

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Town of New Ashford

2003



Prepared By



This document was prepared with funding from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Executive Office of Transportation and Construction, Department of Housing and Community Development, and Department of Economic Development.

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Berkshire Regional
Planning Commission

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TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement goes to the Community Development Plan Advisory Committee who directed and advised Berkshire Regional Planning Commission on the creation of the New Ashford Community Development Plan.

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In addition, the New Ashford Planning Board and the Town Clerk assisted with those items related to zoning.

Finally, acknowledgement must go to New Ashford residents and property owners who answered the public survey, participated at the public forums and provided other input to the plan.

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Introduction to the Community Development Plan Program



Introduction

Introduction to the CDP Program

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Introduction to the Community Development Plan Program

On January 21, 2000, then Governor Paul Cellucci issued Executive Order 418, a measure designed to help communities plan for new opportunities while balancing economic development, transportation infrastructure improvements, and open space preservation.

Technical assistance and grants of up to \$30,000 were made available to assist communities in producing Community Development Plans. Community Development Plans are intended to provide guidance as cities and towns consider options and avenues for future development. The plans will focus on housing, economic and community development, transportation, and open space. The plan must also include how the community will develop housing that is affordable to families and individuals across a broad range of incomes.

New Ashford began the process of undertaking a Community Development Plan in 2001 after it received a build-out map and analysis showing the community at maximum development based on current zoning and state laws. A Town survey and forum were then held to discuss important issues relevant to the town and the community's vision for the future. After the forum, interested volunteers formed the Community Development Plan Advisory Committee, which met several times in 2002 and 2003 to offer community input to guide the development of a Community Development Plan for the Town.

Executive Order 418 required that the Community Development Plan cover the following four areas: Affordable housing; Open space and environmental resources protection; Economic Development and Transportation. The Community Development Plan addresses how the community will accomplish its development objectives for each of the four areas.

New Ashford is a unique community facing its own set of challenges, and the Plan is a documentation of these challenges. The Plan also contains recommendations from members of the community as to how to address the challenges in a manner consistent with maintaining the desired character of the community. The Community Development Plan is based on the most accurate and detailed information available by Federal, State and local resources, and is based on a vision set forth through community consensus.

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Executive Summary



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Executive Summary

The Community Development Plan (CDP) has been developed to outline residents' and landowners' concerns for growth and development in the town as the Town moves into the future. The planning process began in 2002 with a survey sent to all town residents and landowners. The survey contained a number of questions related to the residents' views on the community, natural resource protection, protection of agricultural land, affordable housing, economic development, transportation, and town services. (*Survey results are included in the appendix.*) The survey was followed by a public forum, which was held to discuss the results of the survey and gain greater detail on the overall concerns that residents have for the future of the Town. At the public forum, volunteers were invited to join a CDP advisory committee to discuss the issues further and guide the development of the Town's Community Development Plan. The advisory committee held open meetings five times throughout 2002 and 2003 to discuss local concerns and build the Plan. The primary topic of discussion at these meetings concerned fiscal sustainability and new development in town. For this reason, the Community Development Plan is weighed heavily on issues of economic development in New Ashford. However, the Community Development Plan is a comprehensive study with information on housing, open space and transportation in New Ashford. The following is a summary of the results of the plan:

Economic Development

As stated above, economic development was the focus of discussion and analysis for much of the Community Development Plan process, and therefore is the main focus of the Community Development Plan. The way in which economic development occurs in town is seen to have a potentially large impact upon the character of the community. Throughout the process, the Committee was mindful of the possibility for increased development pressures in town due to new resort developments planned for Brodie Mountain, while at the same time recognizing the possibility of increased fiscal pressures on the town to develop the business district if the resort plans do not come to fruition. The main concern of the committee was to guide new development in town according to three primary goals: 1) maintaining the rural character of the town; 2) maintaining high quality education and town services; and 3) maintaining low taxes.

The CDP analyzes ways in which current regulations may or may not be helping to maintain the character of the community. As part of the Plan, the committee analyzed the current layout of the business district to determine if business development would actually be desirable in each of these areas. Then the committee analyzed the uses currently allowed in the business district to determine if inappropriate uses were being allowed and if appropriate uses were being prohibited. Other analysis included in the Plan is a detailed cost of community services analysis, which gives information on the fiscal implications of certain types of development in Town, which may assist town officials in making informed decisions on future land uses in town.

The work of the CDP Committee resulted in six alternatives for encouraging future economic development in Town that may maintain the community's character. Among the alternatives are rezoning some undeveloped business district areas as agricultural/residential lands, rezoning other developed areas for additional business use, updating use regulations that fail to maintain the community's character, and developing design guidelines for future development in the business district. The recommended actions are the following:

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- Determine which of the future economic development alternatives presented in the Community Development Plan are preferable to the town.
- Gain public comment on updates to acceptable and unacceptable commercial uses within the zoning districts, as presented in the Community Development Plan.
- Gain public comment on rezoning the northern section of the Rural Business District to agricultural/residential.
- Determine which potential commercial areas outlined in the Community Development Plan are most acceptable to future non-residential uses and future rezoning, if desired.
- Adopt detailed design standards for new commercial development (such as the design standards included in the Community Development Plan) to help ensure that new developments maintains the town's existing character.

Open Space and Recreation

The Town of New Ashford has a wealth of farms, forests, open spaces and natural resources that are highly valued by town residents. Residents of town, large and small and landowners alike, wish to preserve these valued resources, but also wish to maintain control over their land and decisions that are made concerning their property. There are many different options the town may take to encourage land preservation, one of which is developing an Official Open Space and Recreation Plan for New Ashford. The Community Development Plan lays the foundation for a future Open Space and Recreation Plan, including much of the information that would be included in an official Open Space and Recreation Plan. Potential actions for pursuing future Open Space protection in Town would be:

- Form an open space group or committee to advance town preservation efforts.
- Utilize information within the CDP to develop an Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act, as was done in Williamstown, to assist in open space protection efforts.
- Conduct additional review of zoning by-laws and subdivision regulations to determine compatibility with land preservation goals and opportunities to introduce more flexible development options such as conservation subdivision designs or conservation zoning.

Housing

Residents of New Ashford wish to maintain a housing supply that is affordable to residents of a wide range of incomes. Data included in the Plan shows that construction and sales of new housing has decreased in the past few years, while the population and housing prices have continued to increase. There is a high percentage of residents who cannot afford any of the homes sold in New Ashford. Older residents in town, especially those with older houses, may benefit from housing rehabilitation assistance programs available from the state and administered locally from Berkshire Housing Development Corporation. In order to maintain the Town's goals for affordable housing, the following actions are available to the town:

- Organize or appoint a person or group dedicated to keep issues of affordable housing on the local agenda, and work with regional affordable housing organizations to the benefit of the Town.
- Participate in housing rehabilitation programs offered by local Housing Development Corporations.
- Educate residents on housing assistance funding programs for home and septic repairs.

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Transportation

Transportation in New Ashford is tied to issues of economic development, housing, land use, and community development. As in many small towns, New Ashford does not have access to any single, official documentation of the legal status of Town roads. Such documentation is crucial in issues of new development, as adequate frontage on an accepted town road is necessary for new construction, and disputes could lead to costly litigation. The Community Development Plan has collected documentation on the current status of all Town roads and incorporated it into a Status of Roads map. If the Town views any inconsistencies or ambiguities in this map, clarifications and alterations could be incorporated and accepted by the town by adopting an "Official Map" based on the Status of Roads map. In the future, the Community Development Plan outlines the following actions relating to the Status of Roads map are available to the town:

- Conduct a formal review of the Community Development Plan Status of Roads map.
- Hold a public forum, or a series of working meetings in Town to address potential action on roads where the official status is at question.
- Present the agreed-upon map of town roads at Town Meeting for adoption as the Official Map for the Town.

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Community Vision Statement and Plan Objectives

(As developed by the New Ashford Community Development Plan Advisory Committee)

Residents and property owners enjoy New Ashford the way it is, and wish to work together as a community to preserve and maintain the Town's rural character and open spaces. Any additional development - residential, commercial, or otherwise - should occur in a manner that does not detract from the rural nature and present character of the Town.

Community Development Plan Objectives for the Town of New Ashford

I. Community Enhancement

- Maintain a high level of public safety
- Maintain above average education for our children
- Encourage active community participation in governance
- Maintain property values with fair and reasonable taxes

II. Economic Development

- Maintain the rural character of the town
- Maintain low taxes
- Maintain high quality education and town services

III. Transportation

- Continued outstanding maintenance of town roads and public facilities
- Maintain a high level of public safety on town roads
- Increase access to public transportation

IV. Housing

- Maintaining property values with fair and reasonable taxes
- Maintain housing that continues to serve the needs of the New Ashford Community
- Development as appropriate in areas deemed acceptable, such as the Planned Unit Resort District

V. Environment & Open Space Protection

- Maintain environmental responsibility

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Community Setting

New Ashford is located in northern Berkshire County, the westernmost county of Massachusetts. Berkshire County has some of the most picturesque landscapes in the Commonwealth. Forested hills, mountain streams, open fields, and historic farms dot the landscape, giving the area a rural character and natural beauty that rivals any region in New England. With a 2000 population of 241 residents, New Ashford shares the distinct rural charm of the Berkshires and is one of the smallest communities in the Commonwealth.

The Town of New Ashford is situated in a gorge that runs along the Green River alongside the town's major access road, Route 7. It is bordered by Williamstown on the north, Adams on the east, Cheshire on the southeast, Lanesborough on the south, and Hancock on the west. Most development in the town has occurred in the valley of the Green River, which runs from the south to the north through the middle of town. To the west lie the steep slopes of the Taconic Range and to the east are the equally steep slopes of Mount Greylock, the highest peak in Massachusetts.

New Ashford's location on the Green River designates the area as part of the Hoosic/Hudson River Watershed, which encompasses most of the northern Berkshire County. Also, a small portion of land in the Southwest part of town is in the Housatonic River Watershed.

New Ashford shares access to Mount Greylock State Reservation on the east side of town and is home to Saddle Ball Mountain one of the most noticeable peaks in Berkshire County. In addition to representing a short segment of the Appalachian Trail here, New Ashford is also home to Brodie Mountain, a ski area on the west side of town which attracts thousands of visitors each winter.

New Ashford is 12 miles north of Pittsfield, the largest city in Berkshire County. Along with Pittsfield, New Ashford also relies upon neighboring town Williamstown for many services and employment. There is no municipal sewer or water in town, nor any gas service. There are no public schools in town, so children are transported to the neighboring town of Lanesborough.

The major employers in the region are Williams College, Berkshire Medical Center/ Berkshire Health Systems and General Dynamics of Pittsfield. Most residents travel to work and commute in their own vehicles to surrounding towns.

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Economic Development



Economic Development

Analysis of Future Development & Zoning Regulations
Recommended Updates to the Rural Business Zone
Design Guidelines for Business District Development
Summary of Economic Development Findings
Economic Development Action Map

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Analysis of Future Development and New Ashford's Local Zoning Regulations

Development in New Ashford will result from a combination of three major factors: market forces which create incentives to develop land; building codes which determine the materials and standards used for constructing individual buildings; and zoning regulations which regulate the uses allowed, the intensity of development, and the general form of future developments. The three forces combine to determine the way in which the town will be developed and the way the town will look and feel in the future. Unfortunately, two of these three factors are largely beyond local control. Market forces are largely regional and even global, and they are highly volatile and hard to predict. Building codes are strengthened and enforced locally, but are largely regulated at the level of State government. Overall, the greatest source of local control over the town's future development is determined by local zoning regulations, which at the same time have perhaps the largest influence over the form, function, and locations of future development.

Although zoning regulations are often thought of as restrictive measures used to spell out the types of development the community does not want in town, it is important to the community that New Ashford's zoning regulations also encourage and allow the kinds of developments that many town officials and residents say they do want in their community. The Community Development Plan Advisory Committee reviewed the current Rural Business zoning regulations in an attempt to gauge whether they remain consistent with the community's goals for future community character, economic development and fiscal stability in the town. The following outlines the committee's three goals for future development in New Ashford, analyses whether or not current local regulations help or hurt the town in reaching these goals, and offers potential options for future updates to the zoning regulations to adapt them to more accurately reflect the goals of the community.

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Economic Development Goals of the Community

Before considering strategies to adapt Business Zone regulations that match the economic needs of the community, the committee determined three goals that any of New Ashford's local development efforts should strive to follow:

Goal: Maintain the Rural Character of the Town

New Ashford is a small town, one of the smallest towns in Massachusetts, and it cherishes the qualities that comprise its rural character. New development should occur in a manner that maintains the character of the town by maintaining the look, feel, and safety of the area.

Goal: Keep Taxes Low

The primary goal of economic development in town should be to reduce the tax burden of the homeowners. A diversified foundation of businesses would potentially maintain lower residential taxes by reducing the risk of large tax increases on residents if any one business fails or re-locates.

Goal: Maintain High-Quality Education and Town Services

The Town of New Ashford places high priority on maintaining quality town services and quality education for its children. The Community Development Plan analyzed the costs of community services and found non-residential developments such as commercial properties bringing the town tax revenues without adding to the educational expenses, which was overwhelmingly the largest town expense.

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Analysis of the Current Zoning Districts

With consensus on community goals for guiding efforts of economic development, the Committee reviewed the current Zones to determine if the regulations adequately address the goals and objectives adopted in the Community Development Plan. The Town has the following three zoning districts:

Agricultural/Residential

Rural Business

Planned Unit Resort District (PURD)

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Agricultural/Residential Zone

Location

The Agricultural/Residential Zone encompasses the entire town excepting the strip of land within five hundred feet along both sides of Route 7 that is the Rural Business Zone.

Summary of Uses Permitted By Right in the Agricultural/Residential Zone

Residential

- One family dwellings and mobile home or travel trailers are allowed

Agricultural:

- Land or structures for agriculture, horticulture or floriculture

Commercial Uses

- Roadside stands selling locally grown produce
- Accessory rooms for home occupations
- Accessory buildings for home occupations
- Rental of a room or rooms in a dwelling
- Other accessory uses and structures incidental to a principal permitted use on the same premises
- Display of regulated sign or signs
- Storage of not more than two unregistered motor vehicles

Institutional Uses

- Parks, Playgrounds, and other recreational facilities owned or operated by a town agency
- Religious, educational, or other municipal or governmental uses are allowed by right

Uses Allowed By Special Permit in the Agricultural/Residential Zone:

Special permits provide for specific uses which are deemed necessary or desirable but which are not allowed as of right because of their potential for incompatibility with the characteristics of the district when left without conditions. Special permits are often used to attach conditions to alleviate the more caustic aspects of otherwise necessary uses. Boards are not compelled to give special permits, and with any *permissible* reason may deny a special permit.

- Two family dwelling
- Accessory buildings to permitted uses such as: commercial greenhouses; saw mills; appliance repair; or gun shops
- Recreational facility including or of similar character to the following: golf course; ski tow; or riding stable
- Accessory use for scientific research or development or related production
- Gravel pit for a resident's own consumption
- The storage of more than two unregistered motor vehicles
- Energy conversion systems, generating facilities, or windmills

Prohibited Uses:

The following uses are expressly prohibited in the Rural Business Zone

- Junkyard or commercial saw mill
- Piggery, Fur farm, or Slaughterhouse
- Aviation field
- Any use which may create undue traffic or which is commonly regarded as hazardous, injurious, or noxious.

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Rural Business Zone

Location

The Rural Business Zone is a strip of land within five hundred feet along both sides of Route 7 that runs through the entire town from the northern border with Williamstown to the southern border with Lanesborough.

Summary of Permitted Uses in the Rural Business Zone

The Rural Business Zone uses are the same as those allowed by-right in the Agricultural/Residential Zone.

Uses Allowed By Special Permit in the Rural Business Zone

All Uses allowed by special permit in the Agricultural/Residential Zone except energy conversion systems or generating facilities.

Retail business or consumer service establishment including, but not limited to:

- Grocery store
- Barber or beauty shop
- Antique shop
- Eating establishment
- Bank
- Motel
- Auto service station, repair shops
- Auto sales room, or storage garage
- Trailer park for transient use, except with occupants limited from August 16-June 14 to no more than thirty (30) days in succession
- Manufacturing or assembly of a light industrial nature employing not more than twenty (20) employees
- Any other use determined by the Board to be similar in character to one or more uses specifically authorized herein, provided the Board finds that the proposed use is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of this By-Law and not offensive or detrimental to the neighborhood

Prohibited Uses in the Rural Business Zone

The uses prohibited in the Rural Business Zone are the same as those prohibited in the Agricultural/Residential zone.

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Planned Unit Resort District (PURD)

Location

The Planned Unit Resort District (PURD) encompasses the area surrounding Brodie Mountain Ski Area in the southern section of town west of Route 7.

Summary of Permitted Uses in the Planned Unit Resort District (PURD)

The permitted uses are intended to be possible multiple components of an overall resort character and quality and the actual mix may be proposed **as part of the Master Development Plan for the Resort**. Therefore, all uses must be planned for and may include the following:

- Lodging and housing facilities
- Dormitory-style facilities for seasonal employees
- Restaurants, Retail shopping, Conference centers
- Active and passive recreational uses such as:
 - Skiing
 - Snowboarding
 - Swimming
 - Golfing
 - Tubing
 - Tennis
 - Alpine slides
 - Club-houses
 - Horseback riding
 - Bicycling
 - Walking
 - Hiking
 - Picnicking
- Other resort activities as allowed by the Planning Board that are compatible with the PURD.

Prohibited Uses in the Planned Unit Resort District (PURD):

- Any noxious, offensive, or unsightly uses
- Excessive noise or lighting
- Only open or screened material extraction, warehousing or equipment repair directly related to the resort shall be permitted

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Challenges and Opportunities for the Rural Business Zone

By definition, the Rural Business zone is the location deemed appropriate for new business development in town. The following lists the ways in which the business zone may or may not adequately encourage development that maintains a low tax rate, funds necessary town services, and maintains the character of the town.

Availability of Developable Land – Challenge to Business Development and New Tax Revenues

In order to generate tax revenues to pay for necessary town services while maintaining low taxes, non-residential development in the Business District may be desirable. Locating the Rural Businesses district along Route 7 introduces several constraints to development related to the topology of the land along the road. Steep slopes, such as the falling-rock area; the river and streams running parallel to Rte. 7; and other wetlands have limited development within the current Rural Business District. A Geographical Information Systems Analysis of buildable land for the Rural Business District determined that only eight percent, or 211 acres out of over 2,645 undeveloped acres in the Business District were easily developable without major constraints. (See Commercial Land Analysis Map) However, as advances in developmental technologies facilitate the conversion of difficult to develop land, the potential dangers to the natural resources are increased, and limitations that are not in the zoning ordinances may not be as large a factor in the future.

