18. Fire Station #1

19. Animal Shelter

20. Fire Station #2

21. Police Station

22. Fire Station (under construction)

23. Fire Station (under construction)

24. Fire Station #5

25. Civil Defense

26. Fire Station (Naval Air Station)
- Utilities
27. Water Tank

28. Water Tank

29. Department of Public Works

30. Water Treatment Plant

31. Water Tank

32. Water Tank

33. Water Treatment Plant
- Libraries
34. Tufts Library North

35. Tufts Library

36. Pratt Library

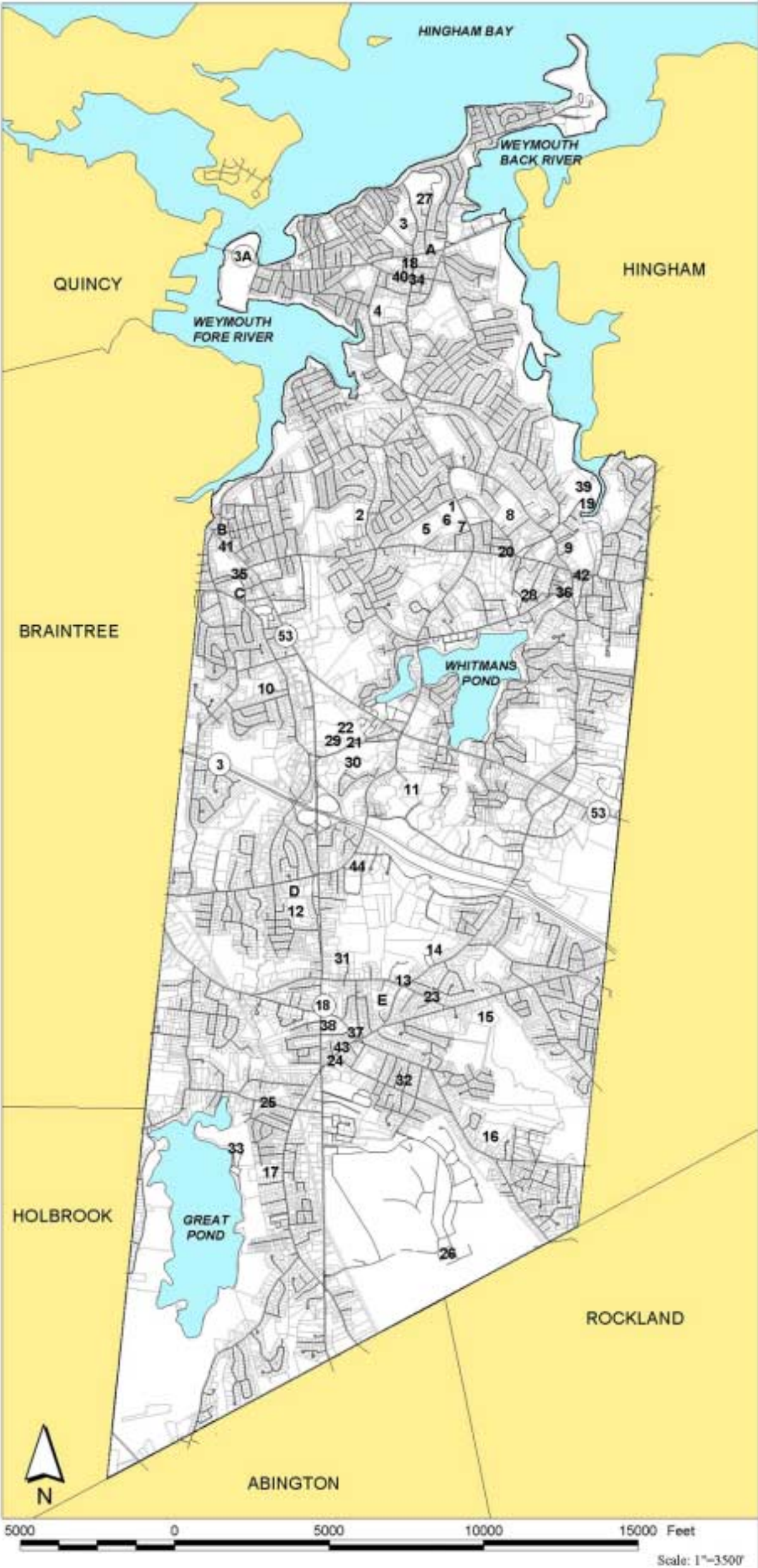
37. Fogg Library
- Health Care
38. South Shore Hospital
- Waste Management
39. Capped Landfill
- Federal/State
40. North Weymouth Post Office

41. Weymouth Landing Post Office

42. Jackson Square Post Office

43. Columbian Square Post Office

44. National Guard Armory



Sources: Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, MassGIS. Town of Weymouth.

Part 3. Public Facilities

- A lack of parking and accessibility issues, some of which will require cooperative agreements with the Parks Department (Weston Park and Tufts Library in Weymouth Landing).

Updating the technology within the libraries will help facilitate the concept of new information connections with School Department.

In addition, hours at the three branch libraries were previously cut back, but the Trustees find demand sufficiently high that the Trustees believe the hours should be restored.

Photo: Tufts Library

D. Other Key Public Buildings

The Town is in process of significant new building and improvement projects that are generally improving the facilities and the ability to deliver services to the community. The public buildings and projects to highlight are:



- The Town Hall which is undergoing an upgrade of the cupola, roof and other exterior work, and more significant improvements to the Memorial wall adjacent to it;
- The complex of buildings on Winter Street that includes the existing DPW garage and offices, the new Police Station, and new Fire Station under construction as the newest addition;
- A new fire station under construction on Park Avenue;
- The other satellite fire stations that help define each of the village areas with a significant municipal component (in combination with the libraries).



Because of the status of current improvements, no significant change in these facilities is anticipated, except for the DPW garage. The age of this building suggests that more intensive maintenance will be necessary to continue the efficient use of this building.

Photo: Police Station

PUBLIC PROPERTY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Town of Weymouth must have a high quality open space environment to ensure a healthy and secure quality of life. The Town can contribute to that quality through the land

that it controls. Contributing actions should include active management of existing resources, enforcement of the protective standards, restoration of degraded resources and expansion of the system of protected spaces as the population and the Town grows. Following are specific recommendations regarding the Town properties.

A. Open Space Management

All public properties require active management plans, even if they are intended to be left in a natural state not requiring attention. The Town is faced with determining the best use of the land and developing management programs that support that use. The uses can be fundamentally connected to the underlying natural resources such as the bird sanctuary. These uses could be far more intensive or focused on a practical town need, such as play fields or land required to support the public water supply. But each use requires the active management to perform such functions as cleaning the areas, maintaining certain vegetative assemblages and completing the other improvements necessary to support the intended use.

To establish the proper management plans requires three major steps:

- Establish detailed information on the resources within the property;
- Establish the goals for use of the property;
- Create the specific management plan necessary to carry out the established goals.

The property resource descriptions come from naturalists and other specialists walking the properties and determining the mix and condition of resources on the land. The goals are established through citizen participation, which includes both the specialists and the agencies that perform the management functions created in the subsequent specific management plans.

In these management plans, the participants and managers will vary. The Parks Department will be involved in active-use areas, the Conservation Commission in natural resource areas, and the Public Works Department in water supply sites. However, in all cases the knowledge base of information and standards for action on the properties should be similar. The Town should understand the resources it has under its control to better manage and take advantage of the values in that land it owns.

For Your Information: Outline for a Typical Management Plan

- 1.0 Introduction
 - Project History and Purpose
 - Conservation Restrictions
 - Public Participation
 - Management Recommendations
 - Summary
- 2.0 Property Description
 - Existing Conditions
 - Surrounding Land Use
 - Historic Land Use
- 3.0 Natural Resources
 - Plant Communities (by type)
 - Geology and Soils; Topography, Bedrock, Surficial Geology, Soils
 - Water Resources (by type)
 - Wildlife (by community type)
 - Rare Species
- 4.0 Management Recommendations
 - Proposed Uses; Managed Open Space, Trail Network, Abutting Developments
 - Property Access
 - Wildlife Habitat Management (by type)
 - Natural Resource Management (by type)
 - Invasive Plant Management
 - Summary

(Note: based on Massachusetts Audubon Society format)

Part 3. Public Facilities

B. Park Management

The recommendation of the Parks Department for neighborhood assistance could be developed into an Adopt-A-Park program for neighborhood organizations and businesses. The City of Boston has a very successful program with intensive participation by neighborhood groups. The City Parks Department provides such items as mulch and bulbs for planting in the fall, and signs to indicate the participants. The residents provide regular clean up and maintenance under a simply worded agreement they sign with the Parks Department. This option could be applied in Weymouth for both neighborhood groups and local businesses.

C. Key Open Space Acquisitions

Certain properties have important values that rank them highly in Town acquisition strategies. Below are the key parcels as identified in the current Open Space Plan.

East Bay

The East Bay property is the last portion of land that was formally the American Agricultural Chemical Company (Agrico). The land has been developed as Weymouthport residential condominiums, Webb State Park, and two six-story residential buildings known as East Bay. Many portions of the site were contaminated by the former Agrico operation and the site has been designated as a Superfund site. As of early 1999, cleanup operations were stalled pending resolution of disputes between interested parties. This land abuts the Back River and Webb State Park and serves as a valuable buffer to those resources.

Durante Property – Back River

The Durante property in East Weymouth abuts the Back River estuary just north of the Greenbush railroad right of way. The parcel is approximately six acres and was a former wool scouring mill in the 1800's. It has been vacant for over twenty years. This parcel is one of the last privately owned open space parcels along the Back River estuary and has been identified for acquisition for some time.

Whitman's Pond, South Cove

This body of water is one of several sources used to provide drinking water to the Town of Weymouth. The Town has recognized the need to insure the viability of the south cove as a water source. The aim is to identify vacant or underutilized parcels around the Cove that should be acquired and work to secure their acquisition. The Woodside Redevelopment project and the nearby Libbey Industrial Park development should support these efforts.

Mill and Front Street

A small parcel of land abuts the Mill River at the intersection of Mill and Front Street. The Town intends to determine ownership of the property and acquire it to protect the Mill River.

Wessagussett Settlement

This parcel of vacant land, located off Babcock Avenue and Sea Street, is the only

remaining parcel of open space near the original settlement of Thomas Weston. This parcel has historical value and open space value in a densely populated section of the Town. The Town plans to acquire the property for open space protection and evaluate the site for further archeological investigations.

Fore River Station – Edgar Park

Sithe Energy has purchased the fifty-five acre parcel that straddles Route 3A along the Fore River. The site is being reused for a natural gas energy generating facility and pump station for the MWRA Weymouth Braintree interceptor. The Town has actively participated in the permitting process for both projects to ensure public access opportunities at the sites.

Whitman's Pond, Main Cove Parcels

Although not a water supply source, the main cove of Whitman's Pond provides countless recreational opportunities for the public. The pond is used for boating, fishing, swimming, and ice-skating and provides a scenic water view in the central area of Weymouth. The Town has formed a Whitman's Pond Committee to study and recommend means to upgrade the health of the pond and provide public awareness regarding potential pollution sources. Acquisition or protection of remaining open spaces around the pond can reduce new pollution sources and preserve the scenic value of the pond and surrounding landscape.

Great Pond – Adjacent Parcels

The Town used foresight to acquire significant land around Great Pond to protect this valuable water supply. However, as development in the watershed continues and our knowledge of pollution impacts increases, it is apparent that protecting additional open space parcels provides benefits to the Great Pond water supply. The Town will use innovative land use techniques, such as planned unit development and clustering, to help preserve open land. Specific parcels that are significant contributors to the pond's integrity will be identified for purchase or development restrictions.

In addition to these sites, it is also recommended that the Town actively seek to obtain easements, if not out-right purchase, of lands that will create the desired links between open space parcels, and along the major rivers.

Capital Program Implications

Capital needs come in the form of land acquisition costs, management and operational needs, and technology upgrades.

Acquisitions

The acquisition of land is typically a large investment decision by a municipality. But, it has almost always proven to be effective in reducing the costs of local services when the acquired land was previously zoned for residential development. The cost of holding the undeveloped land is normally considered less than the costs of providing services to families who would otherwise live there. However, the purchase costs can be high in a high land value area.

Part 3. Public Facilities

There are several options available to reduce impacts on the Town budget when proceeding on land acquisition program.

The option of less-than-fee-simple acquisition (purchase of conservation easements or other restrictions on the land rather than the land itself) can reduce total costs and reduce the potential development while protecting valuable resources. Effective programs for teaching landowners about the potential tax benefits, as well as the community benefits, have been used to encourage extensive participation in regional open space plans. This method has been successful within many regions of Massachusetts.

The recently enacted Community Preservation Act provides an important option raising the public funds needed to obtain land. The provisions of the Act allow the Town to raise taxes by up to 3% for the purchase of land for open space, affordable housing development, and historic preservation. This approach would create a land use acquisition and development program that would be expanded in incremental steps, thereby allowing the Town to insert and expand the program gradually into the broader capital improvement plan.

Open Space and Park Management

The recommended open space and parks management plans are not significant cost items for the Town and can be made very cost effective with participation from the community. The costs for land maintenance are largely labor costs. Community volunteers, properly directed, can provide an option to full reliance on municipal staff. The community's concerns voiced at the public meetings suggest that there may be a willingness to volunteer time, so long as the program is well controlled through the Parks Department.

Information Technology Upgrades

Connections among the Town's information resources may have the advantage of reducing capital costs relative to other methods of providing the same services. However, an improved system of wired and wireless communications connecting the school, library and other Town departments will require an expenditure of operational resources and associated commitments to provide necessary hardware and software improvements, in keeping with changing technology.

NAVAL AIR STATION

The South Weymouth Naval Air Station extends over three towns: Weymouth, Abington and Rockland. It contains about 1,450 acres, with over 50 percent in Weymouth. Almost 30 percent of the land area is wetlands and woodlands. French's Stream originates on the base property and the Old Swamp River flows through the eastern portion of the base. The Old Swamp River is the watershed for one of the Town's water supply sources. Currently, approximately 160 acres (11 percent) is airfield pavement.



Photo: Naval Air Station entrance

The Tri-Town Corporation described the history of the NAS as follows:

The Air Station has a long and distinguished history of service, beginning back in the 1920s. During World War II, the Air Station served as the base for coastal antisubmarine blimp patrols, and was once home to an aviation hangar which was capable of holding up to six blimps and stood as the world's largest hangar without a center support. A few years after the war, air units from Squantum NAS were transferred to South Weymouth, and the Weymouth Naval Air Station continued to perform an important role for active duty and reserve units up through the 1990s. Weymouth Naval Air Station was finally slated to be closed in 1997, as part of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) process put in place by Congress.

Goals for the reuse plan included a commitment to economic development, job creation, expansion of the local tax base and preservation and enhancement of the site's environmental and recreational resources. The Reuse Plan was developed through a three year public planning process and any changes to the plan requires a town meeting vote in two of the towns and a Town Council vote in Weymouth. The Reuse Plan calls for development of the site over the next 20-30 years.

Useful Facts: NAS Project Summary
The total project is proposed to include:
1,400,000 sq.ft. research and development business space
2,100,00 sq.ft. retail commercial space
500-700 units of senior housing

Parceled out from the entire site are 758 acres of open space and recreation areas, the open

space plan for the NAS includes:

- 18-hole golf course with clubhouse facilities and a practice range on 190 acres,
- Reuse of the existing gymnasium
- Trotter Road Ballfields and Community Center
- Bikepath throughout the open space areas.

Part 3. Public Facilities

In addition, the over 400-acres of wetlands have been incorporated into the open space plan, to be preserved as natural habitat areas.

The type of development that will occur has not been finalized, and will be dependent on market and other factors. It is important to note that a recent vote by the Weymouth Town Council resolved that the proposed retail commercial space was not an acceptable proposal for Weymouth. No response to this vote has yet been developed by any of the other involved parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NAS

With the discussions still on-going regarding the different elements of the redevelopment plan, it has not yet come to fruition. However, regardless of the outcome of the final details, the re-use of the land will still create an opportunity for connections to the existing residents of Weymouth. These connections could be both physical and social, and could provide a sense of broader community for the future residents on the NAS, as well. Consequently, the primary recommendation is to make connections to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Connections to the Neighborhood

The site is bordered on the north by two neighborhoods. The Pine Grove neighborhood borders the NAS along the north central portion, and Columbian Square is located further to the north. Rights-of-way extending to the boundary of the Air Station could be considered for review to determine the best means to allow residents of the two northern neighborhood districts to gain access to the recreational areas of the project. However, these designs must be coordinated with the Tri-Town Corporation to ensure that once on the NAS, the pedestrians and bicyclists can obtain access across or along the loop road system and into the other public areas. The construction of the proposed bicycle path within the NAS should be coordinated with the proposed connections to the adjacent neighborhoods. As paved ways, they provide easy accessibility for all residents.

PART 4. TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The transportation infrastructure serves a vital role for the Town's residents and businesses. If it is convenient to use, the infrastructure enhances the quality of life and economic vitality of the entire community. If adequate capacity exists, desired growth can be accommodated. The Town has the opportunity to address the future relationship between land use and transportation infrastructure, particularly in regard to traffic generation and congestion in the streets.

For Your Information: Transportation as a Key to Planning the Community

Transportation was identified as a very important piece of the land use plan for Weymouth. In fact, one of the themes of the Vision Statement, 'making connections' was carried forward because of this concern. Consequently, this next section takes a look at some of the important issues and evolving recommendations that come from the Transportation analyses.

This requires continuous judgements concerning the long-term goals of the community, rather than a direct response to immediate problems that face the Town transportation system capacity. Typically, as improvements are made to infrastructure and access to land improves, so the value of the land improves with a subsequent demand for development. In turn, the development causes increased traffic and a deterioration of service that requires further access improvements. Transportation planners call this a 'Transportation - Land Use Cycle', which may not be in the long-term interest of the community.

Matching land use, transportation and other Town interests is not a simple matter. The best balance cannot take into account traffic generation issues alone. For example, the land being developed as housing will create a relatively small increase in vehicle traffic. But it will be accompanied with a potential substantial cost from the increased demands of new residents for local services and potentially lower value tax receipts from residential uses versus commercial development. Alternatively, the Town could benefit from increased commercial tax revenues to accomplish some of the other master plan goals on the same land. Development and land use relationships cannot be settled on a site-by-site basis, either. For example, the majority of commercial and industrial development potential in Weymouth lies within the NAS and in other locations, which may lead to volume and traffic pattern changes that would affect the Route 3, Route 18 and Route 53 corridors substantially (see MAPC Buildout Summary in Chapter I).

Based on a review of transportation in Weymouth, the Town needs to balance development pressures with the need for adequate transportation infrastructure. As in any community, if new development is allowed to proceed unchecked without significant transportation review and mitigation, there will be traffic flow problems throughout the community. Retail and commercial growth in Town will be the primary traffic generators in the future. These land uses generally require transportation infrastructure improvements, particularly intersection improvements for new turning movements, to maintain traffic flow. Although the development potential is not as great, major residential developments will also impact traffic congestion, adding to the AM and PM peak hours with additional commuter traffic.

The transportation planning effort is largely composed of the following steps:

Part 4. Transportation

- Identification of major travel corridors;
- Identification of major problems in the network;
- Establishment of a process for programming improvements that relate to land use.
- Establishment of recommendations for traffic management improvements.
- Consideration of site-specific problems and responses.

A. A Review of the Major Corridors and Problems

The identification of the major travel corridors and major problems with the network were largely identified in Chapter 1. As shown previously on Map I-6, Arterial Level of Service, both the major travel routes and levels of service are illustrated. As can be seen, the major capacity problems are centered on Washington Street within the section after Route 18 and Route 53 converge. Note that this section of Washington Street is estimated at a failing, LOS F, while it is already at LOS D at the Hingham town line. The other congestion areas are on the north-south regional transportation routes, Route 3A and Route 18 to varying degrees depending on the location. Almost all of this congestion is caused by through traffic in regional commuting patterns.

The trips causing a majority of the congestion appear to be extrazonal; that is they are created by demands outside the Town's commercial area zones. The reasons for this assessment are:

- Demand - The commercial area within Weymouth Landing is not currently strong enough to generate this level of economic activity (see description in Village section). However, the highly developed, highway commercial areas south of Weymouth Landing are large enough to draw on a regional market area (see Market Area under Retail Market section);
- Regional Access - Route 53 and to some extent, Route 18 generally parallel Route 3. Consequently, when Route 3 becomes highly congested during peak hours, the congestion encourages the use of alternate routes such as Routes 53 and 18 to travel to the other regional business centers.

Buildout of the land adjacent to the highway will cause future traffic impacts, but changes in land use could mean less of an impact than the existing zoning would create. As an example, with the construction of the Avalon housing project at the intersection of Routes 18 and 53, a significant amount of land and over 800,000 sq. ft. of potential commercial space has been removed from the development potential previously estimated by MAPC. As an indication of the impact this has on traffic demands, the 800,000 sq. ft. of commercial space that MAPC estimated for this location, if developed as office space could have generated some 12,000-vehicle trips per day compared to the estimated 2,100 trips per day that will be generated by the 300-unit housing project (based on Institute of Transportation Engineers standards).

B. Opportunities for Improvements

This section contains information and recommendations for transportation related improvements. While each improvement may be considered as a separate action, the overall impact of the changes is significantly expanded if they are undertaken through a concerted and coordinated effort.

State Projects for Weymouth

The State, through the Massachusetts Highway Department and the Town's regional planning agency, the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, follow a program for defining traffic improvements over time much like a municipality's capital improvement program. The process steps through a series of actions as follows:

Each year, specific areas of transportation concern are identified throughout the community. Potential solutions for improvement based on field observation at each location are brought forward. However, these locations usually require significant additional study to pinpoint specific problems and devise a recommended action plan. The resulting locations are listed in the statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), where they can be advanced through the stages (concept, design and construction) as funding is made available. Since all the needed projects cannot be funded at the same time, the TIP sets a prioritized list of transportation projects to be completed over a ten-year period. The most recent TIP covers fiscal years 2000-2005. These Master Plan findings can be the first step in the process to focus and identify projects the Town envisions as important for solving traffic problems and continuing economic growth.

Currently, projects are listed in the TIP to improve arterial roads deemed deficient. Weymouth has several projects programmed in for future years pending approval from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD). These projects include:

- A supplemental project from the state (Mass. Highway Department) to reconstruct Route 18 from Route 3 to Columbian Street will improve capacity and help to reduce delay. The project cost is estimated at \$2 million. This further indicates the state is preparing for increased traffic along Route 18. This is also being done with the purpose of improving access to the Naval Air Station.
- Fiscal Year 1999 – This project at Route 18 and Winter Street is underway to improve operations at this intersection. The projected cost was \$451,113.
- Fiscal Year 2001 – Route 53 at Middle Street is programmed to make safety improvements at this intersection. This project was previously in the FY 2000 TIP, but was deferred to FY 2001. Project cost is \$600,000.
- Fiscal Year 2002 – Route 18 at Route 53 is programmed to upgrade the traffic signals at this location. This project was previously in the FY 1999 TIP, and was added to the FY 2002. Project cost is \$350,000. The intersection is located near the siting of a new CVS pharmacy and the Avalon, 300-unit apartment complex. Both CVS and Avalon have agreed to contribute to improvements at the intersection as part of its traffic

Part 4. Transportation

mitigation plans. This dedicated funding will accelerate improvements to this intersection.

- Supplemental TIP projects – These are future projects listed for planning purposes with no assured funding source, and implementation could extend to ten years out or more. One other project, Naval Station Connector Roads construction is listed as a supplemental project. Approximately \$25 million has been assigned to this project by the State.

Commercial Development and Route 3 Access

The Town should develop preferred alternate access to Route 3 for the industrial zoned areas beside Route 3. This will require modifying the approach to land use and circulation, and should meet both economic and transportation goals. The industrial zoned areas are the Libbey Industrial Park, and the quarry off of Washington Street. The potential buildout of these industrial areas is approximately half of the Town's total for commercial and industrial space, or over 2 million square feet.

The recent submission of a plan for the Weymouth Woods office building project in Libbey Industrial Park suggests that the value of this land is increasing. However, there are several access issues that may reduce the ability to further develop this land and the adjacent industrial land. Even though these industrial districts are very close or adjacent to Route 3 entrance ramps, these industrial areas exit onto local roads. The quarry has frontage on Washington Street, but this still is only indirect access to Route 3.

By connecting these areas to the Route 3 ramps with a dedicated road, much of the impact to local roads would be relieved of most traffic and allow for the potential development of these sites. This improved access would make the Town's industrial zoned land more economically valuable. The implementation of this recommendation would require creation of a road layout connecting the quarry with Libbey Industrial Park, and extending further west along Route 3 and connecting to the exit ramps at Exit 16;

The extension of the road to Exit 15 would also be a desirable part of this proposal. However, Federal Highway Administration standards would have to be met to ensure full federal financing, if available. The recommendation also requires State interaction in the planning and design. However, given the status of the Route 3 widening project, this appears to be an opportune time to advance this idea.

C. Management Recommendations

Many of the problems with traffic in Weymouth are related to patterns of use that can be better managed. The connection between future land use and traffic management conditions is again emphasized. The management recommendations generally fall into four categories; land use changes, traffic management strategies, access improvements, non-vehicular access improvements, and public transit improvements.

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One way to understand the management task is to recognize the different types of trips that compose the traffic within Weymouth. As an example, the following lists are different trip types that could be accomplished with different modes of transport, depending on distance and end points.

Table II-7 Types of Commutes

Local trips	
<u>Type of trip</u>	<u>Implications</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Between Home and Business:	These are short trips for shopping and pleasure. They can occur during peak hours for business and outside the peak hours for recreation. They create parking demands in the business areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Between Homes	Typically off-peak hours, these do not create a significant problem for roads or parking.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Between Home and School	These are car, bus, pedestrian and bicycle trips. The alternative means of access to cars can be encouraged by providing safe and easily accessible roadways, bikeways and sidewalks.
Regional trips	
<u>Type of commute</u>	<u>Implications</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commutes to Weymouth	As an end-point to a commute, the Town provides either a parking spot or a local transit option (for example, bus or taxi) from a regional system (for example, train or bus). The local roadway system is used to access the business location. Concentration of business land uses allows easier mass transit development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commutes through Weymouth	These are the most difficult because they provide no benefit to the community with the exception of some pass-by local business stops by the commuters. The growth of traffic outside the community and the ease of travel on the Town highways creates the demand. The Town must look to outside sources – MHD and MBTA – to provide relief with improved arterial highways and public transit options.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commutes from Weymouth	These commutes are created by the options for jobs that support local residents within the urban center. Decisions on economic development projects can specify where the vehicle trips will end, but do not lessen the number of trips.

The key to a good transportation plan is one that accommodates all these trip types with the most efficient movements while considering physical and financial constraints. Below

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are some additional concepts based on the need for wide ranging transportation improvements.

Land Use Changes

In theory, the most effective land use changes to reduce traffic impact would be to prohibit uses with high traffic generation. However, these high traffic generating uses are also typically the highest value development and so create the greatest tax benefit to the community. Examples are commercial retail and office development. Consequently, this action would not help the tax base.

Encouraging large single employers who have ability and responsibility to control their company-related traffic demands would allow the Town to support uses that provide the Town with the tax revenues and create a means to control traffic impacts that would more easily allow the existing transportation infrastructure to support new development. Encouraging large office space development projects, such as the Weymouth Woods project in Libbey Industrial Park could lead to this greater management control option with the right tenants.

A second option is to limit uses that cause the greatest number of stopping and turning movements during the peak hours as a means to smooth the flow of traffic. These are typically the fast food services that cater to the passing traffic. As an example, a typical take-out coffee shop with drive through and sit down service can have 400 or more customers an hour in the morning peak times. However, there could also be other services such as food stores and dry cleaners that also cater to the commuter who needs a quick option to meet their home needs as they pass.

Decreasing the number of curb cuts also meets the goal of smoothing traffic flow. This reduces turning movements and potential crossing conflicts as the number of driveways is reduced. Requiring large frontage requirements and minimizing the number of drive throughs or curb cuts per length of highway frontage would encourage fewer turning movements. An example is the McDonalds and Ames combined driveway openings, although the resulting curb cut is larger than is actually required.

Land Use and Connections to Transit

Another means to reduce vehicle travel is to locate the concentrations of residents where there are good public transit options that will provide them easy access to the jobs and services they desire. This would entail development of multi-family dwellings close to the rail line stations. Because of the proximity of the village centers at Jackson Square and Weymouth Landing, this would also provide another stimulus to the local businesses with an increase in available customers.

Traffic Management Strategies

Traffic management strategies have been developed as concepts to respond to the need for solutions other than trying to restrict the zoned use of land. These include the following:

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- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) - These are user programs such as carpooling, transit subsidies, staggered work hours, and employee telecommuting. One mandate for this comes from the Federal Clean Air Act that requires certain large-scale employers to manage employee commutes to reduce air pollution. An example of a reasonable local program would be the one instituted by South Shore Hospital, which uses off-site parking lots and bus shuttles to reduce local traffic and parking impacts in Weymouth.
- Transportation Systems Management (TSM) - These are measures to preserve the capacities of existing roads such as moving people onto transit systems. Other examples are to direct traffic to certain roads at certain times to relieve other locations. The regional SmartRoutes project was initiated to provide this type of real-time and readily available information during the commuting hours so that commuters could make choices to avoid adding to certain traffic tie-ups. Local options might be electronic signage that could direct travelers before they reach congested areas.
- Traffic Management Planning - This is the approach taken to address unavoidable impacts and decide on structural or non-structural solutions. Some of these are discussed in the next section concerning vehicular access and non-vehicular access.

Vehicular Access as a Comprehensive Strategy

Vehicular access improvements could include the construction projects such as the Route 3 and Route 18 widening and intersection improvements described above that will lessen demand on local roads directly or by improving the ability to travel the major arterials. The improvements could also include gateway and signage improvements to help guide motorists. The focus of most of these actions is to keep through traffic on the arterials and away from the adjacent neighborhoods.

The construction of new access roads designed to take commercial and industrial traffic directly to the arterials also lessens the impact on neighborhoods and local roads. The proposed connector to the Naval Air Station from Route 3 is one example. Other possible ideas presented in this master plan include:

- A connector road from the Planned Industrial Park with the Industrial zoned land at the quarry (see Map III- 10 Recommendations).
- Direct connectors to the existing Route 3 ramps from the industrial properties.
- Improvements to the local collector roads such as Route 18 and 53 to smooth traffic flow and reduce impacts to adjacent residential streets.

Other controls on vehicle use can originate from the large employers within Weymouth. Under the federal Clean Air Act regulations, employers with a large number of employees, for example, more than 300 employees, are required under certain circumstances to ensure their employees are provided with options to traveling to work in single-occupancy vehicles. This can include car pooling and ride shares, or even bus service where applicable.

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Non-vehicular Access as a Strategy

A key to improving the quality of life related to traffic congestion and highway improvements is to improve the choices and alternatives to using passenger vehicles. The idea is to create easier access options for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit by focusing improvements on the facilities that not only accommodate these options but also facilitate them as well. Bicycle and pedestrian accessways can provide good local alternatives to using a vehicle for short trips. However, the path must be safe, efficient and hopefully, fun.

As a proposal for Weymouth, a bike path is recommended as a series of loops on the existing roadways around Town. Much of this system could utilize the existing rights of way because of the extra wide pavements constructed in a number of areas. The initial streets proposed as part of this system would be Pleasant Street, Commercial Street, Middle Street, and Green Street, with Front Street and Summer Street used to create connecting loops on more scenic roads.

This system would provide important connections to schools, residential and commercial areas. The wider roads can simply be striped as was recently completed on Middle Street as a way to keep cars within their lane and allow freedom of movement for bicycles. This striping is also applied to Spring, High and Webb streets. Parking restrictions on these streets outside of the commercial areas would be fairly easy to accomplish. Within the village areas, the use of traffic calming measures would allow the bicycles to move in relative safety with the slower flow of traffic.