Location of the Zone – Challenge to the Town Character

The remaining developable open land in the Rural Business District is sporadically located along Route 7 and not near existing businesses. Much of this land is currently being used for farms or forests and is not near the limited amount of existing infrastructure around the Town's businesses. The Rural Business Zone only recognizes the location of Route 7 and treats the entire strip of land uniformly from Lanesborough to Williamstown. It does not consider the town's historical development pattern as Route 7 passes farms, fields, houses, businesses, forests and woodlands. The diverse topography leaves much of the commercially zoned land in town constrained for development, and if it were developed, it would be at high cost and greatly impacting to fragile lands. In the near future, plans for increased development in the Planned Unit Resort District may increase development pressure in the Rural Business District. Businesses located along Route 7 would also likely cater to the road's travelers, not town residents, and would not be obliged to consider local building designs or development patterns in order to remain within the town's character.

Allowed Uses – Challenge to the Town Character and Business Development

Apart from allowing development in less than desirable locations, the rural Business Zone allows for the potential of commercial-strip types of developments that are exactly the types of development, such as convenience-marts and fast food establishments that have been identified as undesirable for the town. However, in allowing for retail uses, the district relies on special permits, which may be used to attach conditions to alleviate the more caustic aspects of otherwise necessary uses. Boards are not compelled to give special permits, and with any *permissible* reason may deny a special permit. However, town boards are offered little guidance in the bylaws as to how to judge special permit applications, or how to condition them, as there are currently few specific criteria listed as necessary in order to meet a special permit, and there is no guidelines in the zoning regulations as to standard conditions to place upon developments related to light pollution, noise reduction, parking, or aesthetics of the building related to the town. Granting of a special permit, and determinations on conditions to place upon undesirable traits to a development may be highly subject to the permitting authority in place at the time.

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Opportunities to Meet the Challenges:

Recommended Options for Rural Business Development in New Ashford

The primary economic goal of New Ashford is to encourage development that meets the Town's three developmental goals: maintaining low taxes, maintaining quality town services, and maintaining the character of the town. Following these concerns, the committee looked toward potential alternatives for enhanced business zoning that better addresses the commercial needs of the town, the town's character, the topography and environmental attributes of the land, and the town's historical development patterns. The committee then addressed appropriate commercial uses and use regulations for the town. The Advisory Committee reviewed several options available to meet the future challenges and, with the overall economic development goals in mind, determined the following three options as the recommended way to face the challenges.

Recommended Option #1:

Re-Zone the Most Environmentally Sensitive and Constrained Areas along Route 7 from Business to Agricultural/Residential.

Recommended Option #2:

Replace the amount of developable acreage of Environmentally Sensitive and Constrained Areas along Route 7 to areas more conducive to development based on topology surveys and current development patterns.

Recommended Option #3:

Update Agricultural/Residential and Business Zoning Regulations to reflect what are considered acceptable and unacceptable uses for the business zone.

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Recommended Option #1:

Re-Zone the Most Environmentally Sensitive and Constrained Areas along Route 7 from Business to Agricultural/Residential.

Description:

Remove Rural Business Zoning from constrained areas along Route 7 that may be aesthetically or environmentally sensitive and vulnerable to retail, commercial, fast food or other unwanted strip type developments. The majority of this land is North of the Mill on the Floss.

Guiding Factor:

92% of the Business Zone is informally constrained by steep slopes, wetlands, and other naturally occurring factors. These constrained areas are also environmentally sensitive and it may not be desirable to the community to develop them. Legally, however, under current zoning they could be developed for commercial uses with high impact, potentially damaging and unattractive results.

Effect on Current Conditions:

Change in Potential Uses allowed By-Right: None – all uses allowed by right in a Rural Business Zone are allowed in the Agricultural/Residential Zone.

Change in Potential Uses allowed by Special Permit: Retail Businesses, Light Industry and Manufacturing, and Trailer parks allowed by special permit in Business Zoning would no longer be allowed, while electricity generation facilities and windmills would now be allowed with a special permit.

Potential Benefits:

Community Character:

Restricting commercial/industrial development from constrained areas having steep slopes, wooded areas, and water resource areas reflects the current development pattern of the town. This changes beneficially replaces topological developmental constraints, which may be overcome by future technologies or high-impact developments, with definite restrictions in the town's zoning regulations.

Maintaining Quality Town Services:

Keeping commercial/industrial development within already developed areas reduces need to spread town services across wide areas.

Potential Challenges:

Maintaining a Low Tax Base: Removing potential commercial/industrial development may reduce the overall potential for future non-residential tax revenues for the town.

Other Notes:

Loss in tax revenues by a reduced Business Zone may be offset by new development in the Planned Unit Resort District. However, relying solely on one type of development for tax revenues may not maintain a stable tax base

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Committee Recommendations for Re-zoning Environmentally Constrained areas of the Rural Business District:

Recommendation #1: Re-Zone the Rural Business District Strip North of the Mill On the Floss to Residential/ Agricultural

The BRPC Developmental Constraints Map shows that the most environmentally sensitive and constrained area in the Route 7 Business Zone is north of the Mill On the Floss, which should no longer be zoned for business use. Depicting environmental protection areas, soil types and steep slopes this map shows that the great majority of commercial land located north of The Old Greylock Road (the driveway to The Mill on the Floss), was undevelopable.

All business development in New Ashford is currently located south of the Mill on the Floss. The Committee was concerned that commercial development and its impacts would detract from the residential value of the houses and land that currently exists along Route 7, and that re-zoning would potentially add to the value of land in the area by eliminating the risk of new unsightly business uses geared towards servicing non-local Route 7 travelers.

Though the entire Business District in New Ashford is largely constrained, 40% of the undeveloped land south of the Mill on the Floss was developable, while only 5% of the undeveloped land north of the Mill on the Floss was developable. (see Table 1). Additionally, the committee was concerned that with commercial zoning in place, commercial development in that area remains legal and is not impossible for well funded developers to make the necessary site preparations that would severely impact the hills and woodland of the area which are viewed as assets of the town.

Table 1: Developable Land in the New Ashford Business District			
Segment of Business District	Total Acres	Total Developable Acres	Developable Acres as Percent of Total
Area North of Mill on the Floss (Zoning Maps 1-8)	2,402	118	4.9%
Area South of Mill on the Floss (Zoning Maps 9 & 10)	249	96	39.0%

The result of the land suitability analysis suggests that business development North of the Mill on the Floss will be both harmful to the environment and out of character for the town. Therefore, the Advisory Committee recommends re-zoning the Business District zoned parcels in Zoning Maps 1 through 8, (the land north of the Mill on the Floss) to Agricultural Residential.

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Recommended Option #2:

Replace the developable acreage of Environmentally Sensitive Sections of the Rural Business District to areas more conducive to development based on topology surveys and current development patterns.

Description:

After removing Rural Business District zoning from areas with many developmental constraints, replace acre for acre any reduction in developable land in areas that may be more conducive to development. The acreage in question has been determined by BRPC Land Suitability Maps.

Guiding Factor:

Since only 8% of the undeveloped Business Zone land is considered developable without major constraints, rezone the most sensitive business district areas and then increase the Business Zone in more appropriately developable areas to enable additional Business Development. This option balances a need to restrict commercial development in sensitive sections of the Business Zone without reducing the potential for future Business tax revenues.

Effect on Current Conditions:

Change in Potential Uses allowed By-Right: None – all uses allowed by right in a Rural Business Zone are allowed in the Agricultural/Residential Zone.

Change in Potential Uses allowed by Special Permit: Retail Businesses, Light Industry and Manufacturing, and Trailer parks allowed by special permit in Business Zoning are not allowed in the Agricultural/Residential Zone, while electricity generation facilities and windmills are not allowed in the Rural Business Zone

Potential Benefits:

Maintaining the Community Character:

Rezoning would restrict unwanted strip type development along sensitive sections of Rte 7. Increasing commercially developable land may reduce pressures to develop constrained or aesthetically sensitive areas currently in the Business Zone. Rezoning would replace areas subject to potential high-impact and damaging development with areas more conducive to development as determined by the community. Rezoning would allow new businesses to locate near existing businesses and not in fragile, high visibility open spaces, woods, or steep slopes.

Maintaining Quality Town Services: Keeping commercial/industrial development within less constrained areas reduces potential need for town services on additional steep slopes and irregular terrain. Enabling potential commercial/industrial development may increase the potential for future non-residential tax revenues for the town.

Maintaining a Low Tax Base: Moving potential commercial/industrial development to areas more conducive to development may increase the overall potential for future non-residential tax revenues for the town.

Potential Challenges:

Maintaining the Community Character: Additional Business Zone land must be placed in an appropriate area that reflects the current land uses, topology and development pattern of the town. Re-zoning from Business to Agricultural /Residential in constrained areas would not prohibit land uses that already are occurring because the areas are already residential. However, rezoning from Agriculture/Residential to Rural Business in areas not near existing businesses would still allow residential uses, but would introduce the possibility of new types of developments not currently allowed. The current special permitting process offers minimal guidance to town Boards about conditions and acceptable commercial or retail uses, which may be needed to maintain community character.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD

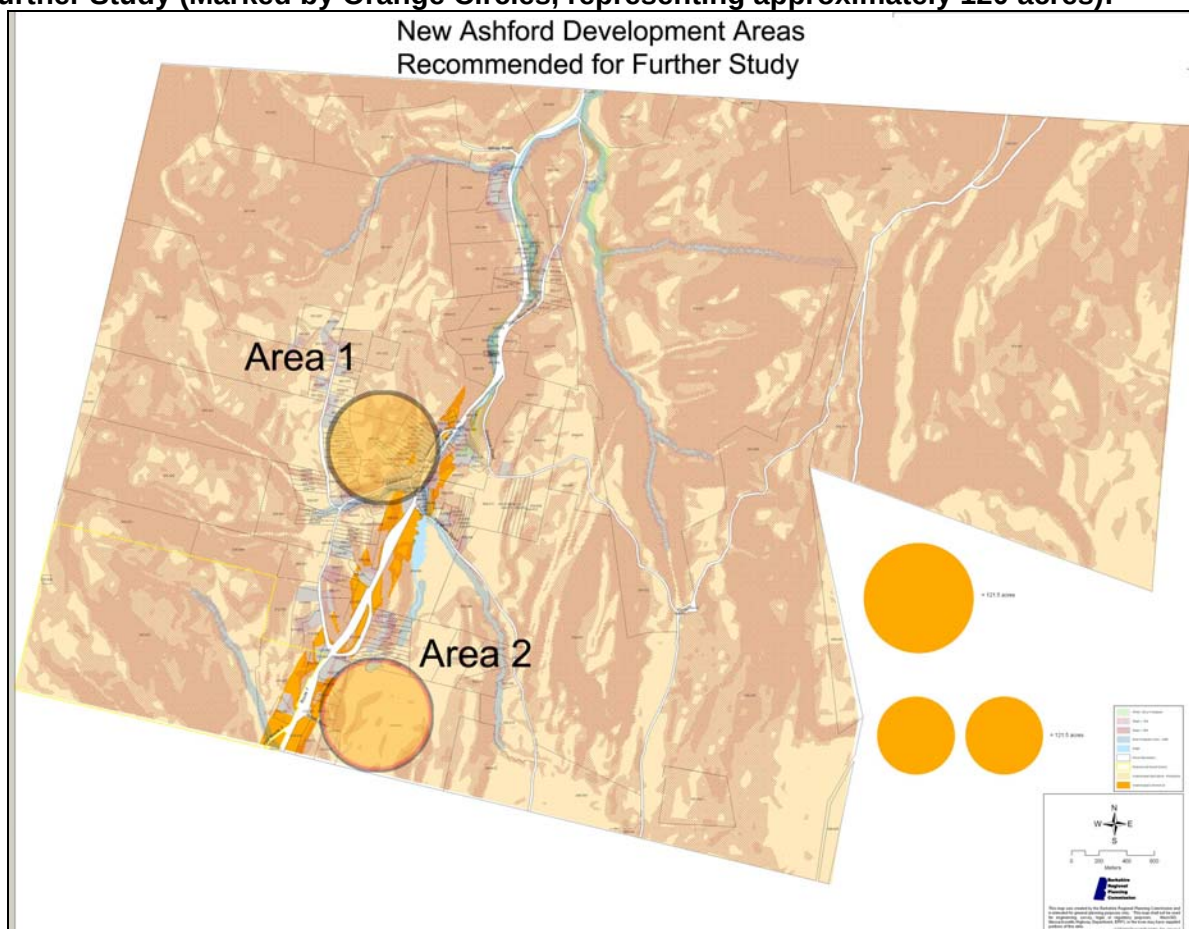


Recommendations for Relocating Sections of the Rural Business District:

Recommendation # 1: Re-Allocate the 118 acres of developable Business Zoned land removed from North Route 7 to an area more appropriate for the town as determined by topology and the Land Suitability Analysis.

The Community Development Plan has determined that rezoning the Northern Section of the Commercial zone affected 118 developable acres of commercial land in Town, (see Table 1 above) which are to be redistributed to more appropriate areas.

Recommendation #2: Based on the Land Suitability Analysis, the most suitable area for re-distribution of Business Zone acreage is one of the Two Areas Recommended for Further Study (Marked by Orange Circles, representing approximately 120 acres):



With assistance from the BRPC's Developmental Constraints Map the Community Development Plan Committee identified two potential locations in New Ashford most appropriate for reallocating the lost business zone acreage. These areas are demonstrated on the zoning alternatives map and are summarized as the following:

(Area 1) Town Center Area: North Mallery Road/Route 7 Intersection West of Rte 7.

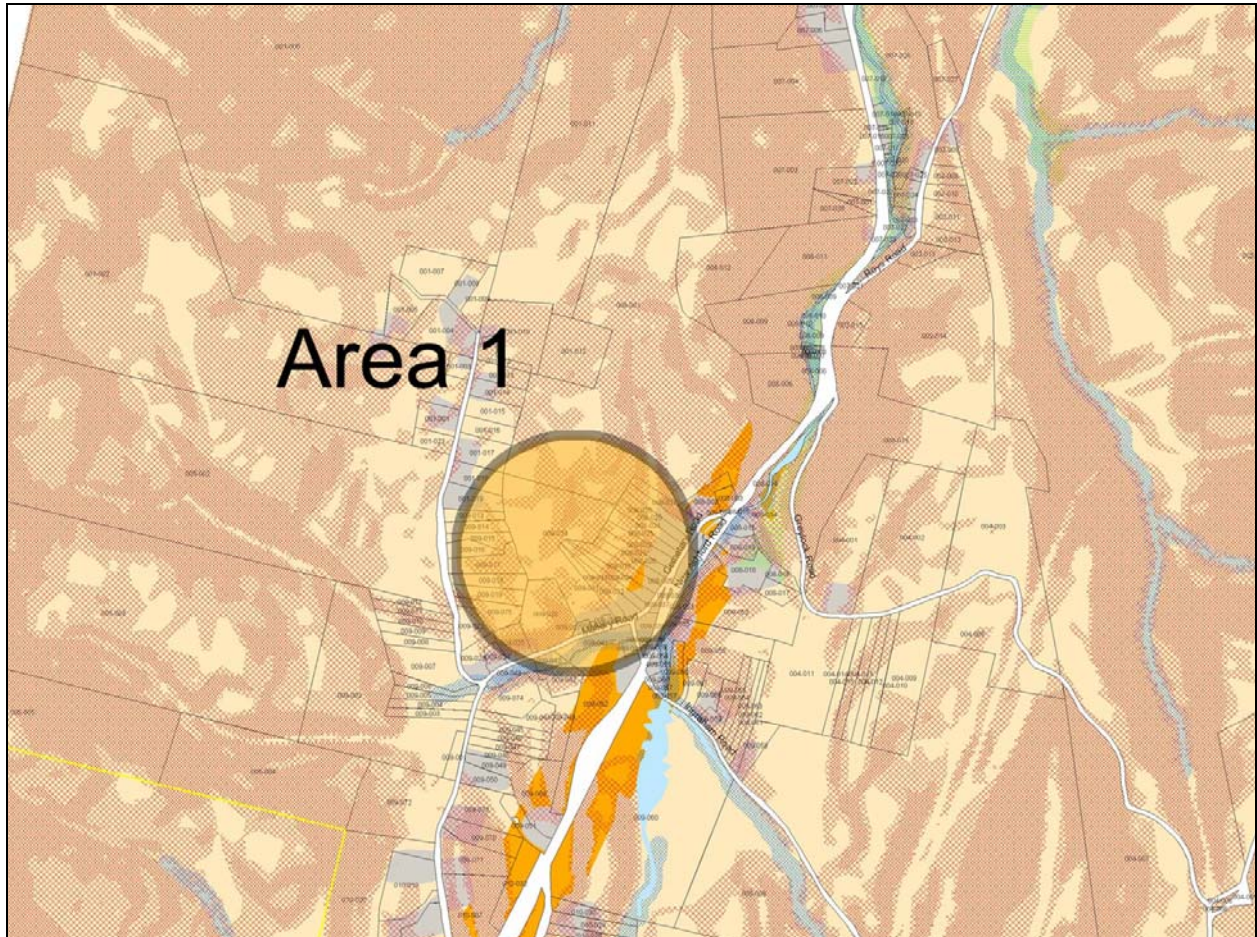
(Area 2) Rt. 7 Intersection with Smith Road, Opposite the PURD on Smith Road.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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(Area 1) Town Center Area: North Mallery Road/Route 7 Intersection West of Route 7.
(Circle represents approximately 120 acres)



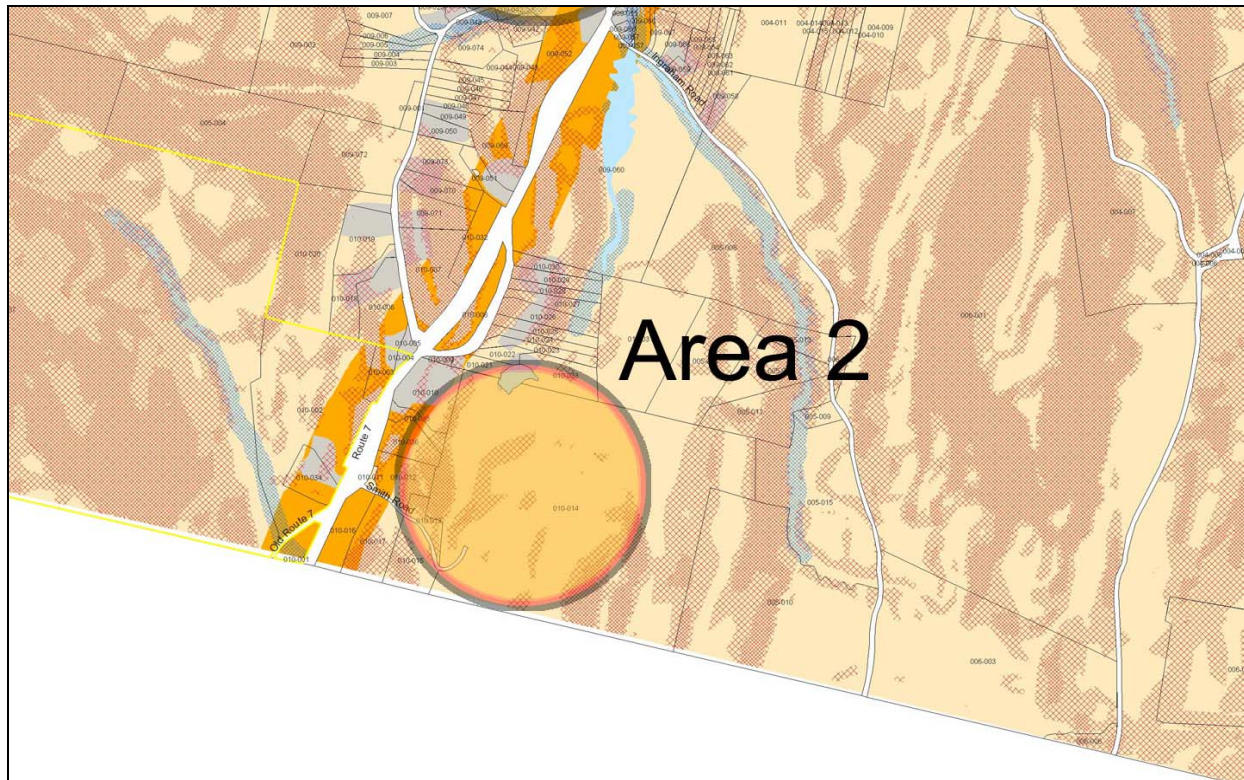
This area is the traditional Town Center of New Ashford along the northern intersection of Mallery Road on the western side of Route 7. The area is home to the Town Hall, a motel, the old New Ashford Schoolhouse, and other residential and commercial uses. The area is recommended for additional consideration as an area in close proximity to Route 7 that is also close to existing development and with a relatively large percentage of unconstrained land. (Shown on map as light yellow areas)

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(2) Rt. 7 Opposite the PURD on Smith Road.