Secondly, and for the environmental and recreational experience as well as circulation option, a walkway that follows the central river corridors could also link the important commercial areas with residential neighborhoods. The walkway would provide a high quality experience and keep a broad public interest in the quality and condition of the river and its natural resources.

Public Transit and the Overall Transportation Strategy

A key to improving conditions on the roads is the increased use of public transit. The new train stations at Weymouth Landing and East Weymouth should help to reduce overall commuting traffic through the Town highways. The overall benefit to the Town will be mitigated by the local traffic impacts on roads adjacent to the stations. By removing vehicles from the arterials, the total demand is lessened and all road systems can benefit. Public transit provides several options in a range of travel patterns from the local shopping area shuttle bus to the regional train system. The recommended transit approach for Weymouth is to have a system that can grow with the Town. A flexible bus system that can alter routes and locations for service, as demand requires, would provide the most efficient service. From the example of other communities, enough subsidies might be raised to operate the system with the participation of regional transit agencies and the local business community. Currently, much effort is being placed towards a quiet and clean electric bus solution for communities. Consequently, the option for an efficient and environmentally friendly bus system appears within reach.

D. Responding to Specific Transportation Concerns

The Town must prioritize the various transportation concerns and take active steps to rectify the problems. Part of this prioritization must take into account the observations of other specific locations or issues. The concerns and responses were identified through discussions with local officials and observations. The areas of concern and responses are Traffic Safety (accidents), Capacity (how much traffic can be handled), Pedestrian Access (sidewalks and ease of crossing), Trucks (mixing with other vehicles and going through neighborhoods) and Speeding (whether or not tickets are issued).

Capacity Issues

- Winter Street at Route 18 has significant delays for westbound travelers. An illegal double left turn has now been created at the morning peak hour. Construction for these improvements is already underway.
- Route 18 at Route 53 contained no provision for a northbound left turn because of the difficult geometry. The Town will direct the redesign of the intersection to allow this left turn and improve overall traffic operations. The Town is working with the MHD and the adjacent developers to improve operations.
- Route 53 will also receive growth in traffic north of its connection with Route 18. Route 53 is located on a commercial corridor and will grow based on the commercial and retail expansion that is constructed along the road. The construction of the Avalon housing project in place of commercial development will reduce the potential growth in traffic.
- Columbian Square is a heavily traveled stop sign controlled intersection in a village center setting. The Town recently hired a consultant and studied improvement options, including a signalized solution. But some local business owners objected to a signalized intersection. There is a potential traffic calming measure to address the traffic circulation problems at this location. This proposed measure is a 'roundabout' and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Pedestrian Access

- Bridge Street at Evans Street is a heavily traveled pedestrian corridor for children on their way to Wessagussett School on North Street and must cross Route 3A, a heavily traveled arterial corridor that is not pedestrian friendly. Pedestrian crossings should be improved and emphasized with upgraded traffic signals and crosswalks.
- Other schools, on Middle Street and Pleasant Street, let out children onto fairly wide roads (up to 60-foot wide right-of-ways) with sidewalks of variable quality and maintenance. These need to be reviewed and appropriate improvements accomplished.
- Sidewalks are generally available in Town but are not of equal or always high quality. Bikeways are almost non-existent. Walking and bicycling options should be available to Weymouth residents. A project to create a comprehensive survey of all sidewalks is one method to establish an understanding of the deficiencies, and to help prioritize improvements.

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- At many of the commercial locations along Route 18, there are no sidewalks and little allowance for pedestrian or bicycle traffic. These are auto-oriented businesses that actually discourage pedestrians because of their site designs that lack any options for foot traffic and with streets that have been built only to move a significant volume of vehicles. Interior site walkways should also be required as part of the Site Plan review process. Adequate sidewalk space should be a condition of all new or significant redevelopment, and should be corrected as part of any publicly funded streetscape program.

Truck Traffic

- Restricting truck traffic on West Street and moving it to Park Avenue would increase safety at the intersection and along West Street. The Town should reopen discussions with the Town of Braintree to secure approval for this truck exclusion.
- A proposed solid waste transfer station in Abington may add 600 trucks per day to Route 18, going in and out of the facility. These trucks would move through Weymouth to the other major collectors and arterials. MHD has projects to improve Route 18 in this vicinity and at Winter Street. However, there is no benefit to the Town of Weymouth from the siting of such a facility there.

Speeding

- Green Street has consistent speeding problems. The wide road geometry encourages speeding. The street did not appear on the list of highest number of accidents, but two fatalities, ten years ago, contribute to the perception of this road as a dangerous speedway. This problem can be addressed through improved enforcement.
- Pleasant Street has a significant number of speeding violations according to the Police Department. Again this road is wide and encourages speeding. The posted speed limit is 30 miles per hour, but speeds are consistently clocked in the 40-mile per hour range. Enforcement is considered the key to addressing this issue.

PART 5. LAND USE AND ZONING

This section of the Master Plan considers the important role played by zoning in guiding future land use decisions. It analyzes the zoning ordinance from a variety of perspectives and includes recommendations for changes and amendments that revise the ordinance so that it achieves the Goals and Objectives of the Master Plan. Additionally, updates are recommended to reflect changes in state land use law, case law, and remove internal inconsistencies. Some of the recommendations are simply aimed at improving the manner in which the ordinance is presented so that it becomes more “user-friendly”. Finally, certain amendments may be required to reflect the change in form of government from representative town meeting to mayor and town council.

For Your Information: What is Zoning?

Modern zoning began in the early 1900's in response to the location of potentially incompatible and noxious land uses next to commercial and residential areas. The zoning ordinance has evolved over the years as a means to limit the types of land uses that could locate in a particular area of the municipality, resulting in a separation of uses.

Ideally, the Master Plan is the blueprint for the Town and the zoning ordinance is the regulation that implements the plan. Typically, a zoning ordinance regulates land use by:

- Specifying and distinguishing different land use types;
- Creating development standards for the size and shape of lots and the buildings erected on those lots;
- Addressing lots, buildings and uses that pre-dated the adoption of the zoning ordinance (non-conformities);
- Establishing criteria for the evaluation of permit applications for new buildings;
- Establishing procedures for permitting uses not specifically allowed by right;
- Defining terms that have specific meanings under the ordinance; and,
- Creating a map that displays the geographic extent of each zoning district.

A. Overview of the Weymouth Zoning Districts

The Weymouth Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 120 from the Code of the Town of Weymouth) has not been comprehensively revised since 1969. However, numerous sections have been added or revised on a section-by-section basis over the intervening years. The zoning ordinance establishes fourteen districts and three overlay districts. They are as follows:

- **Residence District R-1:** This is primarily a district that allows detached single-family dwellings and related accessory uses.
- **Residence District R-2:** This is a mixed low-density residential district that is intended to provide a transition between single-family and multi-family or business districts. It allows up to two- and three-family dwelling units and can include some office use as well.
- **Residence District R-3:** This is a higher density district for low-rise structures that are appropriately planned to create garden-type multiple-family dwelling units and would allow certain businesses that may be compatible with residential use.

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- Residence District R- 4: In this district, appropriately planned high-rise structures for high-density multiple-family dwelling units are allowed in a manner that would provide varied housing opportunities.
- Neighborhood Center District NCD: This district allows mixed residential and non-residential uses in neighborhood setting. It is designed to reflect historical development patterns that include residential, commercial, governmental and religious uses that serve the surrounding neighborhood. Standards are established to ensure that the neighborhood character is compatible with adjacent residential districts.
- Highway Transition District HT: This also is a mixed-use development district, but is found along the major arterials. Redevelopment of structures previously used for residential uses into commercial uses is encouraged. Site design criteria apply in order to preserve the scale and character of the existing streetscape.
- Medical Services District: Only health care uses are allowed in this district and density and dimensional requirements must be met to ensure compatibility with abutting districts.
- Business District B-1: This is a standard limited business use district that allows a variety of retail, service and office uses. Drive-through service is allowed with a special permit.
- Business District B-2: This general business use district is similar to the B-1 except that it also allows for commercial parking and automobile and related rentals. Multi-family dwellings are allowed by special permit.
- Industrial District I-1: Generally, this is a standard industrial district that allows offices, research facilities, wholesale businesses and some light manufacturing.
- The Planned Industrial Park District is intended to establish areas to be set aside for industrial parks. The allowed uses are similar to those in the I-1 district, with additional uses allowed by special permit. This is the district in which adult uses can be sited with the issuance of a special permit. Industrial performance standards are designed to minimize adverse environmental impacts.
- Planned Office Park District: This district provides a zone for “park-like development” for office, research and development, and light industrial uses.
- Industrial District I-2: In addition to the industrial uses allowed in the I-1 district, some heavy industry is allowed by special permit. Water-based industry such as boat sales and water freight terminal facilities (by special permit) can be located in this zone as well.
- Open Space District: This district is intended to allow for the reuse of surplus public and quasi-public property. A mix of uses is allowed here.

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In addition, there are the following overlay districts that serve to reinforce key Town policies in the underlying zoning districts in special areas:

- The Watershed Protection District: This district is an overlay intended to protect surface water bodies, particularly those that affect public water supplies. Additional criteria and restrictions apply to the uses allowed by the underlying zoning district.
- The Groundwater Protection District: This is an overlay designed to protect groundwater recharge areas and municipal drinking water wells. It follows the same basic premise as the Watershed Protection District.
- Floodplain District: This is an overlay district to prevent flood damage to properties in areas designated by the ordinance. Additional procedures apply in this district, but the underlying zoning determines uses. Certain construction criteria may apply as well.

The special permit granting authority (SPGA) is defined by the ordinance as being the Zoning Board of Appeals, in accordance with March 2000 amendments to the ordinance. The Planning Director now has an administrative site plan review authority under the ordinance as a result of the recent amendments. This is a less stringent standard of review than a Special Permit, which is used for projects presumed to have a less intense impact.

The zoning ordinance also includes sections on off-street parking and loading, which include dimensional requirements, as well as parking standards for different land uses. However, no other design requirements for these parking areas are set forth. The ordinance contains earth removal and earth filling sections. Newer sections address wireless communications equipment (towers) and adult uses.

The Weymouth ordinance regulates the type, size, and placement of signs in the Town in different zoning districts (Article XVI). While the ordinance does address size issues, it does not regulate signs by material type. As an aesthetic concern, the sign regulations can be amended as the Town determines appropriate to match the character of the Town, including a differentiation of allowed signs in different districts.

With the exception of Table 1 – Schedule of District Regulations, all zoning regulations are presented in text form. There is no land use table that summarizes permitted and prohibited land use types for each zoning district, as well as which uses may require a special permit. A graphical type of presentation is typically used to assist the public in finding information readily, in a document that can otherwise be quite dense with information.

There are a number of newer growth management tools and techniques that are not found in the zoning ordinance. These include “smart growth” village center and design review standards, landscaping requirements, sustainable development principles, and a number of other techniques that can be used to further the goals and objectives of the master plan.

What follows is a description of recommended changes to the ordinance that are designed to implement the recommendations of the master plan from a regulatory perspective. New tools and techniques are explained. The rationale for the proposed changes also are outlined, including discussion of alternatives means for implementing the changes as well

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as identifying potential pitfalls. Additionally, there is a discussion on recodification of the ordinance to improve its ease of use and readability.

B. Recommendations for Changes to the Zoning Ordinance

There are nine different recommendations for changes in the zoning ordinance for Weymouth. The first and most important recommendation is to address the need to preserve and revitalize the village centers. Modification of the ordinance format and specific sections are also proposed.

Village Center Zoning

The initial rationale for creating improved village-base, commercial zoning in the Weymouth Zoning Ordinance can be found in its Neighborhood Center District. The stated purpose is “to outline and preserve the neighborhood core which has historically developed into a composite of residential, commercial, governmental and religious uses primarily designed to serve the surrounding neighborhood”. The zoning for the district permits single and two-family dwelling units, retail sales and services, small offices and similar uses. Non-residential uses are limited to a maximum of 5,000 gross square feet of floor area. Some other uses may be allowed by special permit, most notably multi-family dwellings and businesses utilizing drive-through service or windows.

Although these provisions meet some of the purposes of a modern village center zoning district, the regulations could seek to define some of the themes that have emerged in the focused study sites and the analyses of the four village centers (Columbian Square, Jackson Square, Weymouth Landing, and Bicknell Square). During the public forums there has been a great deal of discussion regarding these village centers. The emerging themes have centered on the need to:

- Maintain a vibrant center, teeming with commercial activity;
- Provide greater access to those areas that are more pedestrian friendly and less dependent on the automobile;
- Keep a mix of uses that are smaller in scale, but can compete against the changing retail economy; and
- Establish minimum design standards for buildings and signs.

The new generation of village center zoning districts accomplishes this with a focus on scale, aesthetics and a compatible mix of uses. Village center zoning districts are designed to encourage pedestrian-oriented commercial enterprises and consumer services that do not rely on automobile traffic to bring consumers into the area. Encouraging mixed uses, including a variety of residential housing types to attract more pedestrian traffic, promotes the pedestrian activity. Reducing the scale of the buildings, as well as the minimum lot size and setback requirements improves the aesthetics of the village center areas. The buildings are brought closer to the street on smaller lots with reduced off-street parking requirements. This, in turn, directs necessary parking to the rear of the buildings. Because

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municipal lots are located in several of the village centers, this rear parking can easily be accommodated. The aesthetic character is further enhanced with design guidelines and landscaping requirements. Thus, the principal recommendation is that Weymouth enhance its existing Neighborhood Commercial District language with updated village center zoning standards that could be applied in the four village centers mentioned above. Additionally, there should be four Neighborhood Center Districts established within the zoning map for each of the village centers. Of the four village centers, only Bicknell Square is presently designated as a Neighborhood Center District, under the existing zoning criteria.

Village Center Allowed Uses

The possible list of allowable uses in a revised Neighborhood Center District (NCD), recognizing that some already are allowed either by right or special permit, could include:

- Single-family residential structures for lots of 5,000 square feet where it is incidental to a commercial use. Single-family housing is already allowed by right in the NCD;
- Multi-family residential structures for lots that exceed 7,500 square feet where it is incidental to a commercial use. Currently, two-family structures are allowed by right, while three or more requires a special permit. If the Town would like to encourage greater residential density as a way to attract more pedestrian traffic in a mixed-use setting, then it should consider allowing multi-family by right (perhaps up to six units);
- Mixed use where commercial/office space is located on the ground floor with residential dwelling units above (perhaps with special permit or site plan review);
- Educational facilities;
- Child care facilities;
- Auction galleries, gift shops, arts & crafts, and antiques shops;
- General merchandise, food stores, apparel & accessories, furniture & home furnishings, other retail sales;
- Consumer services;
- Restaurant (not including take-out or drive-through);
- Professional or business office;
- Bank (no drive-through windows);
- Home-based businesses.

The retail business uses intended for this area, which are not specifically identified above could include bookstores, flower shops, tailors, shoe repair, hairstylists, copy and printing shops, dry cleaners, and similar small-scale uses. Professional offices could include real estate, medical, dental, insurance, travel agencies, and similar services. This represents a more detailed listing than the current ordinance delineates for the NCD. The goal is to provide the types of goods and services on a neighborhood basis so that residents of the area can walk, rather than drive, to run those errands.

At the same time, certain uses must be prohibited. This can include all commercial uses larger than 5,000 gross square feet of floor area (as is currently the case in the NCD), although other size thresholds can be established. Specific land uses to prohibit include gas and automotive service stations, convenience stores, fast food restaurants, any use with a drive-through window, warehouses, storage facilities and other uses destined to

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generate larger volumes of traffic. This could also be the case with a freestanding bank ATM machine. The reason to consider prohibition of new structures with drive-through windows or service is to minimize the number of new curb cuts in the district, but also to reduce the number of instances where cars interfere directly with pedestrian traffic on the sidewalks. Currently, the NCD does not specifically address these uses.