The Land Suitability Analysis determined that physical factors made this land conducive to development. (Unconstrained land depicted on Map as light yellow). The land is also close to the PURD and adjacent to Route 7, with Smith Road existing as a potential access road. However, the area is also currently important to the town for agriculture, and it is recommended that additional discussion and consideration be given to this area.

Other Potential Business Zone Areas Considered and Discussed, but not Given Recommendation:

Mill on the Floss / Old Greylock Road Area.

This was seen as a potential area close to existing businesses. The area is a small, level area located to the east of Route 7 that is currently home to the Mill on the Floss and other residential and commercial parcels, and a large amount of Forested Land. The area is level and could potentially be a desirable local gateway for tourist access to Mt. Greylock State Forest. The area is not currently highly residential like the town center, but might be conducive to additional commercial uses.

South Mallery Road/ Beach Hill Road Area

This area is between Mallery Road in proximity to the intersection with Beach Hill Road. This is largely residential with a large amount of developable land.

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Recommended Option #3:

Update Agricultural/Residential and Business Zoning Regulations to reflect what are considered acceptable and unacceptable uses for the business zone.

Description:

This option calls for identifying acceptable and unacceptable uses for the business zone by permitting acceptable uses by right with the submission of a Site Plan for review, restricting additional unacceptable uses, and adding additional guidance to the bylaws on conditions to include in the Special Permitting Process

Guiding Factor: Currently, all retail businesses are restricted to the Business Zone. All business development is required to go through the special permit process whether or not the type of business is supported or encouraged by the community. This option intends to identify low-impact uses that maintain community character and allow them to be built by-right, as long as a site plan for their development is provided. Local regulations have no specific guidelines as to what development features enhance the community character, so these would be included in the update as considerations for both site plan review and special permitting. Regulations also allow for the possibility of unwanted development such as gas stations, which would be addressed as prohibited.

Potential Benefits:

Community Character:

- Reducing regulations on acceptable uses will encourage businesses that maintain community character.
- Guidelines for desired look and form of developments will enable the town to encourage the desired types of developments that occur in the future.
- Special permitting process will have access to additional review criteria, and site plan development guidelines and will enable developers to create developments that are desirable to the community.

Maintaining a Low Tax Rate and Quality Town Services:

- Development Guidelines will stabilize property values by reducing the risk of unsightly development near existing homes and businesses. Ensuring that undesired uses are specifically prohibited and that new developments will follow set rules on look and form will help maintain stable property values.
- Encouraging desired non-residential developments might help form a diverse tax base and lower the burden on residential taxpayers and help fund necessary town services.

Potential Challenges:

- Conditions must be adaptable to specific conditions while maintaining their effectiveness in maintaining the character of the community.

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Updating Use Regulations in the Rural Business Zone:

In order to maintain and enhance community character and encourage the types of small businesses desired in the community, the Community Development Plan recommends updating the zoning regulations in the rural business district by conducting three measures: updating the list of acceptable and prohibited uses; forming a list of design guidelines to keep all new commercial development in line with the character of the community, and initiating a site plan review process to replace the more extensive special permit process for certain uses considered less harmful and most in line with the community.

Site Plan Review for By-Right Business Uses

The Community Development Plan recommends that certain uses compatible with the community character be allowed by-right, as long as they first submit a site plan for review according to certain design standards. This change would release acceptable uses from the more intensive and subjective measures of a full special permit process, as long as they follow certain guidelines in their Site Plan intended to maintain the look and character of the community. This report will first address uses that are compatible with the community character and then will address design guidelines for new development and the site plan review process to enact them.

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Recommended Updates to the Rural Business Zone Use Regulations

All business uses are currently allowed by special permit in the business zone; none are allowed by-right. The recommended changes to the Rural Business Zone Permitted Uses are as follows:

USE	Size	CURRENT PROCESS	NEW PROCESS
Grocery Store Barber Shop/ Beauty Parlor Antique Shop Bank Other Retail	Building Footprint under 3,000 sq. ft.	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan Review
	Building Footprint over 3,000 sq. ft.	Special Permit	Special Permit
Eating Establishment - Sit Down	Building Footprint under 6,000 sq. ft.	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan Review
	Building Footprint over 6,000 sq. ft.	Special Permit	Special Permit
Professional Office Building	Building Footprint under 3,000 sq. ft.	Not Allowed	By Right w/Site Plan Review
	Building Footprint over 3,000 sq. ft.	Not Allowed	Special Permit
Eating Establishment - Fast Food (Drive-through expressly prohibited)		Special Permit	Special Permit
Bed & Breakfasts	under 8 bedrooms	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan Review
	over 8 bedrooms	Special Permit	Special Permit
Motel		Special Permit	Special Permit
Manufacturing/Light Industrial		Special Permit	Special Permit
Auto Service/Repair (no gas sales)		Special Permit	Special Permit
Auto Sales Room/Storage Garage		Special Permit	Special Permit
Gas Station		Special Permit	Prohibited
Trailer Park		Special Permit	Prohibited
All Allowable Commercial Uses		Four Story Height Limit (Sec 5.1.e)	Two Story Height Limit

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Design Guidelines for Development in the Commercial Business District

Plans and zoning regulations help communities clarify a broad vision, potential land use locations, and some criteria for development decisions. However design guidelines help a community achieve the appearance that it desires. Generally, design guidelines help to:

- Assure the community that good design features and visual quality will be required when new development is proposed
- Establish principles for appearance in town
- Establish design principles for the interaction between uses on adjacent lots
- Provide the foundation and support for making good design decisions

The Community Development Plan recommends establishing design guidelines to be followed as part of the site plan review process for new commercial development in town.

Site Plan

The Site Plan is defined in New Ashford's by-laws, but remains as an optional condition to be requested as part of the Special Permit Process. This Section attempts to further define the contents required in a Site plan and gives design guidelines for the contents.

Before a building permit is granted, each development must submit a site plan for review of the Planning Board. The Site Plan may contain such additional conditions, modifications, restrictions and requirements, as the Planning Board deems necessary to effectuate the purposes and requirements of this section. The applicant will supply an original Site Plan plus seven copies to the Town Clerk.

Required Site Plan Contents and Design Guidelines

For new construction in the Rural Business District, the applicant shall submit the following:

- A Scaled Locus Plan (at a scale of 1"=100')
- Scaled Site Layout Plan (at a scale of at least 1"=40')
- Landscape plan (which may be combined as part of the scaled site layout plan)
- Building elevation plan and drawings (at a scale of at least 1"=20')
- Topography and Drainage Plan (at 2 foot contours)
- A Brief Plan Narrative

The Site plans must cover the entire development, and must be prepared by a professional Engineer or Registered Landscape Architect at a scale of no less than 1" = 40' clearly illustrating the required elements listed below. The Community Development Plan also lists Design Guidelines to accompany each element required in the site plan, which are intended to aid property developers in producing well designed projects consistent with good professional practice and maintaining New Ashford's special character.

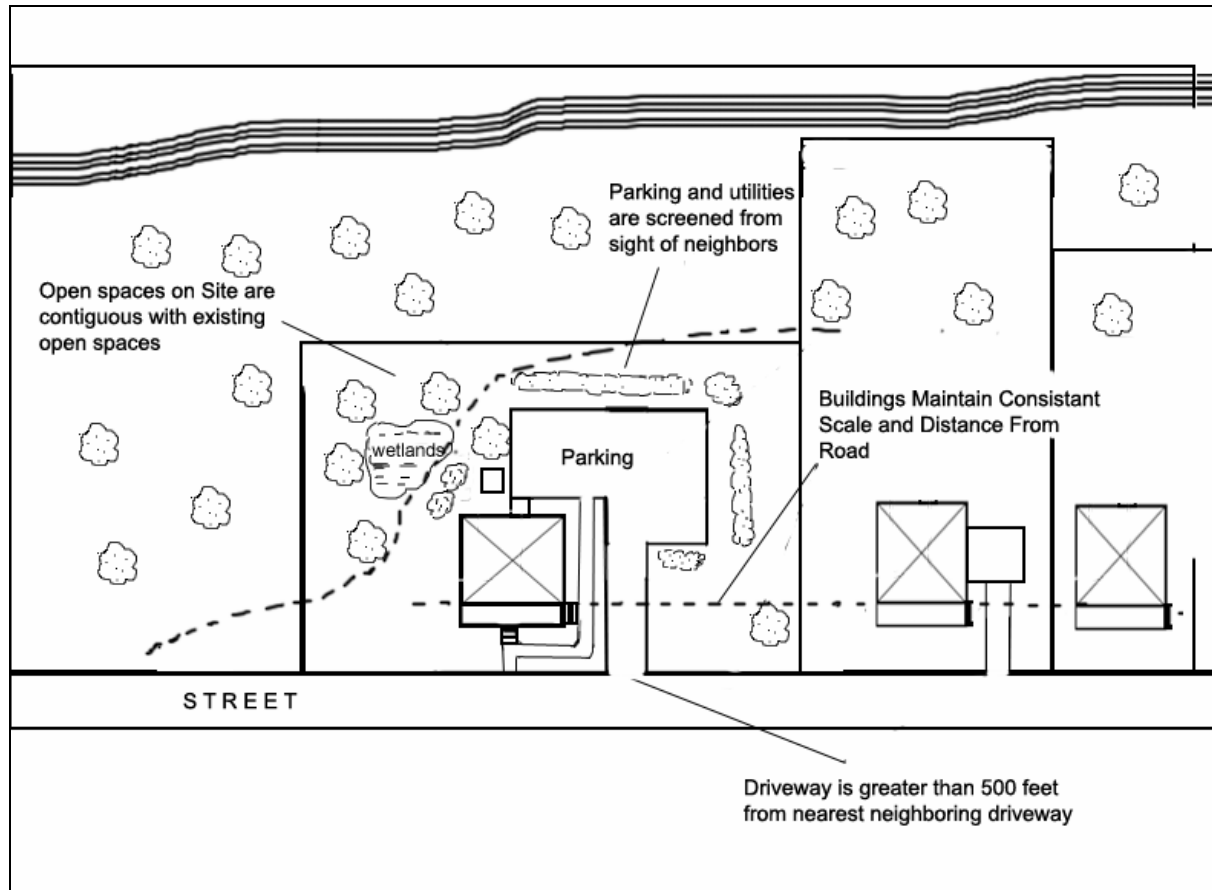
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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A Site Locus Plan should include the following

1) The entire project area (at a scale of 1" = 100'), showing open spaces, building footprints and driveways, and the existing area's open spaces, buildings, roads, and driveways for a distance of at least one thousand (1,000) feet from the project boundaries.



Design Guidelines:

- Open space should connect with larger areas of continuous open spaces.
- Following regional access management and safety guidelines for the speed limit, driveways on Route 7 should be no less than 500 feet from the nearest adjacent road or driveway.¹ In instances where the minimum lot frontage size of 100 feet prevents this separation of driveways, shared driveways are recommended for safety reasons.
- Driveway entrances should maximize visibility for cars attempting to enter the street.
- Footprints of buildings and other impervious surfaces (surfaces not permeable to rainwater) should be minimized.
- Buildings should be at a scale (size, shape, height) that is consistent with neighboring buildings.
- Buildings should maintain setbacks from the street that are consistent with neighboring buildings.

¹ Berkshire Access Management Guidelines, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, April 2002

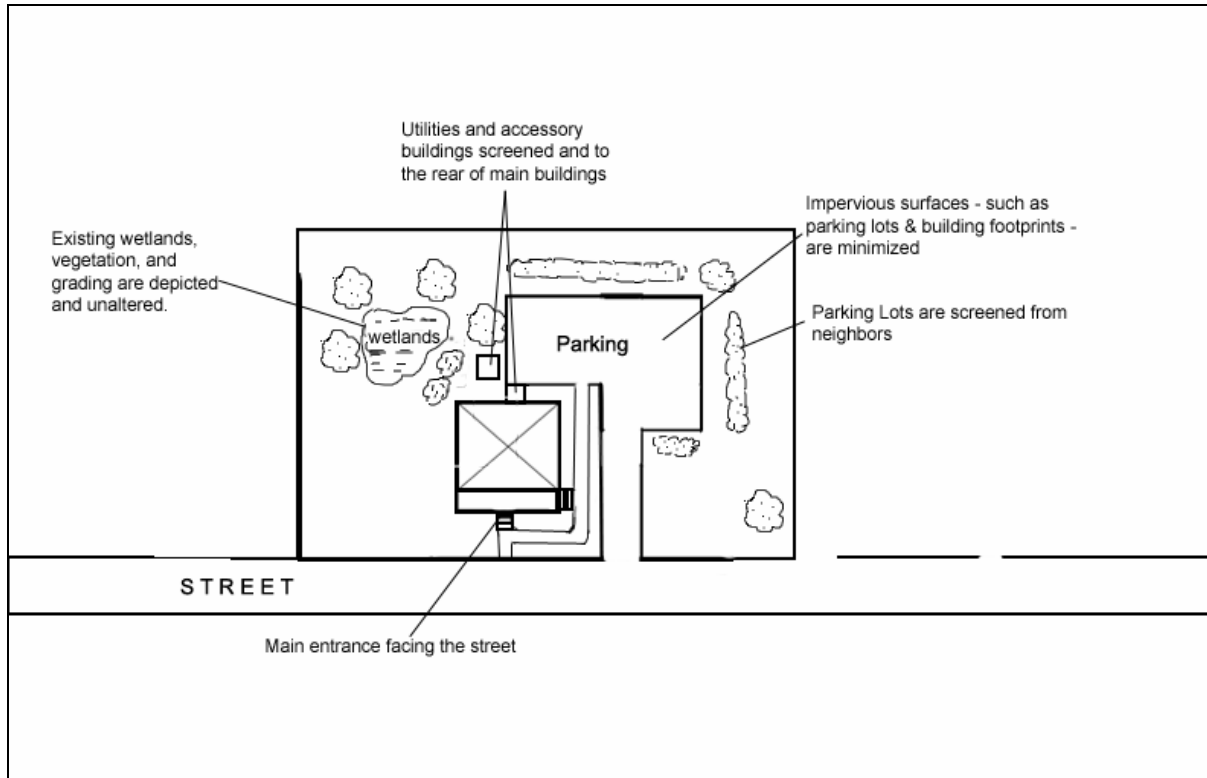
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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A Scaled Site Plan should include the following:

- 1) All existing and proposed buildings and other construction (at a scale of at least 1"=40')



Design Guidelines:

- The Site Plan should accommodate itself to the site topography to maximize preservation of natural amenities on the site, minimize cutting of trees, and minimize grading necessary for development.
- Footprints of buildings, asphalt, and other surfaces impervious to drainage should be minimized, while Best Management Practices should be implemented for all impervious surfaces created.
- Open space should connect with larger areas of continuous open spaces.
- Buildings should be set back from the road at distances consistent with existing development in the neighborhood in order to maintain uniform look along the road such as green buffers.
- Garages, accessory buildings, parking areas, and all utilities should not be in front of the building, and should be to the side or the rear of buildings and screened from adjacent roads and property.

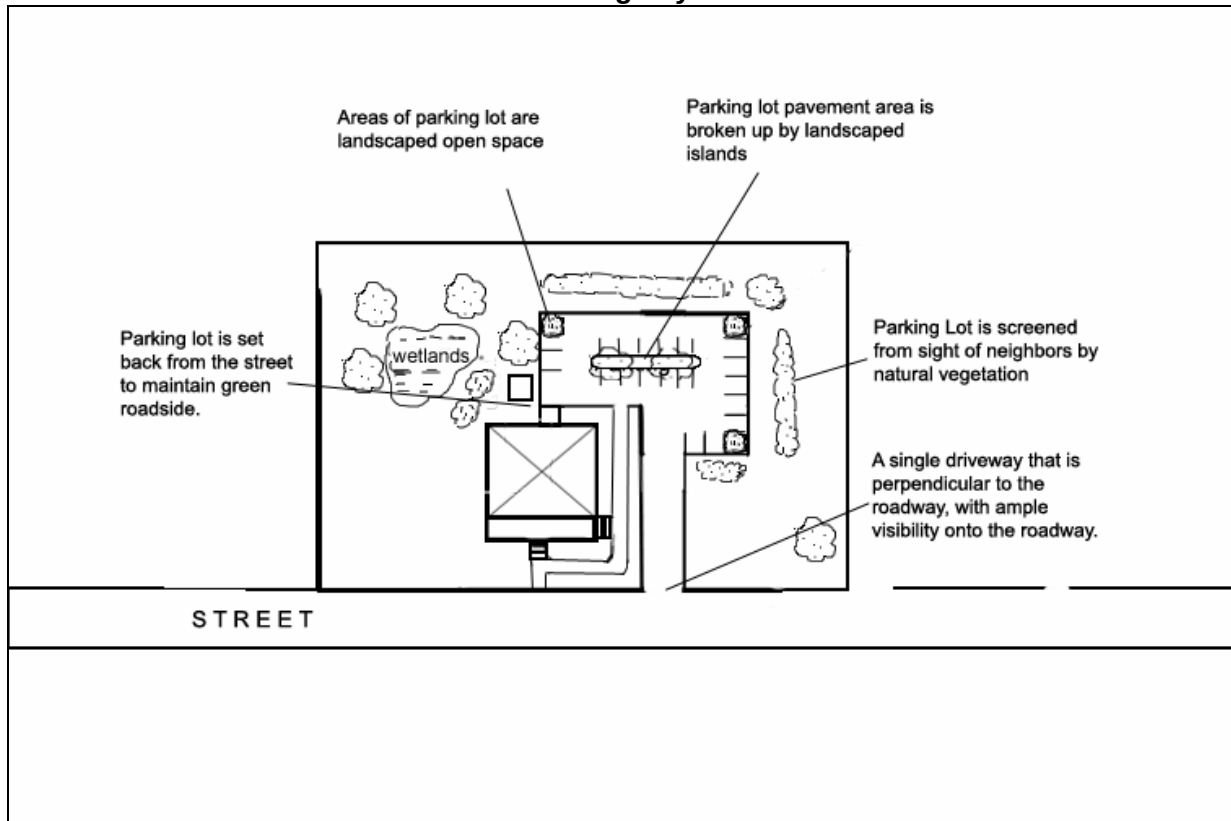
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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2) All parking areas, loading areas, walkways, driveways and adjacent driveways.

Parking Layout

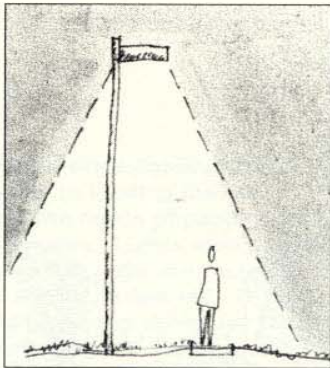


Design Guidelines:

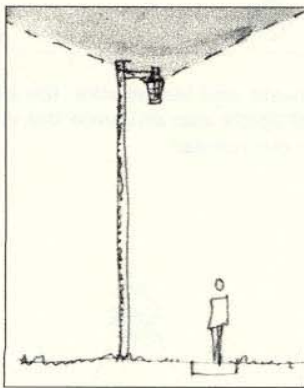
- Size of parking lots should be minimized and should follow Best Management Practices for stormwater drainage.
- Parking lots should be located to the side or behind buildings to the extent possible in order to maintain a green roadside; parking lots in front of buildings are discouraged.
- Main storefronts should address the public street front to acknowledge the surrounding neighborhood.
- Parking lots should be buffered with landscape and/or screening such that only the access way is visible from adjacent streets. Natural screening is preferred.
- Parking areas shall provide landscaped open space such as islands and plantings, especially in underutilized areas to minimize large amounts of pavement. Larger parking lots, parking areas of 25 or more spaces, shall provide landscaped islands of a minimum width of four feet in order to avoid large swaths of pavement.
- There should be no more than one driveway per parcel
- Driveways should be made perpendicular to the major roadway to prevent vehicles from entering or exiting at a high rate of speed.
- Driveways should allow exiting cars ample visibility to oncoming traffic, and should follow best practices for driveway design and engineering guidelines set for the relevant speed limit.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

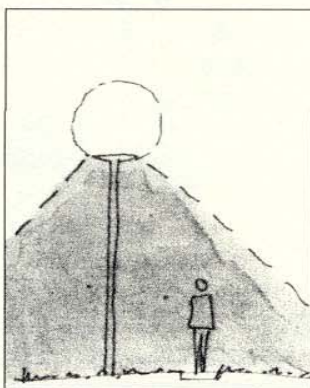
TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Best lighting design directs light only to where it is needed.



Poor lighting design - light shines to unintended areas and up into the sky.



Worst lighting design - light fills the sky and is not directed toward use areas.

Drawings Courtesy of North County Council, Inc., Community Design Manual, 1998

3) Location and type of all external lighting

Design Guidelines:

- All lights should be shielded in such a way that all direct and direct rays are directed away from all adjacent property and toward the Earth's surface.
- Lights on poles shall not be taller than the building whose area they illuminate nor taller than fifteen (15) feet, whichever is shorter
- Internally lit signs are discouraged, lighting for externally lit signs shall comply with the guidelines above to avoid glare and light trespass.
- All-night lighting is discouraged.
- See town zoning by-law for additional signage requirements.

4) Location, size and height of all signs including, if any, illumination methods.

Design Guidelines:

- Freestanding signs are discouraged.
- Freestanding signs should be no more than one story high.
- Signs should be firmly attached directly to buildings, limited to one or two colors that are compatible with the building façade.
- Internally lit signs are discouraged, lighting for externally lit signs shall comply with the guidelines above to avoid glare and light trespass.
- All-night sign lighting is discouraged.
- See town zoning by-law for additional signage requirements.

5) Location and dimensions of utilities, gas, telephone, electrical communications, and all other utility structures, site objects and fixtures.

Design Guidelines:

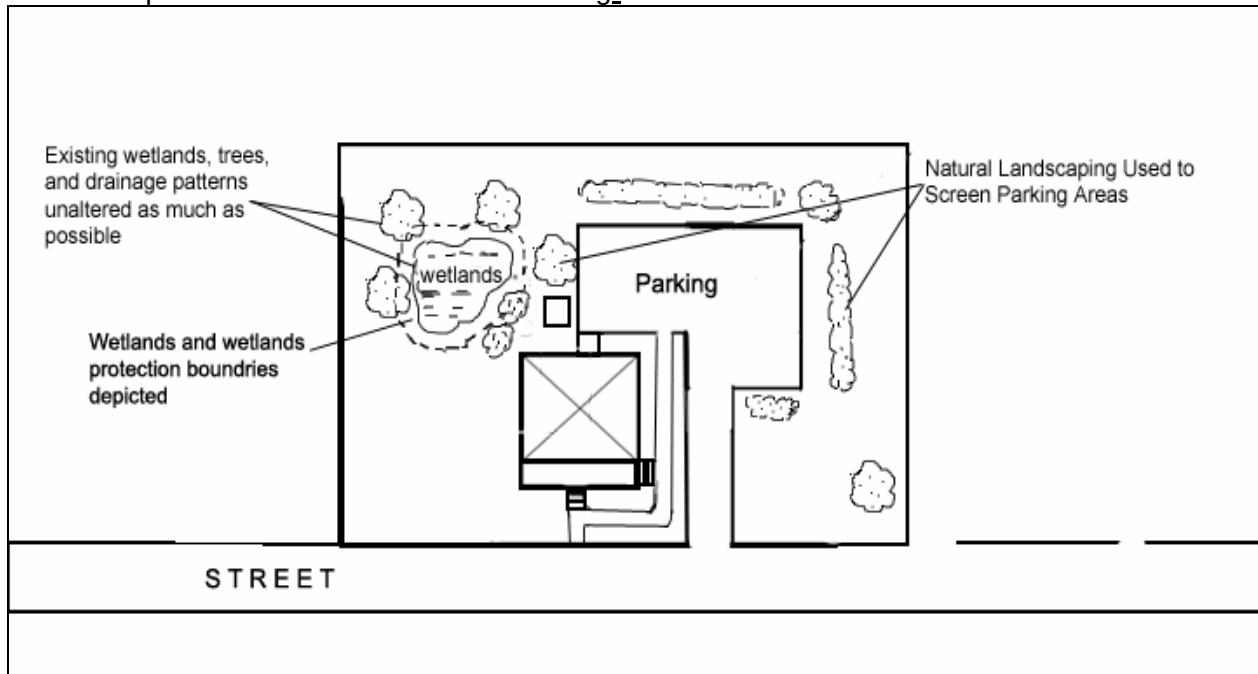
- Utilities should be underground.
- If not underground, utilities and utility structures and machinery, such as transformers, vents and HVAC equipment, gas tanks, utility meters, etc., should be located in the rear of the building so as not to be visible from the adjacent street.
- Maintain as much natural vegetation and drainage ways as possible.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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A Landscape Plan should include the following:



1) Location of all existing natural features including trees, wetlands, vernal pools, lakes and ponds, rivers and streams, and their respective buffer zones as cited in the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

Design Guidelines:

- Construction should minimize impacts upon all existing natural features including but not limited to existing drainage patterns, trees, wetlands, vernal pools, streams, and historical elements.
- Designs should enhance public access to and visibility of natural features within a development site.

2) The location, type, dimensions, and quantities of landscaping and screening, water, drainage, stormwater control structures, sewer/septic and other waste disposal

Design Guidelines:

- Maintain as much of the natural vegetation as possible, including existing trees, natural buffers, and natural drainage ways.
- Landscaping and/or fencing should be used to screen parking areas, utilities, and utility structures from adjacent property.
- Natural screening is preferred, but any fencing should have color and material that match the color and material of the building and the neighborhood.
- Where new landscaping is introduced, native and easy to maintain plants should be used.
- Landscaping should be used to screen parking as well as provide open surface drainage for the parking lot.

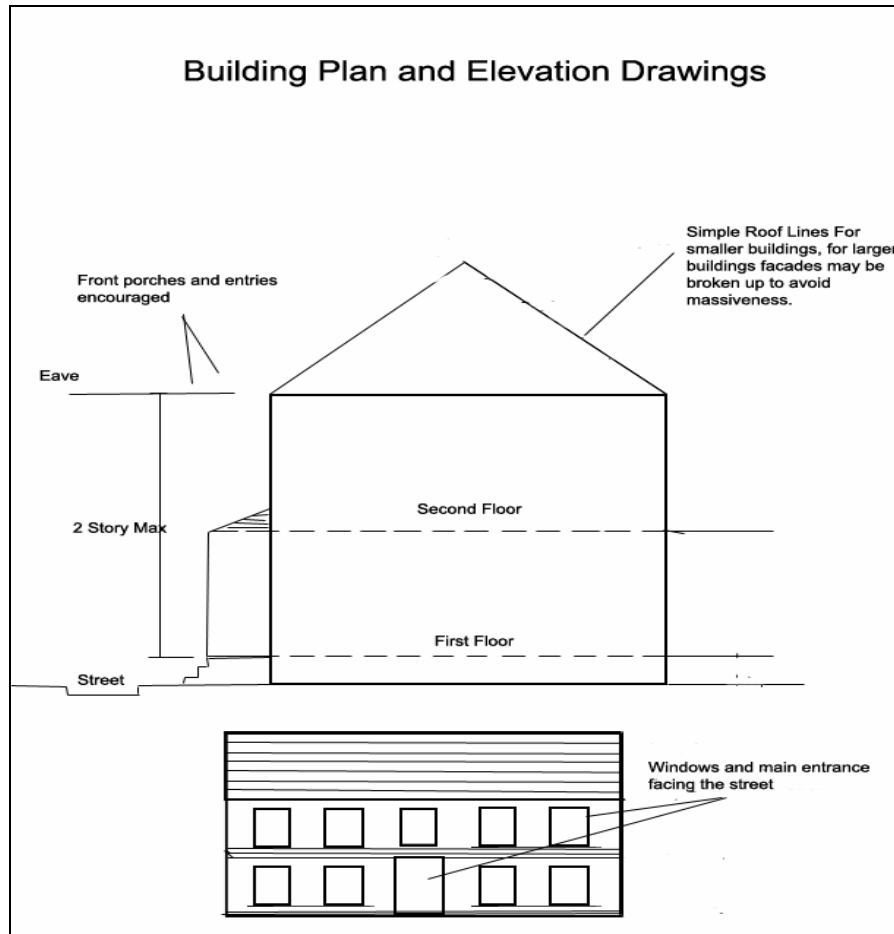
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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A Building Plan and Elevation Drawings should include the following:

- 1) Conceptual ground floor plans and architectural elevations of buildings to be erected, including entrances, windows & vents, external HVAC, façade treatment and materials, and all site objects, landscaping, and screening.



Design Guidelines:

- Buildings should be in keeping with existing neighborhood buildings with regard to size, shape, color, materials, and historical architectural style.
- Buildings should be no higher than two stories high.
- Massive building facades should be avoided, with larger facades broken up into smaller sections to reflect the scale of existing buildings.
- Buildings should have simple roofs with peaked roofs similar to local residential dwellings.
- Elements that encourage semi-public spaces in the front of the buildings, such as entryways, decks, awnings, and open porches are encouraged.
- Main shop entrances should address the public street front to showcase activity and address to surrounding neighborhood. Buildings on corner lots should have entrances facing the larger street.
- Window number, window proportions and door placement should be in common to existing buildings. Blank walls shall not face the street.
- Building materials should be wood, brick, or other material common to local buildings and residences, and colors should be harmonious with existing buildings.

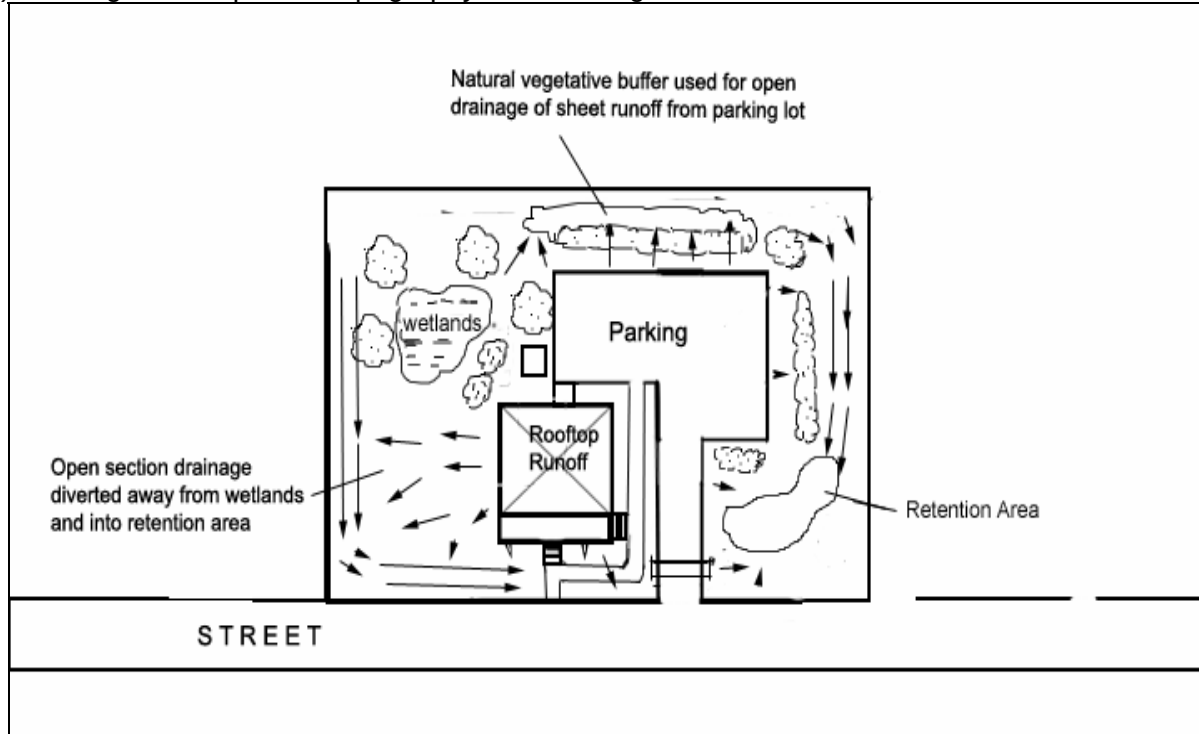
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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A Drainage Plan should include the following:

- 1) Existing and Proposed Topography and Drainage of the site with two foot contours.



Design Guidelines:

- Site Plan should accommodate itself to the site topography to maximize preservation of natural amenities on the site and minimize grading necessary for development.
- Designs should limit impacts to natural resources and drainage patterns and should avoid excessive grading, especially to avoid creation of steep slopes.
- Open surface drainage for parking surface and rooftop runoff, such as vegetative buffers, filter strips and retention areas are preferred drainage methods.
- Best Management Practices for stormwater drainage should be implemented for all impervious surfaces created.

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A Plan Narrative Should Include the Following:

1) An original, plus seven copies of a brief narrative description of the project, highlighting any special features of the items listed above, shown on the Site Plan should be included. At minimum, the narrative description should provide enough information for the Planning Board to understand what site planning, architectural, landscaping and engineering solutions are being proposed to handle the problems of traffic, parking, provision for utilities, drainage and impervious surfaces, wastewater and solid waste disposal, lighting and signage, environmental protection and aesthetic considerations such as views and design compatibility with surrounding development. No application will be accepted until the planning board determines it is complete.

Summary of Required Site Plan Contents and Design Guidelines

The Town of New Ashford may effectively maintain a desirable visual environment through enacting this list of design guidelines. By following these guidelines, the beauty of the Town may be preserved and enhanced.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Additional Options for Rural Business Development in New Ashford

Not Recommended by the Committee

Option #4: Increase the Size of the Planned Unit Resort District (*Not Recommended by the Committee*):

Description:

Planned Unit Resort District zoning allows for a great deal of public process as well as a large amount of stability in property value because all development is part of a known plan.

Guiding Factor:

Enables additional non-residential business uses to occur with a high degree of town control due to the requirement that all development follows the accepted development plan.

Potential Benefits:

Community Character:

Increased Town Control and community input over uses and form of developments occurring as part of an accepted development plan.

Maintaining a Low Tax Rate and Quality Town Services

Increased non-residential developments lower the burden on residential taxpayers and help fund necessary town services. Additional businesses outside of the Single PURD could diversify the town's tax base and leave less risk of high residential tax increases year to year if any single business fails. Development could be planned in a way that minimizes infrastructure and maintenance costs for providing town services.

Potential Challenges:

Requires capacity of the town or the property owners to form a town accepted development plan for the district in order for development to occur. Does not address a potential need to formally restrict commercial development in sensitive sections of the Business Zone. Does not address need for additional guidance on special permitting in the current Business Zone.

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Option #5: Maintain Current Zoning (*Not Recommended by the Committee*)

Description:

Maintain the Town's Rural Business Zone the way it is

Guiding Factor:

The Town currently does not have a large amount of development pressure; it has relatively low taxes, and high quality services.

Potential Benefits:

Maintains the status quo. To date, current regulations have allowed limited development to occur.

Potential Challenges:

Maintaining Low Taxes and Quality Town Services:

Currently, much of the developable land on Route 7 is constrained with environmental and topological barriers. These barriers, not the zoning regulations, are limiting commercial development in these areas. The Town's tax rate is highly dependant on the success or failure of a small number of businesses. Failure of any one significant business will affect the town's ability to maintain low residential taxes, potentially necessitating additional developable land acceptable for non-residential uses. Non-residential development increases local tax revenues without adding to educational expenses, which are the town's largest source of expenses.

Community Character:

Currently, potential uses identified by the Advisory Committee as undesired and out of character for the town, such as fast food outlets and convenience marts, are allowed under special permit. Retail uses are allowed uniformly throughout the Route 7 corridor as it passes fields, forests, steep slopes, and the town center. The 2002 Community Development Survey described 98% of residents most enjoy the Town's rural nature, 83% most enjoy the town's low tax rates, and 76% would support efforts to protect the town's farms, forests, and other scenic resources. In treating the entire strip of Route 7 uniformly, New Ashford's current Rural Business Zone does not acknowledge, reward, or protect these valuable attributes. Increasing technology and development pressures may make hard to develop land attractive to future retail//commercial development. Current developments along Route 7 are geared toward the needs of travelers, not area residents, and are without set conditions for form and function to make them fit in with local buildings. Under current zoning that limits all businesses to the strip of land along Route 7, New Ashford cannot recreate or reinforce its historic development pattern.