Finally, pedestrian amenities are important in order to capture the village character. This includes providing for paved walkways and safe street crossings. Retail uses should be located along streets with sidewalks, in a typical village configuration. Parallel parking can provide a barrier between the moving vehicles on the street and the pedestrians on the sidewalk. Bicycle racks should be provided to encourage bicycle use as an alternative to automobiles. These items could be considered as part of a Site Plan Review or building permit process, but are more likely to be the responsibility of the Town as part of streetscape improvements in these areas.

Village Center Setbacks and Dimensions

It is recommended that the dimensional regulations be amended for the new NCD. Minimum lot sizes should be reduced to as little as 5,000 square feet to accommodate small businesses and residential (at least 7,500 square feet for multi-family as currently stated in the Schedule of District Regulations). Setbacks also should be reduced below those established for the NCD. The front yard setback can be as little as five feet on the first floor and a greater distance (ten to twenty feet) for the second floor unless this interferes with the architectural character of the village. A similar scenario can be considered for the rear yard setback. Since it is likely in a village setting to have buildings built adjacent to one another, it is recommended that a zero lot line be established, where buildings are constructed on the lot line with no setback. This concept can be employed in this district for the side yard setback as well.

Another option is to provide minimum standards (still below the current requirements for the NCD), but allow flexibility so that certain setbacks can be reduced further or eliminated in order to achieve the vision for the particular village center. If this approach is preferred, the review can be administrative as part of the site plan review process or as a special permit. However, the special permit may be a disincentive for developers because of the process, time involved, and the uncertainty. The Town also may consider some flexibility in the height requirements to allow for some residential/commercial mixed-use structures on smaller lots.

Lot size and setbacks should be revised to encourage redevelopment of parcels, including pre-existing non-conforming structures. If the minimum lot size or setbacks are too large, redevelopment is discouraged, as evidenced in other similar municipalities. Reduction of lot sizes and setbacks provide greater flexibility for developers to work with, thereby increasing the opportunity to enhance the village center. Businesses and residences also should be oriented toward the street with a minimum front yard setback in order to encourage better pedestrian accessibility.

To determine the most appropriate concepts for building height, setbacks, exterior square footage, and parking, the Town should establish standards that maintain consistency

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within the village center districts. Village attractiveness and functionality can be enhanced if there is some consistency in the standards. At the same time, it is recognized that the existing neighborhood fabric is created by a variety of building heights or even a desire to have some variety. This is why providing for some flexibility in the standards through additional height that might be gained through a bonus provision or as a part of site plan review of a project. It also helps to understand why certain structures do not “fit” into the village center.

Village Center Design Issues

Several concepts for upgrading the design guidelines or standards for commercial properties within the villages were discussed previously. Again, the key steps in creating design guidelines that communicate the Town’s desired condition are:

- Understanding the original style or styles, which can vary significantly. By understanding the existing architectural style, the new development can be made complimentary.
- Establishing requirements that understand the special needs and demands on businesses in the village area. Limited parking on the street and delivery methods and a need for distinguishing signage are some of those special needs.
- Establishing the most important elements for the facades that can be included in regulations and program standards. With more specificity in the regulations, the application of the standards becomes easier.
- Determining which guidelines should be adopted and how the guidelines should be applied by the Planning and Building offices may require additional public debate.

There are several ways of implementing design guidelines or standards. First, the Town can prepare a design guidelines manual, as has been done in a number of communities such as Wellesley and Northampton. These are guidelines only, but they illustrate design principles with words, photos and renderings and should be given to developers early in the project planning process.

Second, the design of a project can be subject to site plan review or special permit application. If the special permit process is preferred, standards for review and criteria for approval must be included in the ordinance.

Third, there is the design review process, which allows a municipality to exert some control over the aesthetic considerations of a development proposal. Typically, a separate Design Review Board is established to review projects based on criteria developed within the regulations regarding building design, materials, landscaping, size, etc. Ideally, such a board should include architects, planners, or others with expertise in design issues. This type of review is generally advisory.

It is recommended that the Town prepare a design guidelines manual, but also establish minimum standards in the ordinance that refers to the manual. The ordinance also should establish thresholds for projects that would undergo site plan review, and larger ones that

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would require a special permit. The existing NCD does this for some land uses, but would need to be expanded for the new uses that might be added to the district. At this time, the Design Review Board option is not recommended due to its complexity.

Village Center Parking Standards

Parking is often a major concern in village centers, and the business owners in Weymouth seem to agree. Business owners want to ensure that their customers have ample room to park, while providing spaces can waste valuable land and is viewed as an eyesore. Parking requirements should be made more flexible so that new off-street parking is not necessary for every new business that seeks to open in Weymouth. As new development occurs in the NCD, the Town should look for opportunities for shared parking. Some options include:

- Allowing shared parking between uses with daytime hours such as banks, offices, medical clinics, and some service stores and those with evening hours such as restaurants, theaters, and bars;
- Municipal parking facilities can serve numerous users;
- Allowing off-site parking if certain conditions can be met such as ease of pedestrian access and the use has low parking turnover;
- Accounting for the number of available parallel parking spaces.

Three things should be considered in revised parking regulations. First, current parking standards should be revised to reflect newer parking projections for different land uses. It is important to ensure that there is not too much parking. Therefore, one recommendation is for the Town to estimate the total gross floor area of the commercial establishments in the study area and compare it to the number of available parking spaces. There may be numerous opportunities for shared parking if buildings are built close to each other or if the parking needs occur at different times of the day. Second, off-street parking should be built behind the buildings so they do not face the streetscape. This allows the stores and offices to front on the street, making it more inviting for pedestrian traffic. Parking areas in any case should be landscaped in accordance with standards established in the zoning ordinance to mitigate visual impacts. Last, the standards should include lighting requirements and signage requirements to ensure safe and well-used parking areas.

Highway Commercial Design Standards

Related to the standards for commercial development in the villages, are the standards that could be applied to the larger commercial developments associated with the main transportation corridors, where the larger stand-alone projects may occur. The initial list of design guidelines is included in the section on Corridors as a previous section of this Chapter. The same zoning tools as have been discussed for the village districts could be used in the commercial districts.

Ordinance Format

The Town should recodify its existing ordinance and update its format and content to make it easier to use and understand. The ordinance has been amended in a piecemeal fashion over the years, resulting in internal inconsistencies, some redundancies, and in general is hard to follow. Additionally, some of the standards may be out-of-date, such as the parking requirements. Changes in the Massachusetts General Laws and new case law need to be reflected in the ordinance, as well. The definitions section should be updated to provide clearer better definitions for some terms, while others need to be added.

In order to make the ordinance user-friendlier; it is recommended that more tables and graphics be included within the text. Graphics can be used to illustrate certain definitions and special regulations. Tables should be used for dimensional regulations (currently the only table in the ordinance) and for the delineation of uses in each district. The verbal description of uses found in the existing ordinance can be confusing and hard to follow, especially since one has to refer to previous sections to determine what is allowed in a particular district. Moreover, the description of uses allowed in each district contains design and performance standards, which ideally should be moved to a separate section. A table of uses can more easily depict which uses are allowed in each of the districts as of right, by special permit, as well as those that are prohibited. Finally, cross-referencing of different sections will make the ordinance easier to follow so that those using it can better determine which sections need to be reviewed in order to properly comply with all relevant provisions.

The Town needs to consider some substantive changes to the ordinance as well. Many of those are discussed in this section of the Master Plan.

Essentially, in order to accomplish a zoning recodification, the ordinance needs to be thoroughly reviewed and input needs to be obtained from all users of the ordinance. Those users include Town officials charged with implementing and enforcing the ordinance, developers who rely upon the ordinance to provide guidance on the standards that must be adhered to, and citizens who seek to understand the potential impacts of development in their neighborhoods.

There are several options for the Town as it proceeds with this effort. A total reformatting could be done that results in a new numbering system in addition to all the other changes. Alternatively, the recodification can be done within the context of the existing numbering system. Furthermore, the recodification can focus only on administrative and format changes rather than substantive changes. The final option is to include substantive changes as well as the others for a totally rewritten and updated ordinance. The decision regarding this option depends upon how much change should reasonably be presented to the Town Council at one time.

Cluster or Open Space Zoning

Cluster or open space zoning is probably one of the most commonly applied techniques for conserving open space. It is frequently referred to as “cluster zoning” and more recently as “conservation development zoning”. Open space zoning generally involves the grouping of buildings into compacted areas, often on lots smaller than normally allowed in similar residentially zoned districts, in a manner that allows for preservation of contiguous

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open space. Such a provision is found in the Planned Unit Development section (§120-63) of the zoning ordinance, although it is not a typical example of this technique.

While recognizing that the Town is largely built out and would not benefit as much from this approach as other communities, nevertheless the additional planning, design and review standards Weymouth can take advantage of remaining opportunities to enhance links between residential, recreational areas and open spaces in the Town.

There are certain standards and criteria that could be established in the ordinance to increase the preservation of open space. The ordinance should set aside minimum criteria for what land is to be protected, a minimum percentage of the total parcel to be set aside, and the legal mechanism that will ensure the protection in perpetuity. Design standards can enhance a project, as well, by reducing roadway widths and preserving environmental features, for example. The developer would be required to submit plans showing the natural features of the site and showing how the development would fit within those features. The natural and valuable features would then become an amenity to the project as well the Town.

Typically, the developer is not permitted to build more units on the parcel than may be allowed pursuant to the applicable zoning district. Some concern has been raised about the marketability of clustered units so developers shy away from proposing such projects. One approach to encourage the use of the planned unit development is to establish density bonuses for projects that permanently preserve large amounts of open space or address other planning objectives of the Town such as inclusion of affordable housing units.

This provision could provide additional benefits to the developer and the municipality. In addition to the conservation of open space, less infrastructure is needed to service the project, such as roads, water, and sewer. This reduces costs for both parties for construction and maintenance. It also reduces potential water quality impacts resulting from stormwater runoff.

Related regulations should be incorporated into the Town's Subdivision Rules and Regulations to mirror the concepts and specific submittal requirements of the zoning ordinance.

Affordable Housing

A growing number of communities have enacted inclusionary housing provisions that require a minimum number of units (or percentage) be set aside as affordable within a new housing development. The Weymouth ordinance does not include such a provision.

It is recommended that the Town consider this because of the difficulty of finding affordable housing in the Boston metropolitan area. This also helps to address the affordable housing problem as described elsewhere in this plan.

A key component of such a program includes a threshold for the size of projects for which the requirement applies. In addition, the program must establish a pre-determined minimum set asides (number or percentage of total units), and a requirement that the units

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remain affordable for a minimum period of time, preferably up to 99 years. The units can either be on-site, thereby ensuring greater distribution of the units, or off-site, which is sometimes considered to be less expensive to build. Income requirements have been legislated by some communities, as well.

With the construction of affordable units planned or underway at the NAS and Avalon, the Town will almost meet the subsidized affordable housing standard of 10% for projected units, even to the year 2004. However, to maintain that percentage, the ordinance requirement for 10% subsidized for low income and another 10% to meet the median income standards would be recommended. Because the Governor's Executive Order 418 does not require the subsidy or maintenance of the median income units, their resale value is not affected by the requirement for initial sales restriction. As a result, these units would return to a value comparable to other units in the community with similar tax implications. However, the protected units could remain controlled to provide long term affordability.

One caution is worth noting. Given the recent decision that overturned the Barnstable bylaw requiring a fee for housing rather than a requirement that affordable units are set aside, the Town should probably not consider a fee as a way of meeting its affordable housing goals. At this time, there does not appear to be a legal basis for charging a fee.

Water Resource Protection

The Weymouth Zoning Ordinance protects both surface and groundwater resources with two distinct overlay districts. Although it was added to the ordinance in 1995, The Town may want to consider strengthening this regulation, especially the groundwater protection district. Changes should add more specific filing requirements in order to determine how some of the land use requirements will be achieved. For example, the storage of hazardous materials, fertilizers, and manure require storage structures to prevent runoff. Development in the overlay district requires artificial recharge and removal of soil, loam, and gravel must meet certain standards. Given the technical nature of these requirements, it may ease the decision-making process to specify the narrative and graphic format for the filing of information.

Given the scarcity and sensitivity of water resources in general and of drinking water in particular, it is important to work cooperatively with abutting communities on water quality and quantity issues. Since water resources do not respect political boundaries, it is important for abutting communities to adopt regulations consistent with Weymouth for their shared resources. Additionally, each town should share information regarding projects pending approval that are located in watershed or aquifer overlay districts in order to allow the opportunity to comment or agree upon suitable mitigation measures to ensure protection of the resource.

Landscaping Regulations

Landscaping regulations set forth requirements that describe the type, density, and placement of tree and shrub plantings in order to enhance the community character. They can accomplish several objectives. First, minimum landscaping standards enhance the aesthetics of a project site. Second, landscaping can provide a buffer between land uses. Third, it can help to reduce impacts from development such as drainage, noise, and lighting. From a visual perspective, landscaping softens the impacts from new

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development and thereby helps to maintain the character of a community. All of these purposes further the Goals and Objectives of the Master Plan.

The Weymouth ordinance does not comprehensively address landscaping in a stand-alone section. Instead, there are some requirements listed within the articles describing each specific use or in the supplementary regulations. It is recommended that the Town adopt a new, comprehensive section that addresses landscaping requirements across the board. This could include specific design guidelines. There are a few different approaches that could be taken, as described below.

Landscaping requirements should be applied to building sites as well as adjacent parking areas, loading docks, and drainage areas. The regulations should be tailored to ensure that the correct species mix is used that achieves the desired results and can survive in the long term. They should encourage maintaining existing vegetation to the extent possible or use of indigenous plants when revegetation is undertaken, and reduced lawn areas to minimize the need for watering. There should also be a long-term maintenance requirement as well. Some ordinances are very specific as to the size of trees and shrubs to be planted as well as how many are to be planted in a given area. Others take the approach of requiring the submission of a landscape plan for approval based on certain standards and criteria set forth in the ordinance. The latter approach is preferred because it allows greater flexibility in the decision-making process that can better account for the site-specific conditions.

Buffers are necessary between land uses, especially those that may be incompatible with one another. Landscaping ordinances can establish how wide the buffer zone should be and the degree to which natural vegetation should be maintained for such a buffer. Standards also should be established for parking lots and different land use categories. Vegetation along the edge of these parcels would soften the edge and present a more visually aesthetic perimeter to a project site. The Weymouth ordinance only deals with this issue on a piecemeal basis without specific design guidelines or standards.

Parking

As mentioned earlier, parking standards have changed over the years. Given the amount of time that has passed since the last review the ordinance, it is recommended that the parking standards be thoroughly reviewed and updated. The purpose is three-fold. First, the standards should be updated based on current available data from such sources as the American Planning Association and the Institute of Traffic Engineers. Second, there are a number of new uses commonly found that are not contemplated in the current ordinance that should be added. The same sources can be used for such data. Third, parking lot design standards that reflect landscaping, buffering and disabled access should be added.

Site Plan Review

Under the Weymouth ordinance, site plan review is required for a wide variety of new construction or alteration projects in most of the zoning districts as set forth in Article XXVA of the ordinance. Regulations also have been promulgated that govern the special permit and site plan review processes, which were adopted in 1980.

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At this time, there is no recommendation for changing the applicability provisions for site plan review. Rather, it is important to update the site plan review criteria and conditions. Some of them are worded in general terms that can be subject to interpretation. The criteria should be more specific as to what types of project impacts require developers to provide a greater degree of mitigation. More emphasis should be given to environmental criteria, particularly those that relate to a project's potential impact to water quality and quantity, and traffic. Additional considerations should include noise impacts to residential areas adjacent to commercial or industrial projects, impacts to historic and cultural resources, and more specific criteria regarding alternative transportation options, including the creation of pedestrian and bicycle-friendly projects.

Signs

The Weymouth ordinance regulates the type, size, and placement of signs in the Town in different zoning districts (Article XVI). While the ordinance does address size issues, it does not regulate signs by material type. The use of signs can have a profound impact on the visual characteristics of a neighborhood, especially if, for instance, large electrically illuminated signs are utilized without controls.

Thus, it is important to revise the sign ordinance to address the unique characteristics of a mixed-use village setting. Design standards are recommended to improve the sign ordinance for a village center setting, assuming the village center zoning recommendations are adopted. Many communities have adopted sign regulations that prescribe certain materials and sizes in such districts. Even the size of the letters on the sign can be regulated. Usually, electric signage use is limited or prohibited, especially in village centers where aesthetic issues become more prevalent.

Earth Removal

Two articles of the Weymouth ordinance address earth removal and filling from mining and construction activities (Articles XIX and XX). The most important element missing from these articles is the need to require restoration plans as part of the permitting process to ensure that earth removal and filling operations will restore the land to a stable, vegetated state. This is necessary in order to prevent erosion, which in turn can exacerbate water quality problems. An additional provision would allow earth removal only in stages so that not too much land is exposed in an unstable state at any given time.

Enforcement

The proper and full enforcement of the ordinance ensures that the Town maintains a high quality of character within the community. The full enforcement of the codes is the responsibility of each agency, Building, Health, Conservation, but each action can carry additional weight if taken concurrently with the other departments. The continued coordination of all the Town departments through the ordinances will ensure the best means of enforcement.

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CONCLUSIONS: OVERALL LAND USE AND ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis and recommendations developed in the previous sections, the following land use strategy is recommended for the Town of Weymouth. This plan proposes a combined set of coordinated land use, regulatory, and circulation improvements that are directed towards making the community whole. This is to be completed through a connected series of zoning map changes, new regulatory standards, and improved travel ways that will provide opportunities for new economic growth and the preservation of valuable land use areas. Some of these will require additional study, detailed discussion and guidance from the community to ensure that they remain consistent with the Town's Goals and Objectives.

The overall recommendations are described below. Map III-10, Recommended Land Use and Access Concepts shows the locations of the proposed actions. These concepts are based on the need to not only preserve the qualities of certain areas, but also the need to improve the aesthetic qualities and to provide better relationships between commercial and residential uses.

A. Zoning Map Changes

There are five key changes recommended for the zoning map. They include improvements to the development potential or new directions for land use in the following areas.

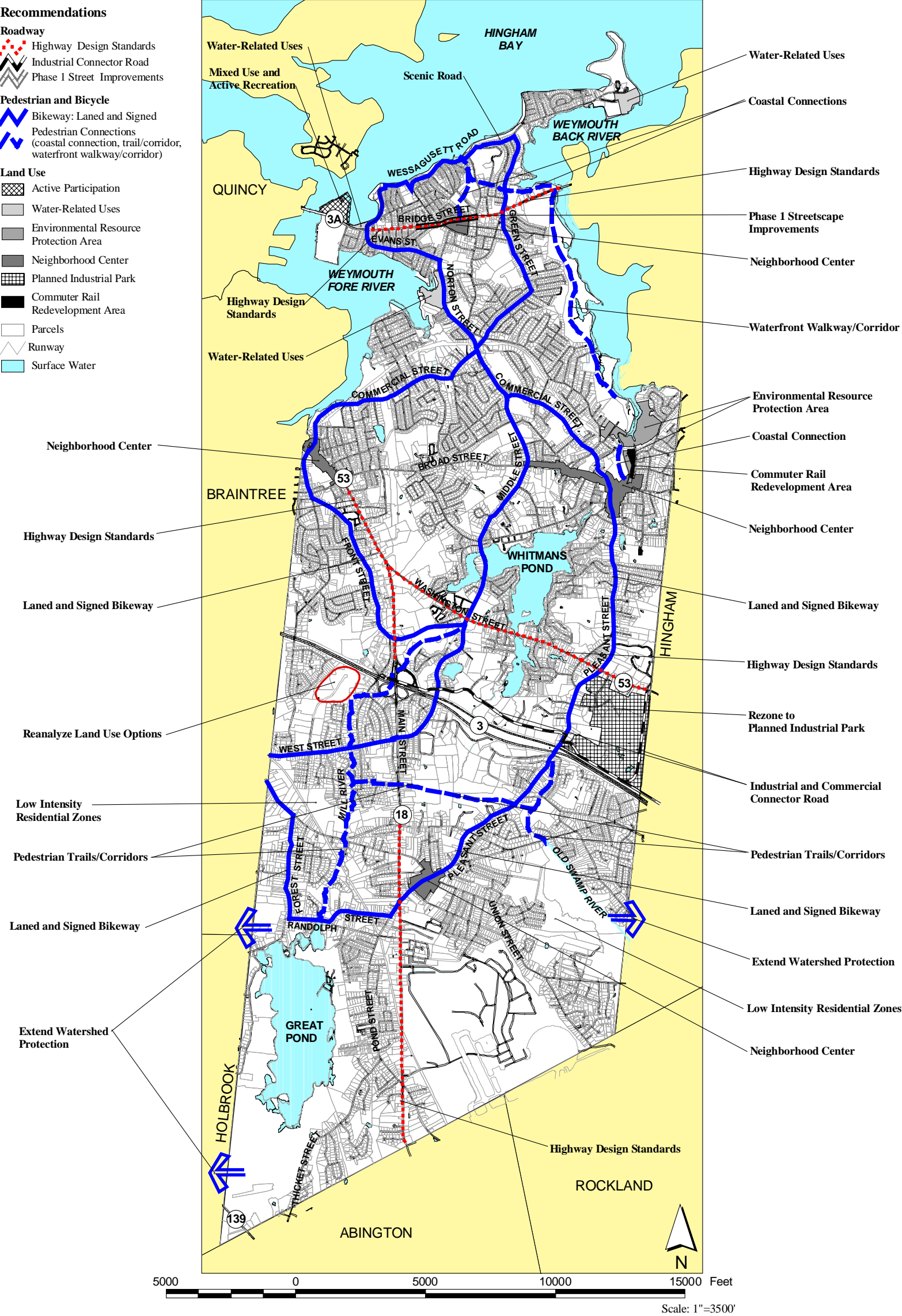
Village Center District Zoning

As previously described, village center zoning districts are designed to encourage pedestrian-oriented commercial enterprises and consumer services that do not rely on automobile traffic to bring consumers into the area. They also support mixed uses, including a variety of residential housing types to attract more pedestrian traffic. The buildings are reduced in scale and the lot sizes and setback requirements are changed to improve the aesthetics of the village centers. The buildings are brought closer to the street on smaller lots with reduced off-street parking requirements. Parking is directed to the rear of the buildings. Because municipal lots are located in several of the village centers, this parking option can easily be accommodated. The aesthetic character is further enhanced with design guidelines and landscaping requirements.

The new Neighborhood Commercial District with an updated village center zoning district should be applied to the four village centers: Bicknell Square, Jackson Square, Weymouth Landing and Columbian Square. The zoning is applied as follows:

- To all of Bicknell Square including those land areas across Route 3A;
- Over most of Jackson Square, including the strip of commercial land along Broad Street;
- Over Weymouth Landing, with the inclusion of the area of improvements that are proposed with the MBTA station stop; and,

Map III-10. Recommended Land Use and Access Concepts



Sources: Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, MassGIS, Town of Weymouth.

Notes: The Town of Weymouth makes no claims, no representations, and no warranties, expressed or implied, concerning the validity (expressed or implied), the reliability or the accuracy of the GIS data and GIS data products furnished by the Town, including the implied validity of any uses of such data.

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- Across Columbian Square, including an extension of the zoning out to Main Street. This would include the retail shops and service businesses as well as the Town fire station that is to be vacated.

Highway Commercial Zoning

The commercial corridors must accommodate the regional flow of traffic. However, they could be greatly improved aesthetically and function for other modes of non-vehicular travel, while still providing proper capacities for vehicular traffic. These are the standards of the Highway Commercial district. They are recommended for application to:

Main Street / Route 18 from the Abington town line up to Middle Street: This would not include the Medical Services district, which seeks office space, or to the residential areas but to the other commercial zoned areas along the street.

Main Street / Route 18 in the section from Winter Street north to the intersection with Washington Street: This section has the potential for more of the 'big box' retail development, which this mapping designation seeks to control.

Washington Street / Route 53 from the Hingham town line to Weymouth Landing: For the same reason of concern for development and redevelopment along Route 18, Washington Street / Route 53 is also of concern. The recommended overlay standards should be applied to the commercial land in this area to provide the proper standards of design and impact control.

Industrial Park Development

Along with the proposed Village Center rezoning, this is perhaps the most significant recommended change in zoning. However, it is predicated on the need for access improvements to connect the industrial areas to Route 3 and the entrance ramps at both Exit 16 and 15. In this way the Town can be provided with additional opportunities in an area of potential valuable commercial growth; for example the Weymouth Woods office project, that will not significantly impact the community roads because of its direct connection to the regional transportation system.

The recommendation is based on:

- The apparent ability to obtain new commercial development in a variable market, based on the proposed office project in Libbey Park;
- The lack of a direct access to Route 3 from Libbey Park to the Route 3 ramps;
- The fact that the quarry is a very large area of industrial zoning with access to Pleasant Street and Washington Street;
- Town infrastructure improvements including the new access and looped utility connections could be provided to the development area;

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- A desire by the Town to allow additional commercial development as a means of economic development;
- The ability to site the development outside the Town's watershed protection districts;
- The need to reduce traffic impacts in the established residential neighborhoods; and,
- The Town's opportunity to negotiate with the State Highway Department regarding certain aspects of the Route 3 widening project that could be advantageous to the project.

Waterfront Overlay

The waterfront is largely developed. However, key parcels with important potential for public access and recreation are still available. Some of those areas are identified with the suggestion that the Town control these land uses through the use of the provisions of Chapter 91 and the State regulations that allow the Town to essentially define the coastal land uses through the establishment of Harbor Management Plan. In addition, with agreement on the types of shorefront activities and land uses, the Town could adopt the local zoning regulations that establish those desired uses. However, the full power of the regulatory scheme devised by the State and the Town may require the Harbor Management Plan to be completed. This could be done as an update of the Waterfront Plan created by the Town in 1988.

Residential Development Overlay

The Town still has land available for development under the residential zoning established within the community. As previously noted, some 2,600 new units could be created under the available zoning. Most of this development could take place in South Weymouth around the Town's existing and proposed water supply watersheds. This development is also in the areas where the few remaining privately-held but natural lands are located. This means that certain resources could be lost in new projects if there is no regulation for subdivisions that sufficiently protects not only the critical resources such as wetlands, but also some of those valuable natural traits that create aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods. Consequently, the requirement for cluster or open space residential development within the watersheds is highly recommended.

B. Access Changes

There are six areas of access improvements that are recommended. They include:

The Commercial Corridor Streetscape

The Commercial Corridor standards discussed in the zoning that also must be part of the Town's own construction standards. Streetscape improvements can proceed in part through private development projects that may provide some of those improvements with a mitigation package. Adoption of an impact fee, with the support of the State legislature, for this purpose would allow the individual projects to support the overall improvements to the highways.

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Gateway Entrances

Related to the above would be four 'gateway' projects and streetscape improvements on Bridge Street at Bicknell Square to initiate the intended direction for identification of the community and its intent to generate improvements to all of the major highways.

Town-wide Bicycle Access

A town-wide bikeway system that provides a looped system of bike ways starting with the pavement already available in the Town roads, but not presently necessary for vehicle capacity. Additional access could be provided within the proposed Highway Commercial district (see previous section on Zoning).

Town-wide Pedestrian Access

A series of functional and recreational accessways connecting the river systems and the town open spaces as a natural walkway. However, the pathways would also function to provide connections between business areas and residences, as an alternative to vehicle access.

Local Bus Shuttle

A local bus system is needed that serves to connect residents and workers with local businesses and jobs. As a bus system, there would be great flexibility in the system routes. Initial routes the bus would run through the commercial areas. As the commercial development expands in the proposed Industrial Park, the route could be diurnal, running to the commercial offices during the morning and evening and connecting the retail areas during the typical heavy shopping hours.

Industrial Park Access to Route 3

Also proposed are the access improvements associated with the Industrial Park Development discussed in the above zoning section. This new road system would be the most significant roadway construction project proposed in this plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PRIORITY GOALS

Following are recommendations for actions to be taken on the priority goals and objectives as determined by the Steering Committee. These actions and concepts include suggestions for funding, studies and activities to be undertaken by the Town agencies and elected officials, and suggestions for participation by the general public. This section starts with three basic concepts of physical access, trails, roads and public transit. It concludes with a newer concept of making connections through electronic communication.

A. Create a linked system of high quality open space system connected with pedestrian and bicycle trails and located in all neighborhoods of Weymouth.

Regulatory Recommendations

- Develop design standards for different formal and informal trail systems: pedestrian, fully accessible, bicycle, and combination trails that can be applied throughout the town. (Also applies to non-regulatory program elements.)
- Include requirements for trail systems within the town subdivision regulations. The requirements should provide for connecting trails to adjacent open space, or assistance in trail development in remote locations.
- Include requirements in the town commercial site plan development standards for trail or walkway systems. The requirements should provide for connecting trails to adjacent open space, or assistance in trail development in remote locations.

Non-Regulatory Recommendations

- The priorities for open space acquisition should start with the list of primary sites found in the Town's Open Space Plan. To obtain open space lands consider three sources:
 - Review tax title parcels for use as open space. These lands are not always of equal importance or value, but they can also be re-sold for funds to support other acquisition efforts.
 - Adopt the provisions of the Community Preservation Act as a way to raise funds for open space along with housing and historic preservation.
 - Educate the land owners on the benefits of applying conservation easements to their properties. Although this does not always provide access, it does prevent the properties from being developed.
- Make agreements with regional land trusts and other communities to jointly purchase valuable open space areas that extend across political boundaries. Develop a local connection with the Trust for Public Lands, Mass. Audubon Society or similar non-profit organizations in preparation for such an action. As a local option, support the establishment of a local land trust for the purpose of accumulating private funds for the acquisition and potential management of the properties acquired.
- The Town Open Space and Recreation Plan, prepared in accordance with the State methodology should be updated every five years to ensure that the Town remains eligible for State funding programs. In addition, the Town should maintain its Housing Certification under Executive Order 418 to ensure a continued approval status for receipt of the State's other funding sources. Review open space parcels within town for options to construct trails, especially along the main river corridors.
- Complete a list of properties situated along the Mill, Old Swamp, and Herring Run rivers and around Whitman's Pond. Consider options for purchase of lands or develop alternatives for less-than-fee simple acquisition; e.g., conservation easements.

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- Actively pursue tax-title parcels or easements to complete connections between existing open space areas and trail systems. Educate property owners on the tax incentives to maintain areas as open space. Use regional land trusts or the MAPC for presentations to private property owners.
- Construct new access-ways through existing open space and town-owned properties. Construct the improvements according to the stated use of the land and the character of the surrounding neighborhood (see Focus Site Study for some possible solutions).
- Obtain participation from state, regional, local and non-profit land trusts in the connections between and within open space parcels to coordinate them with the other parcels and trail systems. In particular, consider the Trust for Public Lands and the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Support the creation of a local non-profit, land trust for the development of private funds.
- Develop water quality testing programs, non-point source pollution measures, and best management practices. Utilize State grants from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Coastal Zone Management office to assist in the preparation of the plans. Seek volunteer participation in the water quality analysis through a “pond watch” group. The Conservation Commission and Dept. of Public Works should work cooperatively in the creation of a pollutant-reducing drainage design, based on the previous tests of systems by the DPW.
- Develop full management plans for all open space areas for on-going maintenance and long-term improvements. Utilize State grants from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Coastal Zone Management office to assist in the preparation of the plans. Utilize the methodology of the Massachusetts Audubon to ensure all aspects of natural resource management and accessibility are included in the planning.

B. Create a “walkable” and “bikeable” town with improvements in public ways.

Regulatory Recommendations

- Develop design standards for pedestrian, fully accessible sidewalks, and bicycle lanes within town right-of-ways. Create standards for different road/right-of-way classifications based on traffic volumes and need for access. Include requirements for sidewalks and lanes following those standards within the town subdivision regulations. The requirements should provide for connections within adjacent easements and rights-of-way outside of the subject subdivision, including connections into the town street system. The villages and commercial corridors on the highways will also require separate standards. These should be based on the Neighborhood Center and Highway Commercial zoning districts standards developed with the new zoning.
- Include requirements in the commercial site plan development standards for sidewalks and lanes that match the village design or highway design concepts. The requirements should provide for connections within adjacent easements and rights-of-way outside

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of the subject site, including connections with other businesses and the town street system. The connections should be designed to provide easy access to and from nearby and adjacent residential areas.