Other Notes:

The Future of the Planned Unit Resort District weighs heavily on the Business District and may determine the required path for the town: Success of the PURD will reduce the immediate fiscal need for the town to develop the Business District, but it will increase development pressures on the District and further compromise constrained lands Zoned for Business Development where development may not be desired, potentially necessitating further restrictions. Failure of the PURD will increase the immediate fiscal need to encourage non-residential businesses in the to maintain low taxes for town residents, potentially necessitating additional developable land acceptable for non-residential uses.

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Summary of Business District Zoning Analysis

New Ashford may want to explore creative zoning incentives to use land efficiently, preserve open space, encourage agriculture and protect scenic views. The Community Development Plan has identified several ways zoning regulations may be improved to better reflect the needs of the town while preserving the Town's rural character and historic development patterns. Unfortunately, none of these options address each of the community goals equally. In choosing options to direct the town's development and developmental regulations, each option must be weighed against the goals it addresses and the priority of the community. With additional efforts, the goals of the Community may be reflected in new developments that meet the needs of the Town without sacrificing its valued assets.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Summary of Economic Development Findings

The Advisory Committee has identified the following three goals for economic development within the Town of New Ashford.

Goal #1: Maintain Low Taxes

Goal #2: Maintain High Quality Education and Town Services

Goal #3: Maintain the Rural Character of the Town

Actions Conducted for the Community Development Plan

- Revised economic development goals
- Conducted a Fiscal Costs of Community Services Analysis for New Ashford
- Determined uses currently allowed in each zoning district.
- Analyzed spatial inadequacies of the current commercial zoning district
 - o Determined the amount of developable land in the current business zone.
 - o Determined the amount of developable land in the current business zone located north of the Mill on the Floss.
- Determined six alternatives for encouraging future economic development through local regulations.
- Analyzed alternative locations for potential future commercial areas.

Summary of Economic Development Findings

The Fiscal Costs of Community Services determined:

- o New Ashford's tax base is highly dependent on a small number of non-residential businesses.
- o The largest Town expense is education and largely due to educational costs, residential tax levies do not fully cover all residential costs, while non-residential tax levies significantly exceed costs.

The Analysis of Local Zoning Regulations determined:

- o Commercial Uses in Town are allowed with a special permit, but criteria and design standards for allowing or denying a special permit are not specified in the regulations.
- o Non-residential development is limited to the Business Zone strip along Route 7 and the Planned Unit Resort District.

The Buildable Land Analysis for the Commercial Zone determined:

- o Much of the land (92% of the area) in the Business Zone along Route 7 is constrained due to physical environmental factors, and the majority of the constrained land is located North of the Mill on the Floss.
- o If development is desired along Route 7, very little is possible without expensive site preparation.
- o If development is not desired along Route 7, local regulations do not reflect this - protection from high-impact development occurs mainly due to current physical or financial restrictions that may be overcome by future technologies or large private investment.

(Continued)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Future Steps Resulting from the Community Development Plan

- Determine which of the economic development alternatives identified in the Community Development Plan is preferable to the town.
- Revise list to specify acceptable and unacceptable economic development uses within the zoning districts.
- Determine which of the areas identified in the Community Development Plan as less constrained are most acceptable to future non-residential uses.
- Develop more detailed and less objective standards, such as the New Ashford CDP design and development standards, to include in the zoning regulations to help guide the planning board in making consistent, informed decisions on the Route 7 commercial zone developments and to keep the look and form of uses permitted by special permit, such as fast-food and convenience marts, in line with the town's character.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Housing



Housing

5

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Housing Strategy Items	5-15
Housing Action Map	5-18

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Summary of Housing Element Findings

The CDP Advisory Committee identified the following three goals for housing within the New Ashford:

Goal #1: Maintain property values with fair and reasonable taxes

Goal #2: Maintain Housing that continues to serve the needs of the Community

Goal #3: Encourage housing development as appropriate in areas deemed acceptable

Actions Conducted for the Community Development Plan:

- o Compiled a housing profile detailing the housing stock and local factors influencing development .
- o Conducted an analysis of housing affordability for the residents of New Ashford.
- o Reviewed regulatory factors and other potential barriers to the affordability of the housing stock.
- o Developed list of options to encourage future development of affordable housing in New Ashford.

Summary of Findings on Housing in New Ashford

Profile of Housing in New Ashford

- o New Ashford, following a trend seen in many rural Berkshire communities, is experiencing a surge in population. This surge is expected to continue.
- o New Ashford is growing more affluent. After having the 21st highest median income in the Berkshires in 1990, the town now has the 8th highest median income in 2000. The housing market is raising prices to serve the demand of new higher income residents.
- o As the market appears to provide more expensive houses for increasing numbers of higher income households, less-affluent households may not be served by market-rate housing.
- o Housing construction in New Ashford has recently slowed, with no new houses built in 2001.

Analysis of Housing Affordability

- o The housing market is serving the demand of an increasing number of more affluent residents.
- o The typical home sold in New Ashford from 1997 to 2001 was slightly more expensive than what the typical household could afford, but was within reach.
- o Only one home sale from 1997-2001 was considered affordable to a moderate-income household earning under \$41,000.
- o Rental housing, though scarce, was not considered a cost burden for the average renter in town.

Other Discussion

- o New Ashford has zero "Chapter 40B" houses guaranteed for below-market rate, low-income households. Towns with less than 10% of housing stock as Chapter 40B units and without a plan to increase their stock of below market rate housing are, under M.G.L. Chapter 40B, susceptible to development largely unconstrained by local zoning regulations.
- o Accessory Apartments, also known as in-law apartments, are not allowed in New Ashford; though they are a commonly used option for affordable housing that may also count towards a town's 40B inventory.

Future Steps Resulting from the Community Development Plan

- o Explore possibilities of permitting accessory, "in-law" apartments in the town by-laws as a way to introduce more options for affordable housing in New Ashford.
- o Determine which of the strategies and options for encouraging affordable housing in New Ashford (listed in the Community Development Plan) are most appropriate for the Town.
- o Utilize the housing profile and affordability analysis of the Community Development Plan to develop a strategy to increase the amount of affordable housing in Town, which may also satisfy the requirements of Chapter 40B.

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Housing Profile for the Town of New Ashford

Introduction to the Housing Profile

This section examines the socio-economic trends in New Ashford and in the surrounding area of Berkshire County, which affect housing supply and demand. Planning to maintain an adequate supply of affordable housing while balancing concerns related to open space, natural resources, transportation, infrastructure, and community services is a challenging task. Planning for affordable housing begins with analysis of detailed information on the local housing stock in order to identify specific concerns and potential problems for the Town to address. Several factors may indicate a potential concern for affordable housing and contribute to a town's ability to maintain housing that is affordable to residents of a wide range of incomes. Some of these factors are:

- Low supply of existing housing relative to the population
- High costs of housing that are beyond the affordability of local residents
- Lack of housing production
- Relative scarcity of land available for residential development
- High cost of land
- Higher production costs associated with marginal development sites
- Lack of available infrastructure
- A complex maze of restrictions related to local zoning, subdivision controls and local permitting

This section presents information and analysis on potential factors that may indicate areas of concern for affordable housing in the Town of New Ashford. The section ends with a list of several actions that may address the Town's specific concerns for housing that are identified.

Current Housing Stock Statistics

The following is a description of the current housing stock in New Ashford as reflected by the US 2000 Census and in a local survey conducted in July of 2002. The local "actual" Census data in Figure H-1 is presented with Figure H-2, which is "survey" data gained from the US 2000 Census. The Census 2000 "actual" data in figure H-1 shows a housing stock of 105 total units, comprised largely of single-family homes (86 units), while the local survey has numbers that are much higher. There are a relatively small number of multi-family units (15) and mobile homes. Figure H-2 shows the housing stock is increasing rapidly, by 33% in the past 10 years. This increase has been mostly in owner occupied houses, which have increased 45%. Vacant housing units have more than doubled in the past 10 years.

Figure H-1: Current Housing Stock:

	U.S. Census 2000 DP-4	Local Survey 2002*
Single Family Homes	86	95
Condo Units	0	0
Multi-Family/Apt Units	15	26
Mobile Homes	4	1
Single Room Occupancy Units	0	95
Total Housing Stock:	105	234

**Local Survey Data C/O Mark Raimor, July 2002*

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Figure H-2: Housing Tenure

Housing Occupancy:	2000		1990		Percent Increase 1990-2000
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
Seasonal	3	3%	6	7%	-50%
Owner-Occupied	68	62%	47	57%	+45%
Rental-Occupied	26	24%	24	29%	+8%
Vacant	13	12%	6	7%	+117%
Total Housing Stock:	110*		83		+33%

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

*[*Tenure Totals are different from housing stock totals above because they use partial survey data.
2000 Vacancy rate is for all housing as reported by Census 2000]*

Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory

According to the Massachusetts DHCD Inventory of CH40B Subsidized Housing Inventory through April 27, 2002, zero (0) of the 107 total year-round housing units counted were considered Chapter 40B Units. "Chapter 40B Units" are units considered affordable by low- and moderate-income households with long-term restrictions that ensure that it will continue to be affordable. Chapter 40B authorizes a housing agency or developer to obtain a single comprehensive permit for the construction of subsidized low- or moderate-income housing. If a community in which less than 10% of its total year-round housing stock is subsidized low- or moderate-income housing denies a comprehensive permit, or imposes conditions that make the project un-economic, the developer may appeal to the state Housing Appeals Committee for review of the local action.

Units included are the following: subsidized affordable units and market-rate rental units within eligible subsidized developments (all rental units in developments with over 25% of total units subsidized with restricted occupancy to individuals and families under 80% of the median). Units NOT included are the following: units rented with Section 8 or MRVP mobile vouchers.

According to Berkshire Housing, there are no families in line to receive section 8 housing vouchers for Town.

EO418 Affordable Housing Certification

The Town of New Ashford has not applied to receive EO418 Housing Certification in any of the past three years. Certification gives the town preferential status when applying for any of the \$45 million in grant opportunities available yearly by the State.

Property Values

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue holds a wealth of detailed data on property values for single family homes in all municipalities, including New Ashford. The most recent property value information provided by the Department is from 2002. The most unique findings are the town's tax rates and yearly tax bills, which are very low compared to the State median. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue lists 75 taxable single-family parcels in New Ashford for FY 2002. The total assessed value of these 75 parcels was \$9,547,000, which is an average value of \$127,293. The tax rate for all residential property in New Ashford in 2002 was \$9.19.

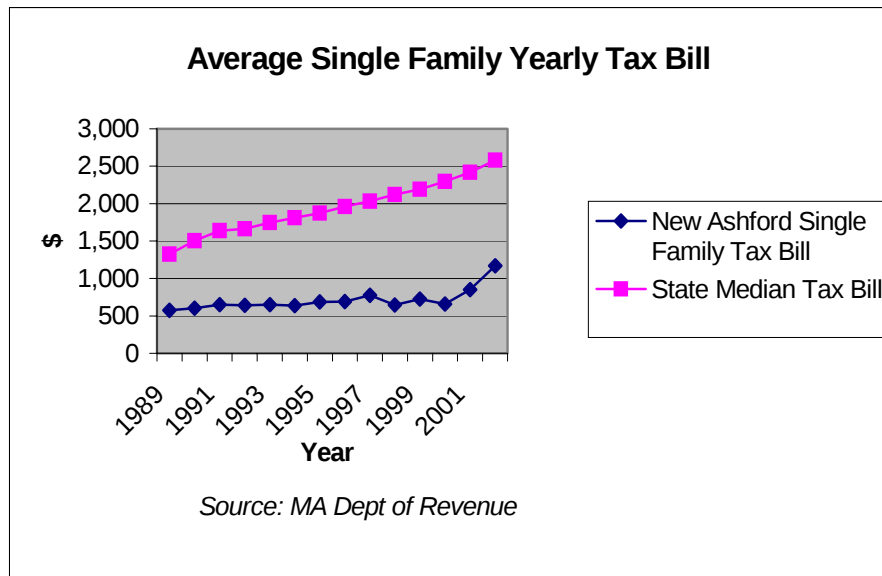
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The rate was low compared to the average rate of \$12.67 for Berkshire County Towns, as well as the state median, which is shown in Figure H-3. The average single-family tax bill in 2002 was \$1,170, ranking the town 328 out of the 334 towns reporting data. In comparison, the State-wide median average single-family tax bill for 2002 was \$2,583.

Figure H-3: Property Tax Rates



Assessed Value vs. Market Value

Assessed values attempt to reflect actual market values of property. If housing prices rise or fall dramatically in a short period of time, changes in housing assessments may be necessary and may signal fluctuations in the housing market. The average assessed value of single-family homes through the late 1990's ceased to fall in 1998, and have since increased an average of \$7,000 a year since. The median sales prices of local homes have consistently been over \$40,000 higher than the average assessed values. (Table H-4). The total number of sales remained low, at 4 in 2000. This suggests that the most recent years have seen small numbers of single-family homes being sold for higher prices. Figures H-4 and H-5 demonstrate that homes currently on the market are largely high-end homes, and that new housing is built at higher than average prices for the Town.

Figure H-4: Annual Single Family Home Statistics

Year	Average Assessed Value	Average Sales Price	Median Sales Price	Total Number of Sales
1997	101,135	\$143,000	\$143,000	1
1998	99,517	\$352,000	\$375,000	3
1999	111,387	\$174,000	\$150,000	3
2000	120,016	\$193,260	\$172,000	4
2001	124,900	-	-	-
2002	127,293	-	-	-

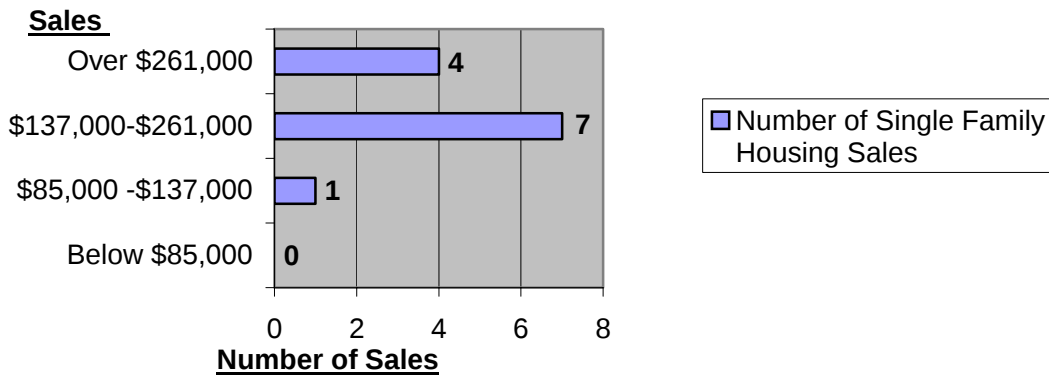
Source: Boston Globe Real Estate Sales Listings Sept, 2002

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Figure H-5: New Ashford Single Family Housing Sales by Price (1997-2001)



Rental Housing

The number of rental units in New Ashford has increased slightly from 1990 to 2000 from 24 to 26. The median monthly rent for these units rose 16% in the past 10 years from \$465 in 1990 to \$542 in 2000. This increase was less than the 36% increase in Berkshire County median rents during this time period. The 2000 median monthly rent for New Ashford units was slightly higher than the Berkshire County median, which was \$499.

Local Educational Expenditures

Each year, the Department of Education reports community educational expenditures. The Net Average Membership Pupils is the number of students residing in Town, averaged over the entire year. The number includes pupils from the Town enrolled in local and regional schools, and those being tuitioned to out-of-town schools. The number does not include non-residents. Cost per pupil is based on the DOE integrated operating costs. The DOE integrated operating cost is one of the most widely accepted measures for comparing educational spending among communities. It reflects the community's share of regional school spending as well as that of its own local schools. The figure does not include capital outlay and construction costs. The following chart shows the total number of membership pupils, and calculated operational costs per pupil for the Town from 1995-2000. It also includes school expenditures as a percentage of all town expenditures from the general fund on government operational costs excluding capital outlay and construction costs.

Figure H-6: Educational Expenditures 1995-2000

Year	Net Avg. Membership Pupils	Education spending as % of all Town expenditures	Cost Per Pupil	New Ashford Educational Spending Per Capita
1995	28.00	68.54%	\$5,582	\$891
1996	27.60	69.76%	\$6,532	\$1062
1997	35.50	74.16%	\$5,103	\$1143
1998	24.20	71.54%	\$8,743	\$1116
1999	23.60	65.49%	\$7,262	\$907
2000	31.80	70.27%	\$7,359	\$897

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, July 2002

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In 2000, the cost per pupil was \$7,359, which was slightly lower than the Berkshire County average of \$7,831. In 2000, 70.27% of town expenditures were for educational purposes, which was high in relation to the countywide average of 54% educational spending. The DOR lists the Town's 2000 per-capita spending on education to be \$897, which was lower than the state average per-capita figure of \$929.25.

Current Development Patterns, Practices and Available Land

Development Patterns

New Ashford is the second least populated town in Berkshire County. The town is bordered by the Taconic Mountains on the west, and the slopes of Mt. Greylock to the east. Most of the development in town has occurred along Route 7 and the Green River, which run together north to south through the center of town. The most concentrated development occurs around the Brodie Mt. Ski area, which is just off Route 7 in the southern part of town. A small clustering of houses has occurred on Mallery Road and Route 7 near the Town Hall, while widely spaced agricultural-residential houses appear on unpaved roads throughout the rest of town.

Construction Trends & New Construction 1995-2001

New Ashford experienced a minor surge in new housing in the late 1990's, as 13 new homes were built from 1997-1999. However, no new homes were built in 2001, and since 1996, 16 new houses have been built in New Ashford. The average value of these new homes is \$142,562, which is higher than the assessed value of existing homes.

Figure H-7: New Construction Values 1995-2001			
Year	Total Single-Family Units Built ⁽²⁾	Avg. New Home Value	Avg. Existing Home Value
1995	0	\$0 ⁽¹⁾	100,606 ⁽¹⁾
1996	1	\$120,300 ⁽²⁾	101,134 ⁽²⁾
1997	4	\$197,425 ⁽²⁾	101,135 ⁽²⁾
1998	5	\$135,880 ⁽²⁾	99,517 ⁽²⁾
1999	4	\$107,825 ⁽²⁾	111,387 ⁽²⁾
2000	2	\$130,150 ⁽²⁾	120,016 ⁽²⁾
2001	0	\$0 ⁽²⁾	124,900 ⁽²⁾

Sources: ⁽¹⁾ [State Data Center Annual New Construction Reports](#)

⁽²⁾ [New Ashford Town Assessor Data 7.02.02](#)

Utilities

New Ashford has no municipal water and sewer systems, as all housing units must provide on-site disposal. Western Massachusetts Electric Company provides electricity service for the Town. The town is also without gas service. Trash disposal is done at the Town Transfer station. Source: *BRPC Data Book 2001*

Local Zoning Provisions

The Town of New Ashford has three main zoning districts and a flood plain overlay district. The large majority of the Town's land is within the Agricultural Residence Zone. Along the Route 7 corridor is the Rural Business Zone, and in the southern-central section of Town is the Planned Unit Resort District.