- Enforce parking restrictions on roads, which have bicycle lanes within the right-of-way using the painted lanes and signage as indicators of the lanes. Provide educational programs and mailings to familiarize residents with the purpose of the lanes and requirements for courtesy.

Non-Regulatory Recommendations

- Establish a system of bikeways on the Town roads with wide pavement widths; i.e., equal to or greater than 36 feet wide. Use the painted lane control in these roads and a standard bikeways symbol painted within the shoulder to identify the bike lane. Include signage at each corner. The initial streets proposed as part of this system would be Pleasant Street, Commercial Street, Middle Street, and Green Street, with Front Street and Summer Street used to create connecting loops on more scenic roads.
- Construct connecting access-ways through existing open space and town-owned properties. Construct the improvements according to the stated use of the land and the character of the surrounding neighborhood (see Focus Site Study for some possible solutions).
- Petition the Tri-Town Development Corporation to ensure the NAS Redevelopment plans provide well-designed and well-located ped/bike crossings of the road system within the NAS. Locate those crossings so they can be used to connect to residential neighborhoods outside the NAS. Use of existing rights-of-way to provide a public access point should be coordinated with paths and crossings of the NAS main road system that loops the redevelopment site.
- Utilize traffic calming techniques to improve public safety. Channel major traffic flow away from neighborhoods, and make the major arterials more pedestrian friendly.

Regulatory Recommendations

- Require that new commercial and industrial site plans include traffic calming measures; multiple planted islands in parking lots, different pavement textures for pedestrian crossings, limited driveway openings, limited sign sizes, and grade variations to improve pedestrian safety.
- Require that road systems within new subdivisions or residential projects use designs that slow traffic flow where it benefits pedestrian and bicycle movement. The use of traffic calming measures applied to public roads can be used for site drives as well.
- Restrict roads to local traffic where; the road is not a collector or arterial, the land use is predominantly residential, the road construction is not suitable for commercial truck through traffic, and the resident's petition for a restriction.

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Non-Regulatory Recommendations

- Reconstruct curblines and replace road/crossing pavements in commercial areas with high vehicular traffic counts, for the purpose of improving pedestrian crossings (see discussion on streetscape improvements in appendix).
- Use signage/gateway concepts that identify village centers and slow traffic before entering.
- Review traffic signal timing and locations of walk signals to determine if improvements for pedestrian crossings are needed.

C. Provide public transportation to connect public transit options, improve air quality and reduce congestion.

Regulatory Recommendations

- Require all large employers and heavy traffic generators to conform to federal Clean Air Act regulations to provide optional access for public transportation.

Non-Regulatory Recommendations

- Develop expanded public transportation to regional transit facilities provided by the MBTA. In particular, develop local bus shuttles that connect commercial areas and are funded by those commercial areas and the regional transit system.
- Increase police presence around the areas to ensure turnover of parking areas, control of long-term parking, and general security.
- Petition the Tri-Town Development Corporation to ensure facilities and participation in bus service to the new MBTA railroad stops and provide connections from new development to the existing rail station.

D. Improve the methods and quality of communications between Town Hall and the citizens. Establish open and high tech communications between residents and the Town government. In particular, develop a centralized response system based on internet technology for citizen concerns.

Non-Regulatory Recommendations

- Establish an electronic 'bulletin board' for posting activities and actions on line, that allows public messages with responses from town offices made on a regularly scheduled basis. Determine the number of households who have and would use their access to contact the town government and review options for polling the on-line public regarding issues of public policy.

PART 6. ILLUSTRATING THE PLANNING POTENTIAL: FOCUS AREA STUDY SITES

As part of the planning process, the Master Planning Steering Committee chose four areas within the Town to serve as subjects for focused investigations of opportunities that could illustrate some of the principal recommendations of the Plan. This effort was also directed towards taking the first step in unlocking the implementation of the plan, by indicating positive directions for change.

The four sites were chosen by the Master Plan Steering Committee for this effort and are as follows:

- The existing Junior High School/New High School as a large open space area that may hold additional opportunities for active and passive recreation that could be supportive to the neighborhood as well as the schools;
- Columbian Square as an active village center with traffic and parking issues;
- The northern portion of the Sithe Energy property with its attendant coastal related issues of access and environmental concern; and,
- The triangle block of mixed land uses between Washington, Main and Winter streets as a developing commercial and public service area, and an existing and stable residential neighborhood.

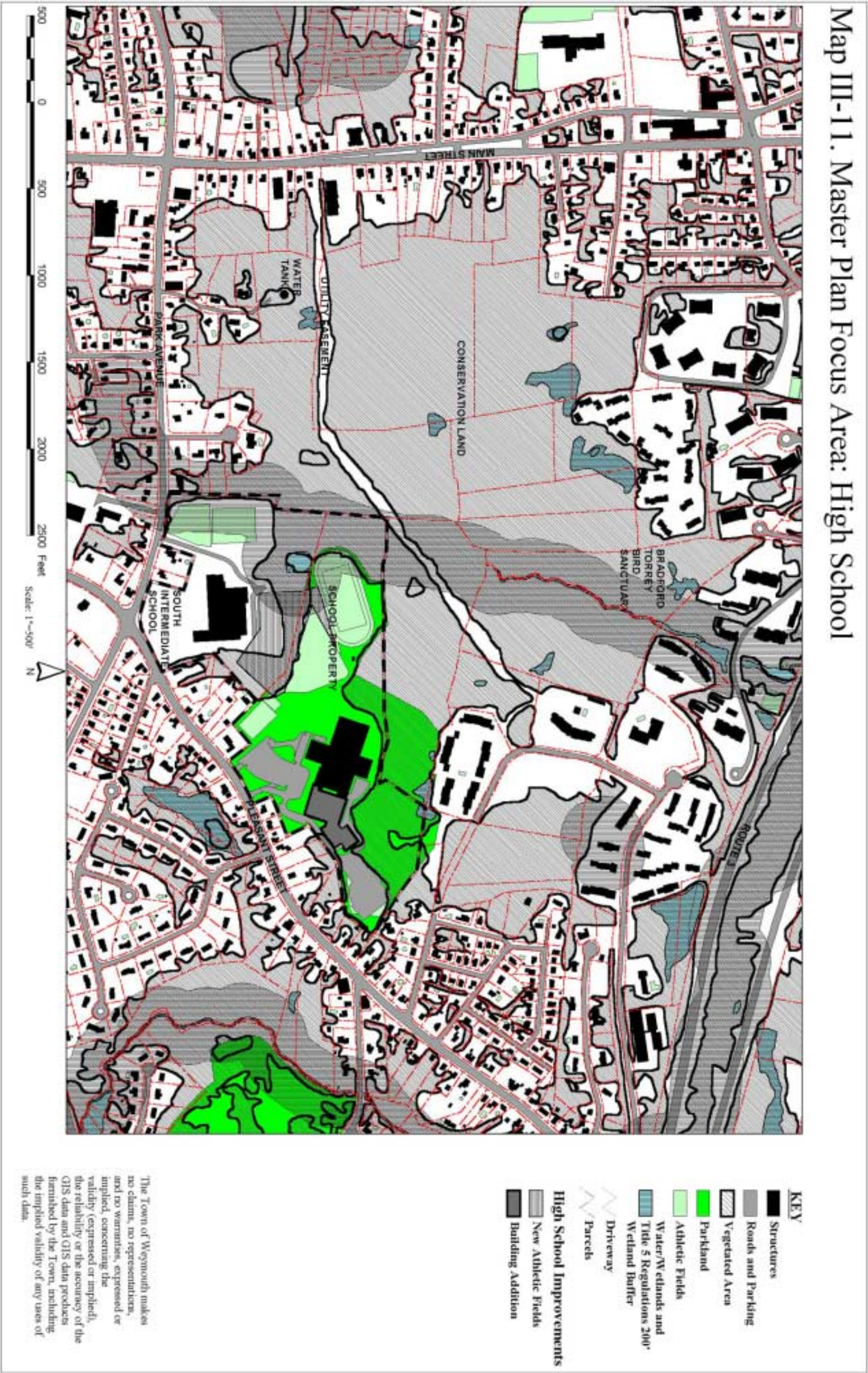
Below are the summary descriptions, findings, and concepts that were developed in this planning process for each of the sites.

A. New High School/Existing Junior High School Site

Existing Conditions

This site is a very large area composed of parcels owned and managed by three different town agencies; Public Works, Conservation, and School Departments. It is comprised of public land used for the Weymouth Junior High School (soon to become the High School) and the South Intermediate School, the Bradford Torrey Bird and Wildlife sanctuary, and a water supply standpipe. About half of the public land area, 63 acres, is school property and the other half is conservation land of 67 acres. The Torrey Sanctuary covers 13.3 acres and a piece of about 4.3 acres surrounds the water standpipe. A small inclusion is part of a town cemetery located off Hilton Drive.

The properties have been developed with two schools. The High School construction plans propose a significant expansion to the front and eastern side of the existing structure. Three multi-use play fields can be found on the school properties. The only other development of the area is the standpipe and cemetery (See Map III-11 Master Plan Focus Area High School).



Opportunities and Constraints

Following are summary points regarding the site conditions and aspects of its use that were determined during the initial part of the study process:

- The site is abutted by multi-family developments on the north side and single-family dwellings on almost all other sides;
- Portions of the site have been used for public recreation with established trails. One of the trails was formally installed by the local students, and other less formal trails can be found in other areas;
- The soils have some significant limitations. Rock outcroppings can be easily found behind the Junior High School. This suggests that any significant regrading could be very difficult and costly.
- Wetlands are a significant issue. The site appears to drain eventually into the Old Swamp River that runs north under the Route 3 expressway. Drainage ways, streams and vegetated wetlands can be found in the central area of the properties, which makes use of the area and connections across the area very difficult.
- There is a single, unimproved access point to the property from Main Street. In addition, Locke Woods Drive leads to the water standpipe from Park Avenue. Otherwise, public access to the property is through the school properties off of Pleasant Street and Park Avenue.
- Across Main Street from the access point is the Thomas Nash School off of Front Street.
- Some reports are that the property may be a youth hangout. More general active use and enjoyment of the site may support the school project and serve the general public.

A significant expansion and upgrade of the existing Junior High School is proposed as a means to reuse it for a High School. This creates the potential for other changes on the site to support the new school population. In particular, there has been a question as to whether the property could support additional play fields that meet high school standards. Consequently, a site review was made of the conditions and opportunities.

Application of the Master Plan Goals

The Master Goals and Objectives considered particularly applicable to the property and its use are:

- Provide a well-maintained and well-connected string of open space areas that links the residential areas to passive and active recreational areas.
- Preserve and protect ecologically sensitive areas within the Town, particularly along Whitman's Pond and the connecting system of rivers and streams.

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- Create a linked open space system connected with pedestrian and bicycle trails.
- Establish conservation trust for purchase and management of open space when public funds are not enough.
- Create a “walkable” and “bikeable” town with improvements to sidewalks in public ways and with the creation or enhancement of pathways that connect residential areas with commercial and business areas through the open space areas of the community.

Concepts of Change

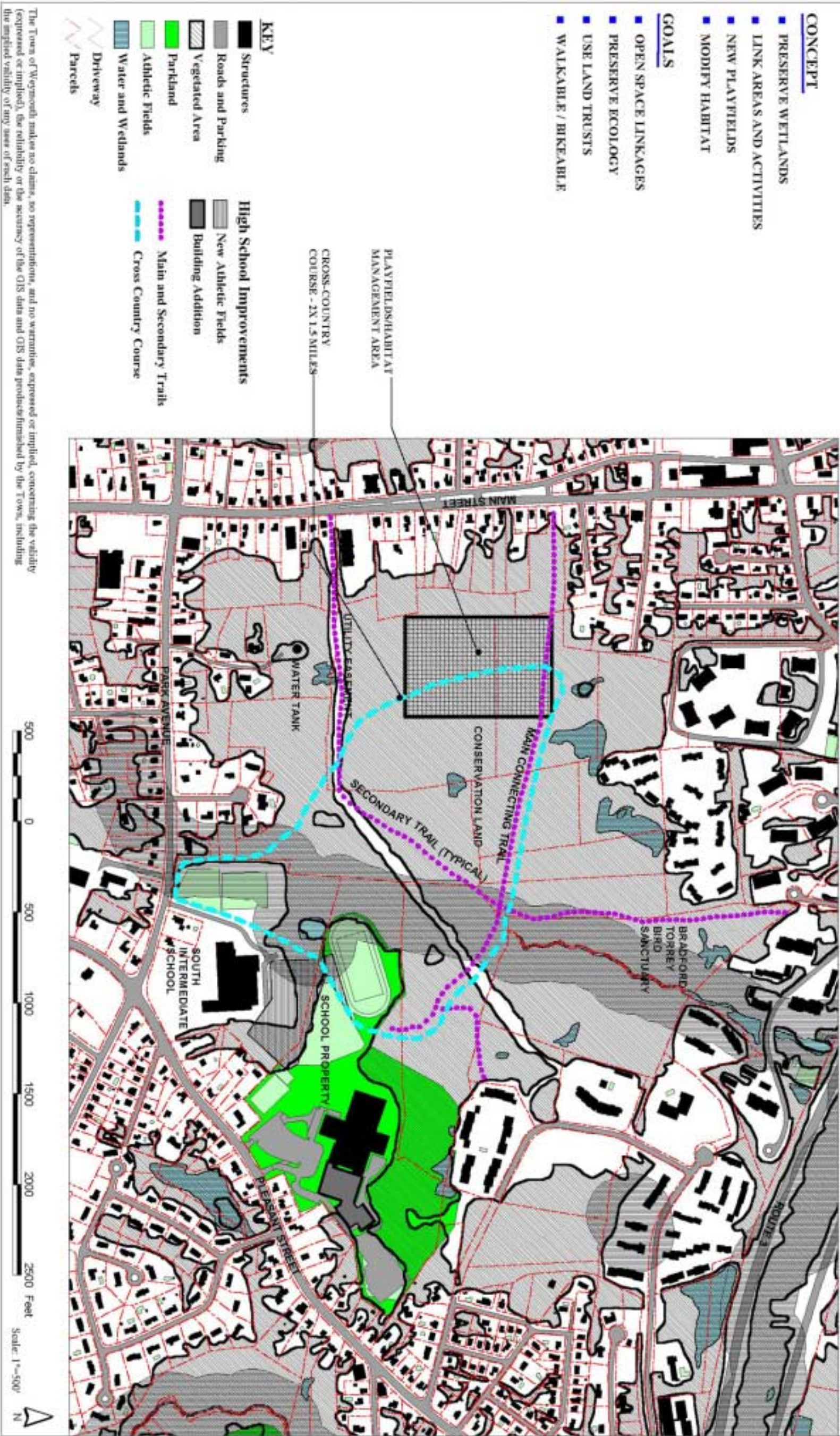
The Goals and Objectives suggest a two-sided approach to the land (See Map III-12 Master Plan Focus Area High School Concepts and Goals). The land should be used for linking the community around it to create the connections and alternative travel options for the residents. At the same time, the land must be treated carefully given its sensitive wetland resources, but these resources should also be within reach for education and enjoyment of the town.

The wetland corridor that runs through the middle of the properties is a significant constraint to connection between the east and west sides of the land. This leaves the western side as the upland area that may provide the most opportunity for any active recreational area. Otherwise, the land is well suited to passive recreation.

If the existing trail system is improved, it could be used for a High School cross-country track. If developed for this purpose, the trail must have sufficient length and be constructed for safe running. The length of the path could be half the size of a cross-country route with the circuit run twice to meet the distance requirements.

If a playfield or fields are built on the western side of the land, access needs to be allowed for maintenance vehicles and buses to reach the fields could be provided from Main Street. This accessway would also provide a closer connection to the Nash School property and the residential neighborhood to the west of Main Street. This would also require a pedestrian and bicycle crossing to be provided across Main Street.