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The Agricultural Residence Zone permits home occupations, roadside stands, and mobile homes by right. Special permits by the planning board are required for two-family houses, windmills, and accessory buildings for businesses. In all districts, development is restricted to lots that are larger than two acres in area with at least 100 feet of frontage.

The Rural Business zone permits by-right single-family housing and buildings for agriculture, horticulture or floriculture. Permitted uses for Rural Business Zone include two-family buildings, trailer parks, retail or customer service establishments, or other uses considered by the Planning Board to be similar to one or more uses specifically authorized in the by-laws.

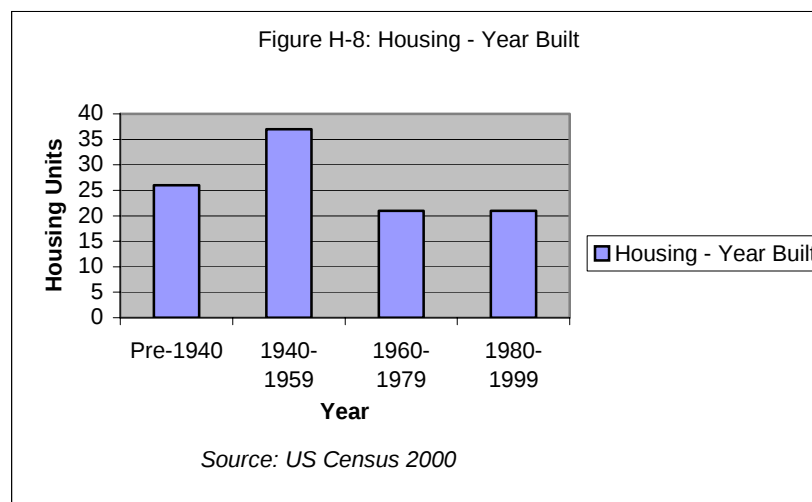
The permitted uses of the Planned Unit Resort District are intended to be possible multiple components of an overall resort character and quality and the actual mix may be proposed as part of the Resort Master Plan. Uses may include: conference centers, lodging and housing facilities, dormitory-style facilities for seasonal employees, restaurants, retail shopping active (skiing, snowboarding, swimming; golfing, tubing, tennis, alpine slides, club-houses, horseback riding, bicycling) and passive (walking, hiking, picnicking,) recreational uses and other resort activities as allowed by the Planning Board which are compatible with the PURD. Permitted uses shall not include any noxious, offensive, or unsightly uses, or excessive noise or lighting. Only open or screened material extraction, warehousing or equipment repair directly related to the resort shall be permitted.

The general boundaries of the Flood Plain District are shown on the "FEMA FLOOD HAZARD BOUNDARY MAP" prepared by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Federal Insurance Administration, in the Town of New Ashford (map), dated November 22, 1974 as zones to indicate the 100-year flood plain. The exact boundaries of the District are defined by the 100-year water surface elevations shown on the Map.

Current Housing Conditions

Age of Housing Stock

New Ashford is home to many historic homes, as well as a significant number of newer homes. The majority of the new construction has been single-family housing.



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Assessment of the Housing Stock

The housing stock in New Ashford has increased slowly with the increase in population. Most new housing has been built with average values higher than the average value of the existing houses. The recent past has seen a great demand for second homes and five-acre residential lots in Southern Berkshire County extending northward.

Structural Violations

The building inspector identified no outstanding issues in regard to the overall conditions of the town housing stock. The town issues an average of approximately 15 building permits per year, 2-5 of which are normally for new, single-family housing. Inspection has commonly occurred as part of the permitting process. Although various individual concerns have been raised as these inspections, they have been addressed. No major trends have occurred, and no major violations have been issued in the last 5-7 years.

Health Violations

The Board of Health has issued very few violations in town. Most of the violations are with commercial properties. Due to the age of the housing stock, and the fact that many houses have remained within the same families, there is the potential that houses may not have kept up to new health code regulations. The largest health concern has been in keeping the aging septic tank systems in working order and up to current regulations.

Population Statistics and Demand for Housing

Historical Population Counts

The population of New Ashford has been increasing steadily for the past 20 years. Since 1980, the year-round population of New Ashford has increased by 55% while the population of the surrounding area of Berkshire County has decreased by 7%.

Figure H-9: Historical Population Counts

	Town	Berkshire County
1970	183	149,402
1980	159	145,110
1990	192	139,352
2000	247	134,953

Source: BRPC 2001 Data Book US Census Figures

Population By Age

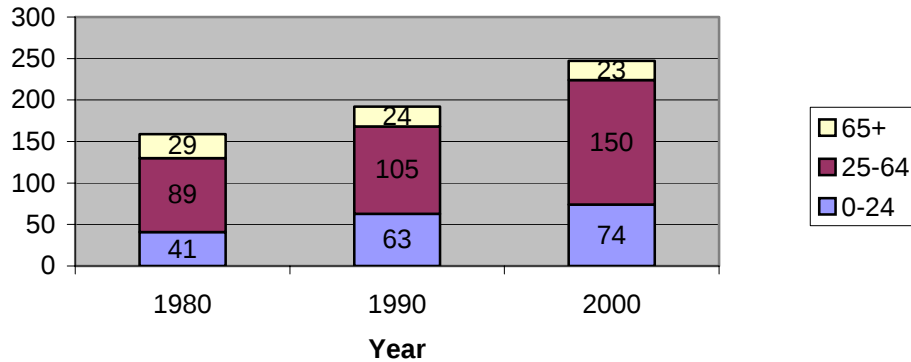
The increase in population in New Ashford has come largely as an increase in residents aged 25-64. The population for this category of residents aged 25-54 increased by 48.8% in ten years from 1990-2000. Children and residents under 24 years old also increased by over 17% in this time period.

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Figure H-10: Population by Age 1980-2000



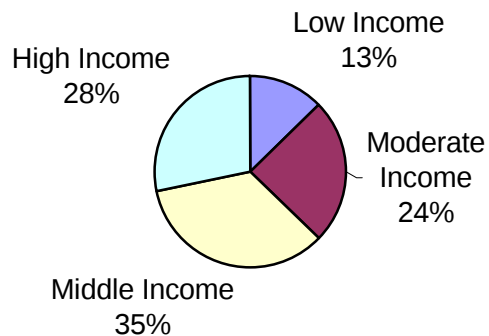
Source: US Census Bureau

Economic Statistics

Local Household Income Levels

The median income of New Ashford households in 2002 was \$51,250. This figure was significantly higher than the Berkshire County median household income of \$39,047, and nearly equivalent to the statewide median household income of \$50,502. Figure H-11 shows the income distribution in town, while Figure H-12 shows the distribution of New Ashford residents in relation to Berkshire County, which shows that 82% of the Town is considered middle or high income for the County.

Figure H-11: Household Income Levels, 2000



Low Income = Up to 50% of Median

Moderate Income = 50-80% of median

Middle Income = 80-150% of median

High Income = Over 150% of median.

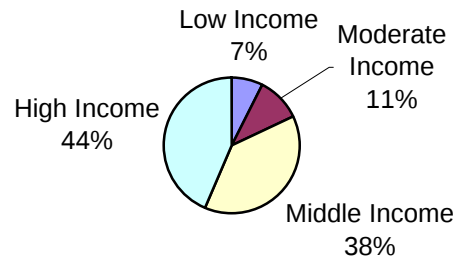
Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

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**Figure H-12: Approximate Household Income Levels
According to Berkshire County Median, 2000**



Low Income = Up to 50% of Berkshire County Median

Moderate Income = 50-80% of Berkshire County Median

Middle Income = 80-150% of Berkshire County Median

High Income = Over 150% of Berkshire County Median

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

Local Employment

Local Employment figures for New Ashford have been on a steady decline for the past 15-20 years. Construction and services are the only two town industries represented by DET figures. Total annual payroll has fallen steadily since 1985. The total number of jobs available in town in 1990 was less than half of the number available in 1985. From 1990 to 2000, the number of total jobs fell from 183 to 110. The only upward trend has been the more recent rise in average annual pay from 1997-2000, increasing over 30% from \$11,181 in 1997 to \$14,791 in 2000. However, in comparison to the Town's census 2000 median household income of over \$50,000, this figure is still very low.

Figure H-13: Employment and Wages in New Ashford

Year	Total Annual Payroll	Avg. Annual Wage	Establish-ments	Total	Const-ruktion	Services
1985	\$2,107,200	\$8,012	4	263	conf.	conf.
1986	\$1,714,000	\$7,171	6	239	conf.	226
1987	\$1,773,400	\$9,188	6	193	conf.	167
1988	\$2,350,100	\$11,929	7	197	5	170
1989	\$2,314,112	\$11,747	9	197	5	conf.
1990	\$1,663,256	\$9,089	9	183	conf.	conf.
1991	\$1,459,945	\$10,735	9	136	conf.	120
1992	\$1,503,998	\$11,481	9	131	7	114
1993	\$1,622,731	\$10,402	8	156	conf.	139
1994	\$1,824,846	\$11,698	7	156	conf.	141
1995	\$1,727,436	\$11,073	6	156	conf.	142
1996	\$1,879,445	\$11,254	7	167	conf.	149
1997	\$1,789,016	\$11,181	9	160	4	141
1998	\$1,856,497	\$12,295	10	151	5	117
1999	\$1,679,084	\$12,625	11	133	5	91
2000	\$1,627,035	\$14,791	9	110	conf.	67

Source: MA DET "Employment and Wages" Figures
conf. = confidential

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Market Trends for Housing

In recent interviews with the Berkshire Eagle, (*Housing Demand Up, Supply Down* June 11, 2002), real estate agents have seen an increase in demand and a reduction of supply throughout Berkshire County. In the short term, there appears a combination of factors increasing real estate investment, such as a low interest rate and a lack of confidence in investing in the stock market. Longer-term factors influencing the New Ashford real estate market is an apparent northward encroachment of high demand and higher real estate prices for higher-end homes, most notably high-end second homes, currently being experienced in South County. Realtors in the Central and Northern Berkshires commented on a "greater awareness of the [real estate] opportunities somewhat north of South County". Currently, as of July 31st, 2002, there is a single house on the market in New Ashford, priced at \$525,000. Paul Harsch of Harsch Associates, who is broker for the one house currently on the market in New Ashford, has noted that sales prices in the area are strong and getting stronger. He also noted that areas around Williamstown are not good on summer rentals for tourists, with seasonal and local owners desiring to be in town during the summer, and the many theater festival employees taking up the supply of rentals in the immediate area.

Housing Affordability Gap Analysis

Housing Affordability Methodology

The housing affordability study was conducted to determine whether or not the "typical" family in New Ashford could actually afford to buy a home in New Ashford at current market values. According to HUD guidelines housing is considered to be affordable when monthly mortgage payments comprise no more than twenty-eight percent (28%) of a household's total monthly income.

This analysis considers the availability of affordable housing for town residents of several income levels. The typical family was defined as a household with an income equal to the median estimated income of the New Ashford (\$51,250). A typical low income family was defined as a household with an income equal to 50% of the Town's median estimated income (\$25,625), and a moderate income family earned 80% of the median income (\$41,000). High-income households earned over 150% of the Town's median income (over \$76,875).

New Ashford's median housing price was presented as determined from sales data provided by Warren Information Services, while New Ashford's median income for 2000 was given by the 2000 US Census.

Maximum price affordability levels for each type of household were determined by mortgage loan qualification calculations provided by local mortgage lenders. The analysis was based on a 10% down payment with no points. Calculations incorporate a mortgage interest rate of 7.0%, compiled as an average of current rates offered by local lending institutions at the time of the report. A current localized basic homeowner's insurance quote for New Ashford was provided by local insurance brokers. The results estimate a maximum housing price with monthly payments that are no more than 28% of the household income with an assumed maximum of 8% in other debts or obligations forming a combined personal debt payments of no more than 36% of monthly income.

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Chart H-8: 2001 Affordability Matrix

Income Level	2000 Household Income Limits	Median Sales Price (1997-2001)	Calculated Maximum Affordable Sales Price	Number of sales (1997-2001) under maximum affordable price level	Number of Households below income bracket in 2000	% of total town Households below income bracket in 2000	% 2001 Sales affordable by these households	Affordability Gap
Low income – up to 50% of Median	\$25,625	\$176,000	\$85,000	0	10	11%	0%	11%
Moderate income – up to 80% of Median	\$41,000	\$176,000	\$137,000	1	29	33%	9%	24%
Middle Income – up to 150% of Median	\$76,875	\$176,000	\$261,000	8	56	64%	73%	None (-9%)
High Income- over 150% of Median	\$76,875	\$176,000	over \$261,000	11	88	100%	100%	0%
Median Income	\$51,250	\$176,000	\$174,000	5	44	50%	45%	5%

Affordability Findings

The Affordability Gap Analysis for the Town of New Ashford shows a lack of housing available to households with incomes of less than \$41,000 a year, or 80% of the Town median. The Department of Housing and Community Development classifies these households as low and moderate income. From 1997-2001, only one house sold in New Ashford that was considered affordable to these families. There were no houses sold that were considered affordable to households making less than \$26,000 a year, which is 50% of the town median household and considered low income households according to the DHCD.

Affordability of New Housing

New housing built since 1996 has an average value of approximately \$142,000. The gap analysis shows that a moderate-income household in New Ashford, with an income of \$41,000 could afford to spend up to \$137,000 to purchase a home, and would not be able to afford the average home being built.

Rental Affordability

Although low and moderate income households could not afford the single family homes on the market, the median rent of \$542 would take up 25% of a low income household's monthly income, which would not be considered cost-burdened according to DHCD definition. Cost-burdened households are those paying more than 35% of their monthly incomes on rental. According to the 2000 census, no households renting in New Ashford were cost-burdened.

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Affordable Homeownership Assistance Programs

Good Samaritan Homeownership Program

Berkshire County Towns participate with Berkshire Housing Development Corporation, Berkshire Fund, Inc., and nine local lenders with the Good Samaritan Homeownership program described below. The participating lenders include Berkshire Bank, Legacy Banks, Pittsfield Cooperative Bank, Lee Bank, Lenox Savings Bank, Adams Co-operative Bank, So. Adams Savings Bank, Hoosic Bank and Greylock Federal Credit Union.

The Good Samaritan Homeownership program, which received a Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program Grant for \$96,000 in 1999 to assist low-income households with down payment and closing cost assistance. This program is available to income eligible residents throughout the County and more than 175 families have bought homes through the program in the past 10 years. Participating lenders provide a first mortgage equal to 80% of the purchase price, Berkshire Fund provides a second mortgage equal to 15% of the purchase price, and the buyers provide a 5% down payment. The banks also purchased more than \$1.6 million of low interest bonds to fund the down payment pool.

USDA Rural Housing Service Loan Guaranty Program

This program is a federally funded program from the Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Rural Housing Service. This program is available to all borrowers seeking mortgages throughout Berkshire County, with the exception of the City of Pittsfield. Through the Guaranteed Rural Housing Loan Program, moderate-income earners can qualify for existing single-family mortgages without a down payment. This program is currently available at Lee Bank.

MassHousing General Lending Program – 1st Time Homebuyers

MassHousing partners with Lee Bank, Berkshire Bank, and Legacy Banks to assist credit-worthy, low and moderate income, first time home buyers whose income and home purchase price fall within federally-set guidelines with financing and educational assistance.

In the last 5 years, New Ashford residents have only received 1 such loan. *Source: MassHousing*

As of March 6, 2002, eligibility requirements for MassHousing programs in New Ashford are:

Income Limits For MassHousing Programs In New Ashford					
Income Limits		Acquisition Cost Limits			
1 - 2 Persons	\$	New Construction		Existing Housing	
66,000					
3 or More	\$ 75,900	Single Family	\$277,100	Single Family	\$198,400
		2 Family	n/a	2 Family	\$223,300
				3 Family	\$270,400
				4 Family	\$314,400

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Housing Rehabilitation Assistance Programs

MassHousing Septic Repair Loan Program

The Septic Repair Loan Program is a statewide program established under Chapter 708 of the acts of 1966 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that is funded by MassHousing and available locally at Lee Bank. The MassHousing program offers reduced interest rate loans of \$1,000 - \$25,000 to cover costs associated with the upgrade of a failed sewage disposal system within the meaning of Title 5. Homeowners may qualify for 0%, 3% or 5% interest rates based on household income (see chart H-10). Repairs are for owner-occupied primary-residences only, not for second homes. The program is popular and several such loans are given out every year throughout the county. Few local applicants have failed to qualify. The Average Loan amount for a Septic Repair Loan has been relatively high, as the program's closing cost requirements have discouraged smaller value loans. The program began with a \$13 million State grant; it is considered successful; and is expected to continue with self-sufficient funds from loan payments.

In the last five fiscal years, no residents have participated in applying for Septic Repair Funds through this program. (Source: [MassHousing Use Figures for FY96-01](#))

Chart H-10: Income Limits for Septic Repair Loans in Berkshire County

Loan Rate	1-2 person family	3 or more persons
0%	\$23,000	\$26,000
3%	\$46,000	\$52,000
5%	\$92,000	\$104,000

MassHousing Home Improvement Loan Program

Local residents are also eligible for participation in the Home Improvement Loan Program at MassHousing. This program is available through Lee Bank. Residents of other towns in Berkshire County have participated. The program offers financing for income-eligible homeowners to repair their homes. Eligible properties are one-to-four family properties and residential condominiums, and the residence must be the borrower's principal residence for minimum of one year. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000 - \$25,000 for loan terms of 5 to 15 years. In the last five fiscal years, no New Ashford residents have participated in this program. (Source: *MassHousing*) More information on this program, is available from MassHousing or Lee Bank.

MassHousing Get the Lead Out Loan Program

MassHousing's Get The Lead Out Program provides low cost financing to owners of 1-4 family properties to remove lead paint and reduce the possibilities of lead poisoning among children. In the past five fiscal years, one Get the Lead out loan has been given to a New Ashford resident for over \$10,000 in funding. Owner-occupants who meet the income requirements (see Chart H-9) are eligible for a 0% deferred payment loan not due until the sale or refinancing of the property. Non-profit organizations are eligible for 0% fully amortizing loans on properties that are being rented to income eligible households. Investor owners are eligible for 3% fully amortizing loans on properties that are being rented to income eligible households. More information on this program is available at MassHousing or Lee Bank.

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Housing Strategy Items

As a result of the Community Development Plan Housing Study for New Ashford, the following actions have been listed as ways in which the Town may continue to meet the housing needs of Town residents.

Action #1: Develop local capacity to address housing needs

The community of New Ashford would benefit from some type of formalized local person, group, or organization that may keep affordable housing on the Town agenda, which would add to and benefit from the efforts conducted by housing organizations working regionally. A local group or committee, for example, needs to be involved in decision-making regarding housing development: where does it take place, who is an appropriate developer for Town-owned property, what type of housing should be developed what will it look like and who should it serve. Such a group should determine how these questions are answered within the town, and how the town may benefit from and contribute to efforts being conducted in the surrounding region.

A local group dedicated to housing could take the form of a Town Committee, Housing Partnership, Housing Trust or other organizational structure. The issues discussed below are relevant for the formation of any type of local housing organization.

- Determine what type of local organization is most appropriate for The Town.
- Establish such local housing organization.
- The newly established housing committee should work with the Town Selectboard to:
 - ⇒ Conduct a more detailed survey of local residents and employers regarding need for affordable homeownership opportunities, housing rehabilitation assistance, septic repair assistance, housing assistance for elderly residents, or any other specific need requiring further study.
 - ⇒ Develop working relationships with regional and sub-regional Housing Development Agencies/Organizations -, e.g. BHDC, Community Development Corporations, Construct Inc. etc...
 - ⇒ Work with the Town to identify state, municipally owned land including tax title properties, or private parcels appropriate for housing development
 - ⇒ Pursue rental housing development as described below.

Action #2: Participation in ongoing local housing rehabilitation programs

The data indicates an on-going need for rehabilitation programs. Continuation of affordable rehabilitation programs will assist low and moderate-income households including elders to maintain their properties in better repair. Two specific programs that may be of particular benefit to the town are already occurring in the area and are readily available to the town. One is the MassHousing program to address septic failures, and the second are ongoing programs administered by Berkshire Housing Development Corporation to address general rehabilitation needs. The MassHousing Septic Repair Assistance Program, as described in detail in the housing profile, is currently available at several local lenders. The programs have not been well subscribed, but have been of specific concern to residents, according to the Town Health Inspector. Septic repair assistance may be needed for older residents or others who may be forced to invest large sums of money to update septic systems in order to sell their house. Berkshire Housing Development Corporation applies for and manages Housing Rehabilitation programs through CDBG for the entire county, but has not included New Ashford in recent efforts. A local housing partnership as described above - working with the Selectboard,

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MassHousing, and the Berkshire Housing Development Corporation - could ensure New Ashford's participation in such efforts to the benefit of the town.

- Continue to make local residents aware of MassHousing's Septic Repair Loan Program.
- Continue to work with BHCD to apply for CDBG funds for rehabilitation grants and loans.
- Pursue new rehabilitation funds that may become available.
- Often elders, who may most need assistance with rehabilitation, are reluctant to participate in loan programs – even deferred payment loan programs. Whatever type of housing committee is developed should work with the Council on Aging to determine the need for grant programs and/or technical assistance for elder households. If such need is identified, the committee and Council on Aging should identify sources of grant funds, such as foundation funding to provide such grants.
- In order to ensure that rehabilitated homes remain affordable and count towards the town's inventory of affordable houses according to M.G.L. Chapter 40B, a use restriction could be placed on these houses for a minimum of 15 years.

Action #3: Pursue development of affordable homeownership options

There are limited year round properties affordable to moderate income households and which are not in significant need of rehabilitation. Development of affordable homeownership opportunities will help maintain a population of families with younger children in the community. Development of affordable homeownership units will also help the community meet its MGL C.40 B requirements.

- Ensure local banks continue to participate in MassHousing's lending programs. In the last 5 years, two Town homeowners have received a total of \$163,000 in loans through MassHousing's First Time Homebuyers Program. These households income cannot exceed \$66,000 for a family of two and \$75,900 for a family of three or more. Cost limits are \$277,100 for new construction and \$198,400 for existing single-family properties. The loans made in Town suggest these households purchased a moderately priced home.
- Conduct a survey to identify need for affordable homeownership. The survey should be a task of the Town's new housing committee (see Recommendation #1 above).
- If a need is identified, pursue development in a manner similar to that described for development of rental housing.
- Consider other low-cost models such as working with Habitat with Humanity or pursuing development with the local vocational school programs.

Action #4 Pursue development of affordable rental housing

New Ashford has a limited amount of rental housing and 0 units MGL C.40 B housing as of April 2002. Development of affordable rental housing will assist the Town in meeting its MGL C40 B requirement and help insulate the community from outside interference in residential development. In order to pursue rental housing development, the Town should consider the following:

- Establish local organization such as a Housing Committee, Partnership or Trust to ensure local voice in decision-making. See Recommendation # 1 above.
- Work with Berkshire Housing or with another local agency such as CDC of Northern Berkshires to develop mixed-use rental housing. Working with nonprofit partners will assist the community in securing the grant resources needed to make the development affordable at no cost to the Town.
- Identify "no cost" local resources that can make the project work such as state- or Town-owned land that can be used for a rental development. For example, if the town has

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foreclosed on tax title and derelict properties, there would be an opportunity for the Town to write down the cost of housing development for local residents.

- Work with nonprofit developer to identify grants and low-interest or deferred payment loans for rental development. Possible sources include:
 - ⇒ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Programs: Section 202 Elderly Housing Program, Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities
 - ⇒ U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Housing Service Program
 - ⇒ Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development Programs: Affordable Housing Trust Fund (with MassHousing), HOME, Housing Stabilization Fund, Housing Development Support Program, Local Initiative Program and Section 8 Housing Voucher Program.
 - ⇒ Massachusetts Housing Partnership loan programs
 - ⇒ Federal Home Loan Bank's Affordable Housing Program

Action #5: Pursue the Reduction of Barriers to Housing Development

While the Town's zoning by-law is minimal and friendly to residential development, a review and update of the subdivision regulations, permitting processes, and even the current zones themselves may find areas for improvement. Actions may include:

- Complete a local analysis of impediments to development of affordable housing,
- Obtaining the pro-bono services of a real estate attorney or other professional.
- Review Land Suitability Maps and local parcel maps to determine if current zoning accurately reflects existing conditions and current community values with regard to housing
- Implementing administrative procedures to expedite the inspectional services process relating to development of housing. (i.e. one stop shopping for permits)
- Adopt model local rules for responding to comprehensive permit applications.
- If a local affordable housing committee of some type is created, this group should work closely with the Planning Board to develop appropriate zoning strategies based on the results of the items noted above.

Action #6: Consider the adoption of the Community Preservation Act to finance future affordable homeownership options in Town

The Community Preservation Act will give approximately \$25 million of State funds to local municipalities every year to put towards creation and support of affordable housing, conservation, and historical preservation. The State monies will match funds gained if a town elects to raise its taxes by up to 3%. Use of these funds is determined locally. In Berkshire County, Stockbridge and Williamstown have elected to participate in the provisions of the Community Development Act, enabling them as the only two municipalities currently able to receive state funds from a pool of funds designed to serve all 32 Berkshire County municipalities.

Action #7: Apply for EO418 Housing Certification for The Town

The Town has not previously been EO418 Housing Certified. Continued Certification gives the town preferential status when applying for over \$400 million in grant opportunities available annually by the State. Grant monies made available by Housing Certification are not necessarily related to housing.

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Open Space and Resource Protection



Open Space and Resource Protection

Inventory of Lands of Conservation Interest
Analysis of Open Space and Resource Protection Needs
Open Space Suitability Map

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6-5
6-7

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Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Introduction

The Town of New Ashford has a range of open space resources and recreational areas that add to the quality of life enjoyed by its residents. The fields and farms of the valley are complimented nicely by the hiking trails and scenic vistas over the mountain forests. These areas are under both public and private ownership, and they hold various levels of protection and various amounts of exposure to the possibility of future development, which may limit the current level of public enjoyment offered.

This section contains an inventory of the parks, forests, open spaces, and other areas in town seen of particular interest to the residents of New Ashford in terms of recreation and conservation. This section will list the important parcels and give a description of their ownership and management, the level of accessibility to the public, and the level of protection from development they hold. The following lists appear in six categories based on ownership, recreational possibilities, and level of protection. The categories are defined as follows:

Public Conservation and Recreation Resources: This category is comprised of State Parklands and Town Conservation Lands. These areas are large-parcel forests open to public access and recreation.

Municipal Lands: These properties are owned and managed by the Town of New Ashford and are mostly located in the central section of town. These parcels consist of various public facilities, an historic schoolhouse, and vacant land. Though these lands are owned and managed by the Town, they have no formal permanent protection.

Cemeteries: New Ashford has one public cemetery that is a valued historic resource to the Town. As with municipal lands, they have no formal protection but are not likely to be developed.

Chapter 61A Lands - Protected Agriculture: Chapter 61A voluntary annual enrollment programs for temporary preferential tax assessment based on current use of the land. Chapter 61A requires a 5 acre minimum of agricultural land which must produce a minimum amount of agricultural products. Chapter 61A prohibits development unrelated to agricultural purposes. The landowner must re-apply for the program each year.

Private Recreation Lands and For-Profit Recreation Areas: This category contains privately owned recreational areas that may or may not charge a fee for use of the facilities. It also includes areas that are commonly used by residents but are on private land and are not protected for future use.

Unprotected Private Land: This category contains lands that are privately owned agricultural and woodland that are without any protection from development, yet their current use would qualify them for public programs offering tax easements.

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Public Conservation and Recreation Resources

A large percentage of open space in the Town of New Ashford is publicly owned. The majority of this land is Mount Greylock State Reservation, which covers over 3,000 acres in the eastern side of Town.

PUBLIC LANDS AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES							
Site Name	MAP & PACEL	LAND ACRES	OWNER/MANAGER	LOCATION	PUBLIC ACCESS	LEVEL OF PROTECTION	ACTIVITIES
Mount Greylock Reservation	003-001	1889	Commonwealth of Massachusetts/DEM	Rockwell Road	Y	Permanent	Hiking, Camping, Backpacking, Hunting, Mountain Biking, Picnicking, Skiing, Snowmobiling
	004-004	124		Greylock Road			
	005-008	49		Ingraham Road			
	006-001	419		Ingraham Road			
	006-004	48.17		Bauers Road			
	006-005	684		Bauers, Greylock, & Rockwell Roads			
	007-021	0.11		Route 7 & Roys Road			
Fire Observation Tower	005-006	1		Brodie Mountain	N	None	NA

Municipal Lands

Lands owned or managed by the Town of New Ashford are located in the center area of Town. The lands have no formal protection from development. The Town has no official parks or playgrounds.

MUNICIPAL LANDS						
MAP & PARCEL	OWNER	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	ACRES	CLASS CODE	PROTECTED
008-003	Town of New Ashford	Mallery Road	Cemetery	1.04	903	N
008-002	Town of New Ashford	Mallery Road	Vacant Land	2.9	903	N
009-028	Town of New Ashford	Mallery Road	Historic School House	0.07	903	N
009-030	Town of New Ashford	Mallery Road	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	903	N
009-041	Town of New Ashford	Mallery Road	Town Hall	2.1	903	N

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Cemeteries

The Town of New Ashford has one town-owned cemetery located on Mallery Road.

CEMETERIES					
MAP & PARCEL	OWNER	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	ACRES	CLASS CODE
008-003	Town of New Ashford	Mallery Road	Cemetery	1.04	903

Chapter 61A Lands - Protected Agriculture

Chapter 61A is a voluntary annual enrollment program that enables landowners preferential tax assessment in return for maintaining agricultural use of the land. Two properties and 22.5 acres are receiving tax easements through this program.

CHAPTER 61A LANDS						
MAP/PARCEL	OWNER/MANAGER	LOCATION	ACREAGE	PUBLIC ACCESS	STATUS	PROTECTED
006-006	Private	Bauers Road	2.56	N	Private	Y
005-001	Private	Brodie Mountain	21	N	Private	Y

Private Recreation Lands and For-Profit Recreation Areas

New Ashford contains two private recreational areas that offer recreational opportunities. The largest private recreational area is Brodie Mountain Resort, located on Kittle Road in the southwestern corner of Town. These privately owned areas are not protected and offer public access for a fee.

PRIVATE RECREATION							
Location	Site Name	Map/Parcel Number	Owner/Manager	Acreage	Activities	Public Access	Level of Protection
Kittle Road	Brodie Mountain Resort	005-007	Private	510	Snow Shoeing, Snow Tubing	Fee	None
Route 7	Brodie Mountain Tennis Club	008-018	Private	4.08	Tennis	Fee	None

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Unprotected Private Land

A large amount of open spaces in Town are on a small number of privately owned parcels that are without temporary or permanent protection from development. Based on their current use, these parcels are eligible for tax easements under governmental and non-governmental programs such as Chapter 61 and APR. These parcels contain over 495 acres of agriculture and forest lands.

UNPROTECTED AGRICULTURAL/WOODLAND					
MAP & PARCEL	OWNER	LOCATION	ACRES	USE	PROTECTED
010-002	Private	Old Route 7	46	Agriculture	N
010-015	Private	Smith Road	5.6	Agriculture	N
010-016	Private	Smith Road	5.1	Agriculture	N
005-003	Private	Brodie Mountain	186	Forest	N
005-004	Private	Brodie Mountain	39	Forest	N
005-005	Private	Brodie Mountain	62	Forest	N
008-001	Private	Route 7	151	Forest	N

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Analysis Of Open Space and Resource Protection Needs

A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The 2002 New Ashford Town Survey found that 76% of respondents would support a Town effort to protect farms, forests and other natural/scenic resources, and that 98% of the respondents felt rural nature is the advantage to living in the community. Attendees of the 2002 Community Development Plan Town Forum were called upon to more clearly define the “natural/scenic resources”, identified by the survey as highly valued and worthy of protection.

The Forum resulted in the following items as valued town resources in need of protection:

- Water Resources: Brooks, streams, aquifers, water recharge areas
- Areas Open for Recreational Use (Hiking/Walking/Jogging)
- Mountains, forests and undeveloped land of natural and scenic beauty
- Farms, open fields and working landscapes

Water Resources

All of the drinking water in New Ashford is groundwater obtained from on-site wells. Therefore, the community must be very cautious of pollutants that could contaminate groundwater. Local controls on erosion, especially on driveways and private roads, are a specific concern for maintaining the quality of local water resources. There is also a need for maintaining an adequate groundwater supply in town aquifers, as well as a need to document the location of town aquifers (*See the water resources GIS Base Maps in Section 8 of the CDP*). The Town's streams and brooks are also valued for their natural beauty and are needed as important habitat areas for local wildlife.

Areas Open For Recreational Use

Many residents of New Ashford enjoy the outdoors and conducting outdoor recreation, as eighty three percent of Town Survey respondents stated they enjoy hiking, walking or jogging in town. New Ashford enjoys a wealth of public lands of the Mount Greylock Reservation, which is open for public access and recreational use. Residents have expressed a need for more formal documentation access and maintenance responsibilities of the roads and trails within the New Ashford portion of the reservation.

Mountains, Forests and Undeveloped Land of Natural and Scenic Beauty

New Ashford is full of peaks, valleys, and steep slopes, with a large amount of undeveloped, heavily forested public and private lands. The majority of the Town's mountainous areas is undeveloped and heavily forested and offers many spectacular views unique to the Town. New Ashford's many scenic vistas work to define the Town and are enjoyed daily by residents and visitors alike. Residents have expressed a need for preserving the valued landscapes that are not already protected. Town residents have also expressed a need to limit visible impacts on the scenic mountains from logging or developments.

Farms, Open Fields and Working Landscapes

New Ashford has a long tradition of agriculture, and has historically been comprised of working landscapes of farms and fields. These farms are a rich part of New Ashford's history that play an active role in the present, and are desired elements the Town wishes to maintain in the future. The farms and fields contribute to the rural character of the community and are also an important habitat for birds and other wildlife local to the area.

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B. Summary of Community Needs

Need to Support Local Landowners Dedicated to Protecting Their Open Lands

A relatively small number of landowners control much of the unprotected open land in New Ashford. As stated above, many of these landowners intend to protect their land and have been doing so for years. Whereas good land stewardship by a small number of large landowners may benefit the entire town, smaller landowners may wish to support the larger landowners in keeping these valued open lands open. The Town has many options for supporting large landowners maintain open space, some of which are identified below in the following needs:

Need to Inform Landowners on the Many Options For Protecting their Open Land

The rural landscape of New Ashford demonstrates that many landowners in New Ashford intend to protect their land, and have been doing so for years. However, many large landowners in Town are not aware of the many conservation options available to them and their related tax benefits. Many landowners are particularly unaware of conservation efforts that may be personalized to fit their individual needs. Distributing information about voluntary conservation in a manner that fits the needs of the individual landowner was seen as a need for the Town.

Need for Legal and Administrative Help for Landowners Wishing to Protect Their Open Land

Many landowners in New Ashford may be interested in obtaining formal protection for their open lands. It has been suggested that land conservation in New Ashford is not happening now because it is a complicated process that requires the time and concentration of a dedicated, full-time person such as staff at a land trust or conservation organization. A local resource to make options known and follow-up to help interested landowners advance the conservation option that is right for them may be potentially a large benefit to the Town. The neighboring town of Hancock is currently working with the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation in such an effort.

Need for Funds to Help Advance Voluntary Land Protection Efforts in Town

Land conservation can be a complicated, time intensive process that requires legal and administrative action by a landowner. In order to advance land conservation efforts in New Ashford, it may be desirable to raise money to help jumpstart the administrative process of conservation without a large financial burden on the landowner. Alternatively, for the town itself to acquire land for conservation, it would take more money than is available within a small town's budget. Local residents wishing to contribute to land conservation efforts may donate to this fund to assist Individual landowners or acquire town lands. The town may wish to set up a conservation fund through its conservation commission or a local land trust, or it may wish to consider adopting the Community Preservation Act, which matches local contributions with State funds.

Need for Additional Controls on Harmful Development Activities

All residences in Town receive their water from on-site wells. Therefore, there is a great need for controlling erosion and pollution of the town's surface and groundwater. Erosion standards for driveways and private roads have been identified as one need. Additionally, town residents choose to live in New Ashford for its rural character and scenic beauty. Therefore, residents are concerned with maintaining the scenic beauty of their surroundings, and feel the need for standards on logging and other developments on mountain lands. Such controls are available through local by-law or through adopting the Scenic Mountains Act.

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Transportation



Transportation

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The Town of New Ashford's primary transportation issues relate to the Route 7, which is a major north-south highway in Berkshire County, the continued maintenance of their current roads, and providing transit access to those in need of or wanting such access. As a result of the public forum the Town adopted the following transportation goals related to their Community Development Plan.

- Continued outstanding maintenance of town roads and public facilities
- Maintain a high level of public safety on town roads
- Increase access to public transportation

Three distinct tasks were conducted through this Community Development Planning process to address those goals. Those are described below:

1. Conduct a Status of Roads Study and Prepare a Status of Roads Map. This task developed a road map that identified and classified the status of roadways within the Town of New Ashford with respect to ownership, maintenance responsibilities, suitability for development, and eligibility for public road improvement funds. Inactive and abandoned roads were identified and a GIS map was prepared.
2. Prepare a Limited Access Management Study. This task developed a limited access management study. Specific focus was given to road safety and recommended steps to improve flow of traffic within the town's transportation network and the Route 7 corridor. The analysis featured the identification of Route 7 access points, such as driveways and intersections and recommendations to improve safety through improved access management techniques, improved resident access to information about available transportation options and improved town access to state transportation officials and enforcement officers.
3. Conduct a limited special transportation needs improvement study. This task conducted a limited special transportation needs improvement study to determine possible ways to increase transportation access for people without cars or with limited access to them. It included a limited analysis of possible van service or alternative public transportation for Town residents.