Map III-12. Master Plan Focus Area: High School Concept and Goals



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B. Colombian Square

Existing Conditions

Located in South Weymouth, this busy intersection of roads and businesses has been fairly stable. Within the Square there is a good mix of retail, historic and public buildings. The merchants association is active. But the area may come under the influence of the new traffic and use patterns associated with the NAS redevelopment project. As change and growth continues, there are some key issues that need to be addressed to ensure its future vitality (See Map III-13 Master Plan Focus Area Colombian Square). More on Colombian Square can be found in the Evaluation and Analysis section of this report.

The Colombian Square Intersection

The Colombian Square intersection is composed of a very wide, four-leg intersection with a stop- sign control on the two minor approaches. There is considerable parallel and angled, on-street parking on the approach streets that are actively used for the small retail and service businesses lining the square. Thirty-nine spaces were counted on the street as shown on the previously prepared plans by Beta Engineering submitted to the Town for consideration of a traffic signal.

The intersection has a failing traffic Level of Service (LOS 'F') in both the morning and evening peak hours of traffic flow. Accident experience averages 13 recorded accidents per year over the last five years ending in 1999. This makes it the third highest accident location in town.

The latest peak hour traffic volumes available were counted in 1999 for an addition to the South Shore Hospital. The counts are assumed to be within ten percent of the current levels of traffic volumes. Pedestrian counts have not been made available. However, the adjacent residential areas and the nearby schools generate a significant number of walkers.

Opportunities and Constraints

Discussions for improvements to Colombian Square have revolved around pedestrians, parking, and traffic flow. Transportation and road design problems are the over-riding issues influencing the perception of the Square. Pedestrian and traffic safety were consistently raised by every person interviewed. The wide expanse of open pavement is not a particularly inviting aspect of the Square for pedestrians or drivers and does not add to the aesthetic qualities. The two existing traffic controls, stop signs, allow relatively uncontrolled vehicle movements within the large expanse of space. The basic challenges are to:

- Maintain convenient vehicular access but manage traffic flows so that the square is a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Maintain the village as a small or neighborhood business and service center that can compete within the changing retail economy.

Map III-13. Master Plan Focus Area: Columbian Square



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Master Plan Goals

The Master Goals and Objectives that are considered applicable to the property and its use are:

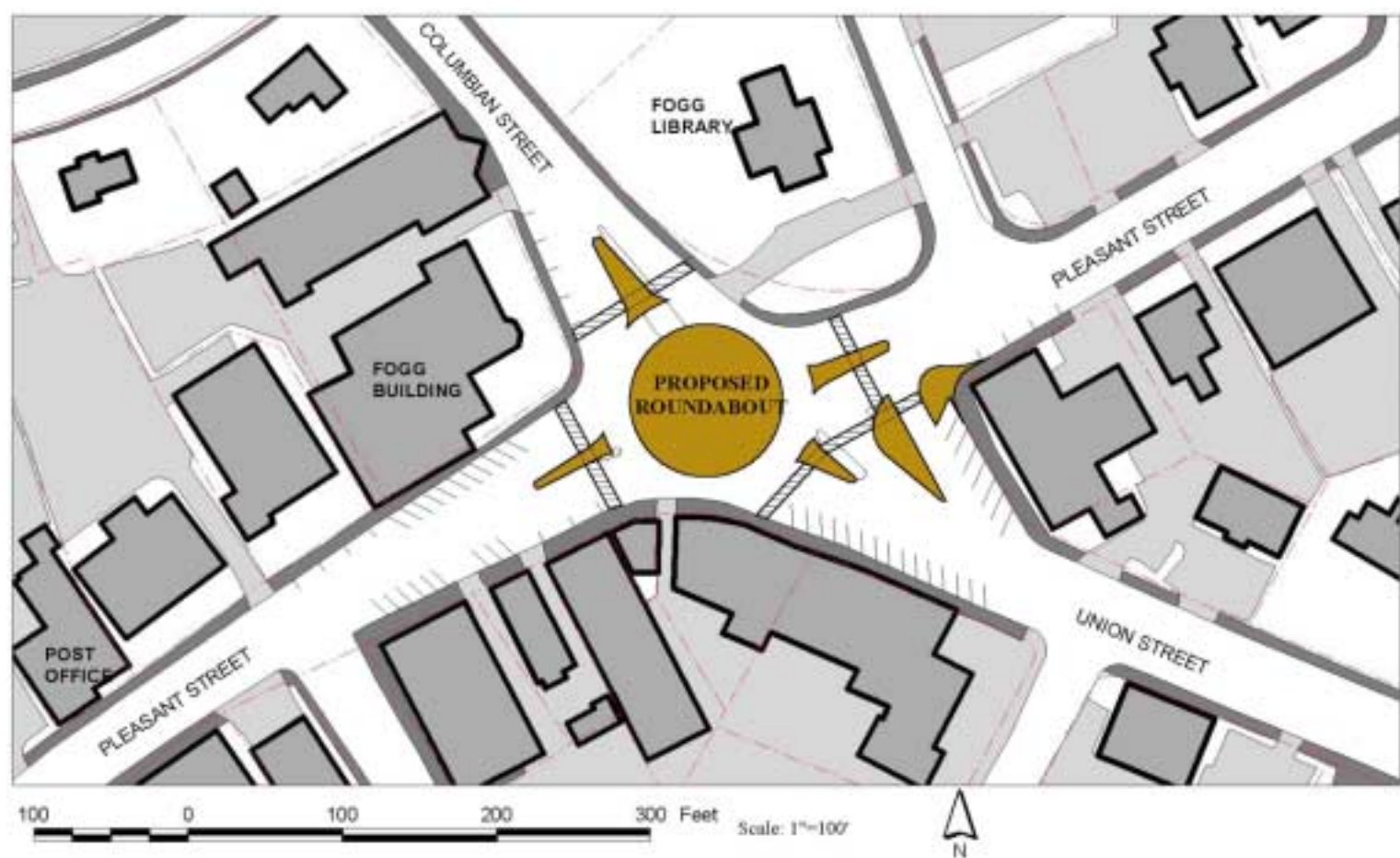
- Preserve and rehabilitate buildings and spaces of significant historic value. Place a special focus on the Weymouth's four villages as unique historic areas that define the Town but must adapt to new consumer demands and services.
- Calm the traffic in residential areas for the safety of the residents, and smooth the traffic through commercial areas so that the businesses thrive and the traffic continues to flow. Expand public transportation options that take additional cars off the road and ease travel to Weymouth's neighborhoods and businesses.
- Implement a program of comprehensive streetscape improvements, including the addition of trees, crosswalks and sidewalks in village centers and on major streets. (A goal for all four village centers.)
- Create a "walkable" and "bikeable" town with improvements to sidewalks in public ways and with the creation or enhancement of pathways that connect residential areas with commercial and business areas through the open space areas of the community.
- Facilitate better movement on local roadways with the improvement of regional and local public transit options, the reconfiguration of key intersections and roads, and the enhancement of public parking areas connected to business and job centers.
- Utilize traffic calming techniques to improve public safety. Channel major traffic flow away from neighborhoods, and make the major arterials more pedestrian friendly.

The first goal recognizes the value of Columbian Square as a social and cultural center, as well as a business center. The other goals direct the planning of street improvements with all modes of transportation considered: vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and handicapped accessibility. The goals also convey the need to look at other components of the Square; particularly the public parking both on street and in the municipal lot, to ensure the best utilization of these areas is being made. Overall, the goals and objectives look to make clear and safe connections between the businesses and residents.

Concepts of Change

Given the poor traffic conditions, notably at peak hours, the Square has long been recognized as an area needing rehabilitation (See Map III-14 Master Plan Focus Sites Columbian Square Concepts and Goals). Consequently, there have been previous attempts to develop concepts for improvement that would help the merchants and the residents.

Map III-14. Master Plan Focus Area:
Columbian Square Concepts and Goals



CONCEPT

- Busy Mixed-Use Village Area
- Maintain Village Character
- Calm High Accident Location

GOALS

- Smooth Traffic Flow
- Maintain Village Character
- Increase Pedestrian Safety
- Increase Access to Village Businesses
- Improve Streetscape



Notes: 1. The Town of Weymouth makes no claims, no representations, and no warranties, expressed or implied, concerning the validity (expressed or implied), the reliability or the accuracy of the GIS data and GIS data products furnished by the Town, including the implied validity of any uses of such data.

2. Possible curb realignment may be necessary.

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A previously proposed concept was to signalize the intersection. Traffic signals require a full stop on the red phase and ensure positive control. However, this concept was not taken further after consideration of the impact the change would have on reducing the on-street parking spaces. A more recent suggestion was to use the geometry of the signalization, but to use four-way stop signs instead of lights.

A concept developed in the Master Plan process is to consider a roundabout as the solution to traffic calming, which is a small rotary. The roundabout causes traffic to slow down and move more carefully through the intersection without ever fully stopping. It also keeps the vehicles within more defined lanes that make movement more predictable for other drivers.

Both concepts, signalization and roundabout, would improve the Level of Service to a Level 'B'. The four-way stop signs do not provide this higher level of service because the controls are not as well developed and peak hour back-ups would be longer. Each of the options also involves reshaping of the curbs and pavement and most importantly an improved traffic flow. Other similarities and differences are useful to understand and are described below.

Comparison of the Options Considered

Traffic Signals

Benefits

Positive right of way is assigned to both vehicles and pedestrians with the signals.

The intersection is made more compact, allowing more sidewalk space for landscaping, street furniture, or seasonal businesses.

Accidents may be reduced.

Issues

A balance of 14 on-street spaces would remain in the area after construction- a loss of 25 spaces.

Heavy volumes may result in greater incidence of rear-end collisions.

Roundabout

Benefits

Traffic calming – meaning more uniform and lower average speeds may be expected.

Right of way for pedestrians requires vehicles to yield.

Accidents may be reduced more than signals.

Landscape island in center of roundabout can enhance esthetics and shade against western sun glare.

Issues

Positive signal control for pedestrians is not available.

Accidents will vary in nature.

Landscape island will be unavailable for pedestrians.

About 12 on-street parking spaces will be lost leaving 27 spaces.

Four-way Stop Signs

Benefits

Lower average speeds may be expected.

Signs allow right of way for pedestrians.

Accidents may be reduced but less than signals or roundabout.

The intersection is made more compact, allowing more sidewalk space for landscaping, street furniture, or seasonal businesses.

Issues

Positive signal control for pedestrians is not available.

Heavy volumes may result in greater incidence of rear-end collisions and intersection accidents.

A balance of 14 on-street spaces would remain in the area after construction- a loss of 25 spaces.

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Other Considerations

Before a more costly design concept proceeds, it is suggested that some additional data be gathered and decisions made regarding needs and approach to the concepts.

- The value of widening the sidewalk to the adjacent businesses should be carefully considered versus a landscaped island in the center, which provides an esthetic improvement and glare reduction. A more active sidewalk area may be of benefit to the atmosphere and energy of the square.
- Since parking is clearly a priority, the use and distribution of spaces around the square should be surveyed and analyzed for availability, turnover and times of maximum use. This information can be used to make sure that spaces are optimized, and that any redesign recognizes that use and maximizes it. Different geometry and signing for parking may be suggested.

C. Sithe Energy / Edgar Power Station, North

Existing Conditions

This property has extensive waterfront with access to a deepwater navigation channel, a large area of open land, and one structure that may have some reuse potential, and a large fuel storage tank. A small area of wetlands is located in the northern central portion of the site. A small portion of the area is graded for spill containment around the storage tank. However, the land is largely open and flat.

The property is underlain with significant public utilities. Access is from Bridge Street/ Route 3A. Other than Bridge Street/ Route 3A, the land is surrounded by water, the Fore River and King's Cove. The Fore River provides access to the channel while King's Cove is a shallow area otherwise surrounded by residential and commercial properties.

The zoning designation for the land is the Industrial, I-2 district, which allows the most intense type of development under the Town zoning. The property is owned by the Sithe Energy Company, LLP. The Fore River bridge bisects the property holdings and the area under study is the northern portion, presently unused except by the MWRA for a sewage pumping station. The southern portion is the site of a new power station that is programmed to be completed by Sithe in 2002 (See Map III-15 Master Plan Focus Area Sithe North). The subject property north of Route 3A is under several temporary construction easements for different construction projects, but Sithe has agreed to discuss the future of this land with the Town.



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Opportunities and Constraints

The Massachusetts Highway Department and Water Resources Authority is currently utilizing the northern portion of the site for temporary and long-term use. The Highway Department is using the site temporarily during the construction of the new Fore River Bridge and the MWRA is proposing sewer line and pump station construction. The MWRA has negotiated the fee for a portion of the land for the pump station and has negotiated easements for the underground utility lines and access to the pump station. The construction activities will most likely be using portions of the site for another 3 to 5 years. The pump station will be permanent. This is considered a minor constraint to the use of the land.

A more significant constraint comes from the storage tank and its spill containment grading, which consumes a significant portion of the center of the parcel. Although there are no plans to remove the tank, it is not reportedly needed for the power generation on the southern parcel. Its value as scrap iron is significant because of its size, so its removal would be cost-effective. However, the program proposed here does not require its removal.

An active citizen's group has been focused on recommending options for the future of the site. The opportunities for economic use of land are based on market conditions discussed below. One idea reported to the Master Plan Steering Committee has been to establish a marina adjacent to the site. There is a strong market for marina uses. Other possible uses include park/recreation uses, boat-building facility uses and commuter boat dock. A deepwater port is not considered feasible.

Other concerns that need to be addressed include car traffic that will be generated, boat traffic, as well as other environmental issues. Lastly, as a coastal property, many of the concepts for use of the site must be based on public access and recreation to ensure full benefit to the general public.

Master Plan Goals

The Master Goals and Objectives that are considered applicable to the property and its use are:

- Provide a well-maintained and well-connected string of open space areas that links the residential areas to passive and active recreational areas.
- Increase public access to shoreline open space.

The goals are clear in that coastal access and recreation is a high priority. The Site property is considered a key opportunity among the few remaining open coastal sites.

Concepts of Change

Several different options for recreational and alternative use of the land were considered feasible for consideration under the Master Plan Goals and Objectives (See Map III-16

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Master Plan Focus Area Site North Concepts and Goals). Because of the size of the site, many of these are considered compatible with each other. Consequently, the property could be a truly multiple-use site, meeting many different needs and providing an economic return supporting the public access areas. While parks do not usually generate revenues to support their upkeep, there are revenue-generating uses that could help to support the creation and maintenance of any park.

Park/Recreation Uses

Given the location, park and recreation uses are the best fit for the property. The property is located near many of the harbor islands and would be an ideal location for water dependent recreational uses such as sea kayaking, and small boat rentals. Concessions stands, and possibly a destination restaurant, taking advantage of the water view, could be developed by a private developer and help support the surrounding park area.

Marina Uses

There is strong demand in the area for marina uses. The Hingham Shipyard, the marina located near Wessagussett Beach and other nearby locations have established the area as a desirable place to locate a marina. A preliminary review of the Waterway Guide charts for Hull and Quincy Bay indicate that the water level in the area is low and may require dredging to accommodate a marina or other water dependant use. In addition, the Harbor lines, which define the channel for passing ships, are quite close to the bulkhead on the northwest side of the property. However, moving north and east, additional space is available. To develop a larger marina would require moving slips into King's Cove and dredging for depth.

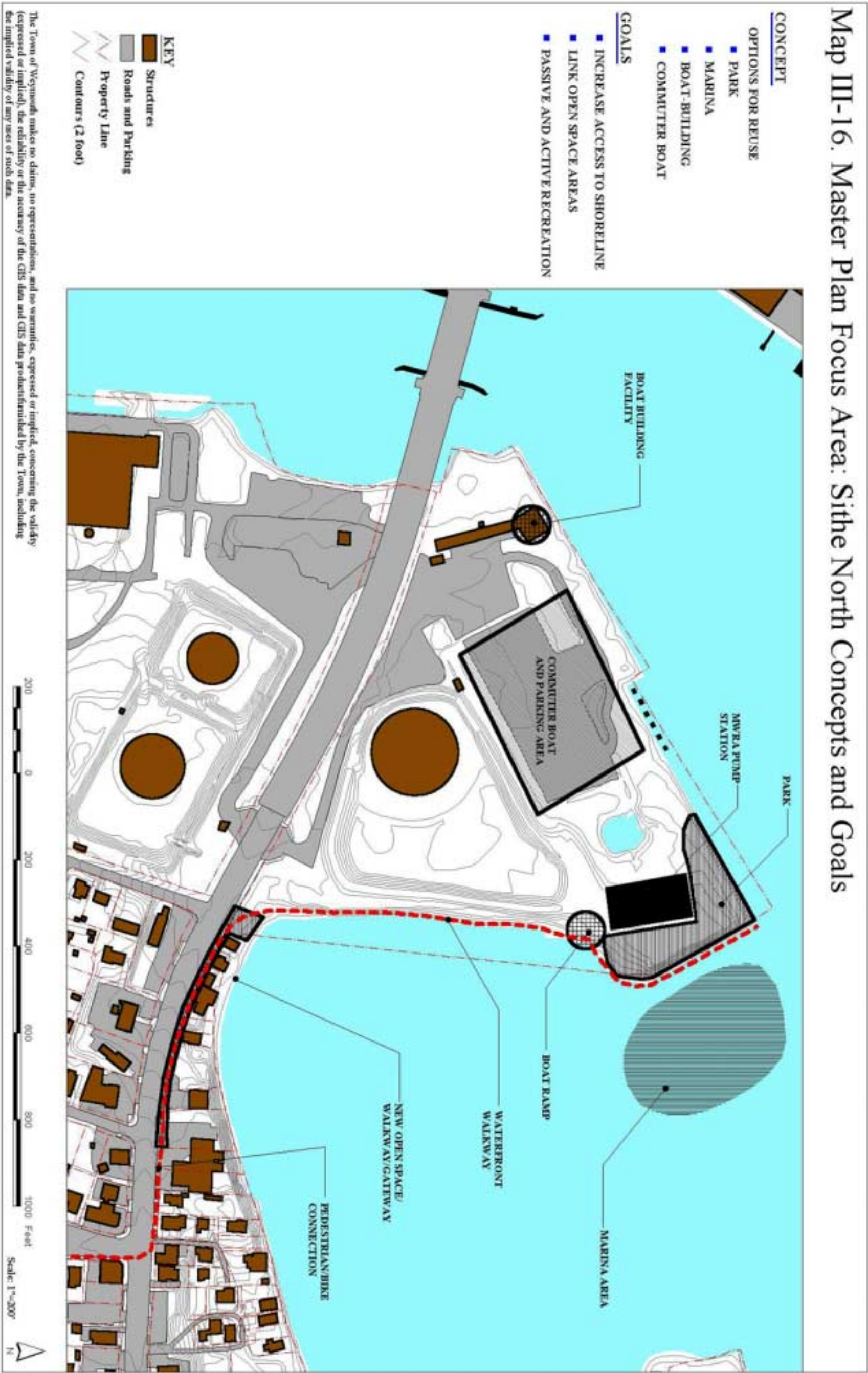
Boat Building Facility

There are a number of wooden boat building facilities in New England that teach the craft of boat building. Associations usually run these facilities. This is another use that could be imaginably attracted to the area and complement a marina or other uses at the site.

Commuter Boat Facility

Currently there is a boat commuter facility at the Quincy Shipyard. The land is owned by the MWRA, which leases it to the boat commuter facility. There is a possibility that this facility may have to be relocated (or could be relocated) to another location and the Site property provides a good alternative location.

As can be seen, the possibilities are wide open for the development of this property as an important part of the coastal resources available to Weymouth residents.



D. The Winter Street /Main Street /Washington Street Triangle

Existing Conditions

Roads define this triangle of land. Main Street/ Route 18 forms the western side running north and south. Washington Street/ Route 53 runs northwest to southeast forming the hypotenuse and Winter Street is the south cross street that almost completes the triangle. Middle Street crosses Winter and Washington streets creating a complex and difficult-to-cross intersection of roads. Improvements to all the roadways are currently in the planning or construction stages (See Map III-17 Master Plan Focus Area Winter Street Triangle).

This area is a mix of uses, with a mix of zoning to match. The eastern side of the Triangle is residential, including both single-family buildings and a mobile home park. The residential areas are well-kept and reflect typical patterns of home-ownership. The commercial areas along Washington Street are a mix of new commercial retail, landscape and garden center, motel, and some small offices. The Main Street side includes larger parcels containing the utility company, and a small shopping center. At the corner of Main and Winter Street, which acts as a gateway coming up from Route 3, smaller service and retail operations can be found.

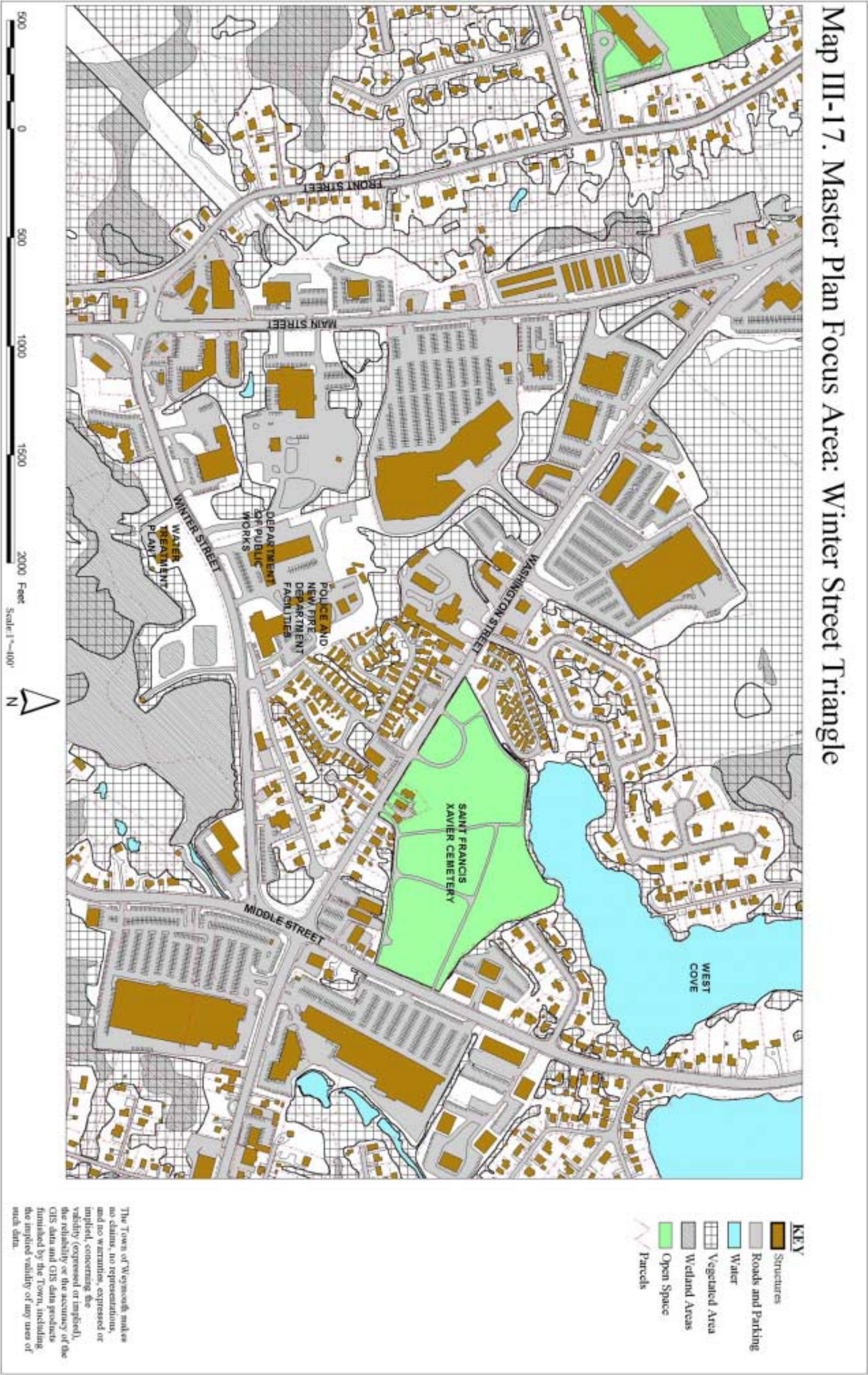
Along Winter Street, the mix of land uses includes public buildings. The new Police Station, the older Public Works building, and now the newest Fire Station are sited within the center of the street and almost the center of the Triangle. Across the street from this complex of public buildings is the water treatment plant, and within the properties surrounding the treatment plant is the previously-closed public water supply well that is to be reactivated.

Opportunities and Constraints

Some redevelopment of certain parcels and streetscape improvements are desired for this area. There is significant new commercial development potential in the area as determined by the MAPC Buildout Study. However, none of the larger development areas were identified within the Triangle.

The options for redevelopment in the Triangle are generally office and retail with retail being the strongest potential land use.

- The triangle is primarily made up of retail businesses, which account for a large portion of the overall retail development within Weymouth. Based upon conversations with brokers, this area, which is home to national retail chains, is one of the prime retail areas in terms of rents.
- There is a small office development at Winter Street, near the intersection of Main Street. The majority of offices in the area are small, ranging in size from 1,000 to 2,000 square feet. Sale prices for offices along Winter Street range from approximately \$15 to \$20 per square foot. Office space as use in new development is not seen as a strong option, in part because of the low value of rents relative to levels required to spur new building construction. In part, this is also due to the retail image that has been established.



The Town has made a significant investment in the public land for the Police Station, and is proposing more investment with the new Fire Station. It holds an older but equally important structure in the Public Works building. These combined buildings are a very significant public investment, and also create a focus of activity.

As mentioned previously, the eastern corner of the Triangle is a residential enclave. In addition, properties north of the Triangle are developed as residential neighborhoods. Further residential development will occur with the 304-unit Avalon Ledges apartment complex project just north of the Washington/Main street intersection.

However, the residents of these dwellings do not have direct access to the adjacent retail areas. In fact, they have no better access than residents in neighborhoods farther removed. The easiest and safest access is to drive to the business locations. This increases traffic on already congested roads and limits the interaction between the businesses and their closest resident neighbors. The Master Plan Goals speak to this issue in terms of accessibility and linkages.

Master Plan Goals

The Master Goals and Objectives that are considered applicable to the Triangle and its uses are:

- Create a “walkable” and “bikeable” town with improvements to sidewalks in public ways and with the creation or enhancement of pathways that connect residential areas with commercial and business areas through the open space areas of the community.
- Expand public transportation options that take additional cars off the road and ease travel to Weymouth’s neighborhoods and businesses.
- Create a linked open space system connected with pedestrian and bicycle trails.

The goals and objectives suggest improvement of the connections between the adjacent and nearby residential areas and the commercial areas in ways that reduce the dependence on automobiles. The concepts proposed here are focused on making these connections and at the same time improving the aesthetics and quality of life for the residents.

Concepts of Change

The concept for improvement presented here is based on the model of the established villages of Weymouth. Added to this is a concept for a gateway for the town from the access off Route 3 to highlight the importance of this retail area and to celebrate the Town. (See Map III-18 Master Plan Focus Area Winter Street Triangle Concepts and Goals). The concepts taken from the other established village areas are combinations of land uses and activities in relatively close proximity:

- Businesses focused within a core of crossing streets;
- A centralized or adjacent public park area that fits within the block and touches the

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residential as well as business properties;

- Separate residential areas that are somewhat buffered from the impacts of the business areas;
- Public properties that are activity centers and are supportive to both the business uses and residents.

The needed element in the 'Triangle' is the open space connector that links the various use areas and properties and allows the pedestrian connections to be fully functional. Usable open space within the center of the block would allow the pedestrian link between the public service buildings, the retail areas and the homes.

Cleaning the area up within the block and creating a quality open space, would also benefit the overall environmental health, especially as this area drains to Whitman's Pond. Expanding the improvements onto private, commercial properties could be accomplished over time as the properties are improved, or negotiated as part of other streetscape improvements.

Map III-18. Master Plan Focus Area: Winter Street Triangle Concept

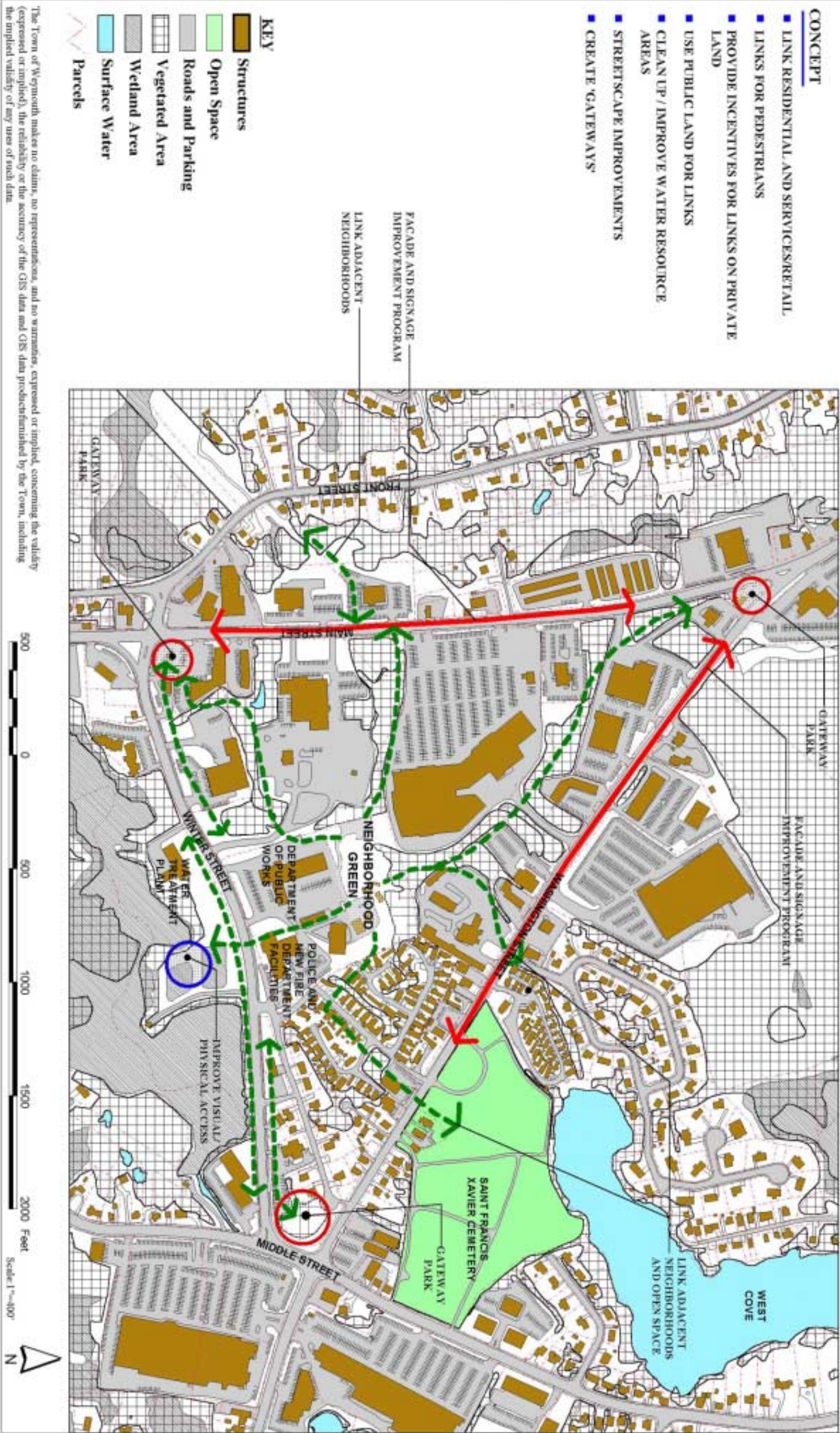


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