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Status of Roads Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify and classify the status of roadways within the Town of New Ashford with respect to ownership, maintenance responsibilities, suitability for development, and eligibility for public road improvement funds. Inactive, “abandoned” and discontinued roads are also identified and evaluated, where applicable. A large-scale Status of Roads Map, which provides a visual overview and summary of the report findings and recommendations, is included with this report.

Preliminary Survey of Roads

The BRPC presented Town of New Ashford officials, namely road superintendent Winthrop Frye, with an orthomap (see Map 1), a high-quality aerial photograph of the town, depicting a GIS overlay of roads listed in the 2002 MassHighway Road Inventory File (RIF). The roads were color-coded according to jurisdiction (e.g. MassHighway, State Forest, Town, Unaccepted or Unknown). The BRPC then compared the roads shown on the orthomap with roads shown on the 1988 County Engineers map (see Map 2) and those shown in the 1998 *Official Arrow Street Atlas of Western Massachusetts*. (see Map 3). BRPC staff also site-checked roads in question during the fall of 2003. All inconsistencies in location, distance, naming and status were cataloged, and BRPC verified records of any roads shown on the County Engineers map as “discontinued by vote” or “abandoned for use” by checking the book and page citations listed on the map from the County Commissioner’s minutes at the Registry of Deeds in Pittsfield, MA.

Inventory of Ways

As the second step in building a status of roads map, the BRPC prepared the comparative inventory of all documented roads and ways within the Town of New Ashford shown in Table T1 (below). The table gives a comprehensive overview of the status of all roads known or identified in the Town of New Ashford. It is easy to identify roads in question by reading across each row: any road missing information or with parenthetical information requires clarification or action. Mileages shown are derived from MassHighway RIF data or from Town of New Ashford records. Some characteristics were indeterminable from information available to BRPC. Such roads require clarification, whether by simply refining the data available for a given road (e.g. spelling of name) or by fixing particular questions of legal status (e.g. administration, mileage, maintenance responsibilities) by action of the select board or Town Meeting vote.

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Table T1. Summary of Road Status

Street Name	Admin System	Miles	Mass Highway RIF	Official Arrow Road Atlas	County Engineer's Map
New Ashford Road (Route 7)	Mass Highway	3.39	✓	✓	✓
Greylock Road	State Park/Forest (?)	0.63 (portions "closed" in winter)	✓	✓	✓
Rockwell Road	State Park/Forest	2.66	✓	✓	✓
Sperry Road	State Park/Forest	0.34	✓	✓	✓
Bauers Road	Town Accepted	1.03	✓	✓	✓
Beach Hill Road	Town Accepted	0.86	✓	✓	✓
Cemetery Road	Town Accepted	0.22 (portions "closed" in winter)	✓	✓	✓
Greylock Road	Town Accepted (?)	0.29	✓	✓	✓
Ingraham Road	Town Accepted	1.64 (portions "closed" in winter)	✓	✓	✓
Mallery Road	Town Accepted	1.80	✓	✓	✓
Old Route 7 (near Brodie Mountain entrance)	Town Accepted	0.33	✓	✓	
Old Route 7 (now Road #16)	Town Accepted	??? (portions "closed" in winter)	✓		
Roys Road	Town Accepted	1.16 (portions "closed" in winter)	✓	✓	✓ (Shown as Royce Road)
Smith Road	Town Accepted	0.32	✓	✓	✓
White Road	Town Accepted	0.34	✓	✓	✓
Unnamed Road (Road #17)	Town Accepted	0.34 (portions "closed" in winter)	✓		
Mountain Pond Lane	Private	???	Shown as Unaccepted	✓	✓
West Mountain Road	Unknown	???	Shown as Unknown		Shown as "abandoned" portion of West Mountain Road, extending into Cheshire and Adams

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Of the 18 road listings, 8 are designated consistently by MassHighway, the Road Atlas and the County Engineers Map according to name, centerline mileage and administration, and otherwise present no questions of status. These 8 roads should pose no problems with regard to status in cases of land use, maintenance obligations or legal liability. The ten remaining road listings require clarification of one kind or another.

Roads Requiring Clarification/Action

The Town of New Ashford is fortunate in relation to many other Berkshire County municipalities to have very few problematic roads. It is also fortunate to have a road superintendent who knows the roads so thoroughly and over such a long, continuous period. It pays to document the knowledge that Mr. Frye offers and to resolve the questions that exist now before the Town faces difficult legal status of roads questions brought by developers and other land use proponents or by those claiming liability suits.

Table T2 details the clarifications or actions recommended for all road listings in question, including for those cited as “closed” in winter. Where possible, the last column provides conclusions based on Town documents, site-checks, or basic answers from Mr. Frye. In most cases, it lists recommended actions that should alleviate most, if not all, potential legal status of roads problems in the Town of New Ashford.

NOTE: According to Massachusetts General Laws, the terms “discontinue,” “close,” and “abandon” do not mean the same thing legally. Discontinuance ends the public right of way along a road; the road ceases to exist legally and all land uses requiring public access along that discontinued portion of the road, such as Approval Not Required (ANR) subdivision development, are revoked. “Closure” and “abandonment” are not officially defined in Massachusetts General Laws. Though the Town of New Ashford has voted at Town Meeting to “close” certain roads or portions of roads in the winter, for instance, it is BRPC’s understanding that the Town has in fact taken what may amount to a questionable legal position on the status of the roads and on its responsibility for legal liability for travelers. In cases of “abandonment,” the intent of the term is most likely either 1) to cease the Town’s responsibility for maintenance along a road or part of it, or 2) to discontinue the right of way altogether. For ceasing maintenance, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 82, Section 32A requires that the Town vote to “discontinue maintenance” for roads that the board of selectmen has deemed “abandoned and unused for ordinary travel...” Where the Town intends to cease both maintenance and the public right of passage, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 82, Section 21 requires that the Town vote to “discontinue” a Town way. (See *Attachment Transportation B* for further details.)

Table T2. Roads Requiring Clarification/Action

Road	Clarification	Recommendation/Conclusion
Beach Hill Road	Mr. Frye noted that the Town voted to officially relocate portions of Beach Hill Road at Town Meeting in either 1949, 1950, or 1951.	Conclusion: Confirm by verifying Town Meeting records from those years.
Cemetery Road	Mr. Frye noted that the very northern end of Cemetery Road is commonly “closed” in winter, though it is not listed	Recommendation: Use the language “discontinue for maintenance” (M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 32A) instead of “close” in the

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Table T2. Roads Requiring Clarification/Action

Road	Clarification	Recommendation/Conclusion
	along with other such roads in the fourth article of the 2003 Town Meeting warrant.	Town Meeting warrant. This will leave the right-of-way legally accessible to travelers while ceasing the Town's responsibility for maintenance and liability for damage for use of the road, so long as signs are adequately posted. (See discussion of statutory language above and in Attachment Transportation B.) Designate the endpoints of "discontinued maintenance" during the winter in the Town Meeting warrant. (See example of Tyngham Town Meeting warrant in Attachment A.) Post "Travel at Own Risk" signs, in addition to any "Road Closed" signs, at ends of "closed" portions. Select Board can officially "open" the road again in spring by "laying it out" for "ordinary travel" (M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 21).
Greylock Road	Reconcile different administration listings: Mr. Frye indicated that the entirety of Greylock Road is Town owned and maintained. MassHighway shows the portion once laid out as a county way (as shown on the County Engineers map) as State Park/Forest administered. The County Engineers map shows a small strip of road connecting Route 7 to Greylock Road just south of the current intersection as "abandoned for use." The strip appears to be a road that once crossed just south of Old Mill Dam. This strip is shown neither in the Atlas nor in the MassHighway RIF. No County Commissioner's book and page citation is listed.	Recommendation: Verify with MassHighway and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (which oversees State Forests) that the entirety of Greylock Road is owned and administered by the Town. Confirm the officially accepted distance. Also, designate the endpoints of "discontinuance for maintenance" during the winter in the Town Meeting warrant. Post "Travel at Own Risk" signs at ends of "closed" portions. See Cemetery Road recommendation. Confirm the "abandonment" of the small strip south of Old Mill Dam; produce Town documentation if possible or else consider voting to discontinue this portion of the road at Town Meeting. A vote to discontinue does not legally establish that a road existed there all this time, but it will cease any claim to the road from that day forward.
Ingraham Road	Mr. Frye noted that Ingraham Road is "closed" (physically barricaded) in winter, as is noted in the fourth article of the 2003 Town Meeting warrant. No endpoints or distances are given regarding the officially "closed" portions.	Recommendation: Use the language "discontinue for maintenance" (M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 32A) instead of "close" in the Town Meeting warrant. Designate the endpoints of discontinued maintenance during the winter in the Town Meeting warrant. Post "Travel at Own Risk" signs, in addition to any "Road Closed" signs, at ends of "closed" portions. Select Board can officially "open" the road again in spring by "laying it out" for "ordinary travel" (M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 21).

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Table T2. Roads Requiring Clarification/Action

Road	Clarification	Recommendation/Conclusion
Old Route 7 (now Road #16)	Mr. Frye told BRPC that this portion of "Old Route 7" had recently been renamed "Road #16."	Recommendation: Produce documentation of this name change (Select Board approval, Town Meeting vote) to MassHighway and to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) so that their records can be updated. Replace any "Old Route 7" street signs with "Road #16" signs.
Roys Road	Mr. Frye indicated that a portion of Roys Road is "closed" (physically barricaded) in winter, as is noted in the fourth article of the 2003 Town Meeting warrant. No endpoints or distances are given regarding the officially "closed" portions. Also, the County Engineers map shows Roys Road as "Royce Road." Mr. Frye told BRPC that Roys—along with Bauers (formerly Bowers) and Mallery (formerly Mallory) Roads—were formally renamed in the 1960s.	Recommendation: Use the language "discontinue for maintenance" (M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 32A) instead of "close" in the Town Meeting warrant. Designate the endpoints of "closure" during the winter in the Town Meeting warrant. Post "Travel at Own Risk" signs, in addition to any "Road Closed" signs, at ends of "closed" portions. Select Board can officially "open" the road again in spring by "laying it out" for "ordinary travel" (M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 21). Confirm name changes by verifying Town records.
Unnamed Road (now Road #17)	Mr. Frye said that this road, off Route 7 north-northeast of Springs Motel, had recently been renamed "Road #17."	Recommendation: Produce documentation of this name change (Select Board approval, Town Meeting vote) to MassHighway and to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) so that their records can be updated. Install street signs at endpoints saying "Road #17."
Mountain Pond Lane	The 2002 MassHighway RIF shows this way as "Unaccepted." A site-check confirmed Mr. Frye's indication that it is a private road.	Recommendation: Confirm that the Town never in fact accepted Mountain Pond Lane as a Town way. If there is any question, consider voting at Town Meeting to "discontinue" Mountain Pond Lane and have the Select Board lay it out as a "private statutory way" (M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 21) and then approved as such at the same Town Meeting. See Attachment Transportation B for further details.
West Mountain Road	Mr. Frye told BRPC that West Mountain Road is an active State Forest Road, paved at either end (in Cheshire and in Adams). The County Engineers map shows the portion of the road passing through New Ashford as "abandoned for use," though it cites no book and page number by which to verify this status.	Recommendation: Verify with the Department of Conservation and Recreation that West Mountain Road is still active and is administered and maintained by the State Forest agency.

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Other Roads of Unknown Status

The Town of New Ashford has two pull-offs, or rest areas, off of Route 7. The status of these two paved strips shows up in the 2002 MassHighway Road Inventory File (RIF) as “unknown.” It is BRPC’s understanding that these pull-offs once formed portions of the “old” Route 7. As such, they should still be state-owned and state-maintained. In November 2003, BRPC contacted MassHighway’s Acting District Project Development Engineer Rich Masse to clarify the legal status, ownership, and maintenance and liability responsibilities for these pull-offs.

BRPC also asked Mr. Masse to clarify the status of a small strip of paved roadway that runs parallel to Route 7, connecting Greylock Road and Roys Road near their intersections with Route 7. The 2002 MassHighway RIF indicated that the status of this strip of road was also “unknown.” Mr. Frye told BRPC that he believed the strip was owned by MassHighway, though he noted that the Town has been plowing that strip in winter.

It would serve the legal interests of the Town to clarify these questions of status, in writing, with MassHighway. BRPC recommends that the Planning Board or Select Board contact MassHighway’s District 1 office at 270 Main Street, Lenox, MA 01240 or by phone at (413) 784-1768 or (413) 637-1750. The Boards may wish to send a letter to MassHighway requesting official notification of the status of these ways.

Lastly, the roads running through property owned by Brodie Mountain are also shown in the 2002 MassHighway RIF as status “unknown.” Mr. Frye told BRPC that they are privately owned, operated, and maintained by Brodie Mountain, and he noted that they have for the most part not been problematic for the Town. The Town’s primary concern for these roads, as far as BRPC can see, is the *potential* for them to serve one day as frontage for Approval Not Required (ANR) development (e.g. subdivisions, condominiums). As private ways, they currently should not be eligible to serve as appropriate ANR frontage. The Town must be vigilant in the future that all land use proposals claiming frontage on any of these roads go through the full subdivision or other relevant approval and permitting procedures. It would be in the Town’s legal and fiscal interests to insist that any new roads in the Brodie Mountain complex, or any roads serving access to any new developments there, meet current standards for grade, width, storm water runoff and so on, especially in the case that any of the roads in question may one day become Town accepted roads.

Of Note...

A July 2003 Massachusetts Appeals Court decision involving the Town of Leverett presents a de facto standard for the reconstruction of an “abandoned” public road for the purpose of developing abutting land. According to the “Around the Commonwealth” column in the September 2003 *Beacon*, the court ruled that a public road must be passable by emergency vehicles at the time of the development application. The court decision makes accessibility by emergency vehicles at the time of application the determining factor in denying an “approval not required” (ANR) endorsement, as outlined in the Subdivision Control Law (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 81, Sections K-GG). Development of the land in Leverett would have required the Town to rebuild a road no longer in use, a cost the Town did not want to bear.

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It should be noted also that *The Boston Globe* has reported cases in other Massachusetts towns, notably Marshfield, where developers are actively seeking roadways that may be unused, or “abandoned,” but that were never legally discontinued. Developers have claimed that such roads provide legitimate access for “approval not required” development, which a planning board must endorse so long as certain criteria are met, as laid out in the Subdivision Control Law. Town of New Ashford officials should be mindful of the possibility that roads construed as “abandoned” or cited as such on maps or documents, even “ancient” (colonial) maps or documents, may therefore present land use quandaries if their status is not clarified legally before a developer approaches the planning board with an ANR plan.

Final Recommendation: Official Map

One powerful land use tool that the Town of New Ashford may wish to consider is the Official Map, as prescribed in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, Sections 81E-I. By law, an Official Map would establish the legally recognized status (ownership, maintenance and liability responsibilities) for all Town ways and parks and could be used authoritatively in all cases of proposed development or land use planning and disputes. (See Attachment Transportation B for a comparison of Official Maps and Status of Roads maps.) An Official Map may be the most efficient and legally effective way to resolve the questions of road status raised in Table T2 above. This legal status of roads report—along with the accompanying status of roads map—constitutes more than half the work needed to produce an Official Map. BRPC can offer technical assistance to complete such a document and guide the Town through its approval and administration.

Currently, nine towns in the Commonwealth have Official Maps on file with the Department of Housing and Development (DHCD). As of May 2003, the Town of Richmond became the first Berkshire town to adopt one, with the towns of Alford, Florida, Stockbridge and Tyringham slated for Town Meeting votes on their own Official Maps after the completion of their Community Development Plans.

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Access Management Study

Introduction

A Corridor Access Management Study was conducted for the Town of New Ashford as part of the town's participation in the Massachusetts Executive Order 418 Community Development Plan program. The study is focused on road safety within the Route 7 corridor and includes documentation of the existing characteristics of the road, an analysis of driveways and intersections on Route 7, and recommended steps to improve traffic flow within the Route 7 corridor through improved access management techniques.

Existing Characteristics of the Corridor

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume and classification data was collected for a one-week period on the Route 7 roadway in 1996. The counts were taken at the border between New Ashford and Williamstown. The resulting volume characteristics of Route 7 in New Ashford are summarized in Table T3. The results show that Route 7 in New Ashford had an average daily volume of 4,567 at the Williamstown line in 1996, which included approximately 300 trucks per day. The town measured 5,090 vehicles per day at the Lanesborough line in 1998, which included approximately 400 trucks. Annualized average volume, which is adjusted to account for seasonal variations in the data, was measured at approximately 4,400 to 5,090 vehicles per day at the Williamstown and Lanesboro measurements respectively. In addition, counts were taken in 2003 at the Lanesborough line. Route 7 was not considered a high traffic volume location for Berkshire County, as Berkshire County's high traffic volume locations had average daily volumes of over 20,000 at each location.

Table T3: Traffic Volumes on Route 7 in New Ashford

Year of Count	Location	Average Daily Volume	Annualized Average Daily Volume	% Trucks
1996	Route 7 at the Williamstown Line	4,597	4,413	6.8%
1998	Route 7 at the Lanesboro Line	5,850	5,090	8.0%
1998	Route 7 at the Lanesboro Line	6,104	5,310	4.1%

Speed Limits

The posted speed limit along Route 7 is between 50 mph and 55 mph throughout New Ashford. The majority of the distance is posted at 55 mph. Areas with posted speed limits of 50mph include developed areas in southern New Ashford near the EconoLodge Motel as well as sections in northern New Ashford where there are several sharp turns in the roadway.

Roadway Characteristics

Route 7 is a state highway and is functionally classified as a rural minor arterial. According to the *MHD Highway Design Manual, 1997*, arterials are the highest functional classification of road providing the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest distance. Minor

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arterials provide less service than principal arterials. Route 7 winds around corners and passes steep hills as it traverses the varied terrain of New Ashford for approximately 3.4 miles. For most of the length of the road in New Ashford, Route 7 is an undivided, two lane highway with 10 foot shoulders on both sides. A small section of road just south of the center of town has three lanes and 7 foot shoulders to allow for a climbing lane for southbound traffic. Intersections along Route 7 are not currently controlled with STOP signs, and there are no traffic signals in the area. The general roadway characteristics are summarized in Table T4.

Table T4: Roadway Characteristics of Route 7 in New Ashford							
Roadway	Functional Type	Functional Classification	Lanes per Direction	Lane Widths	Width of Travelway	Paved Shoulder Width	Posted Speed Limits
Route 7	State Highway	Rural Minor Arterial	1-1.5*	12 ft.	24-36ft	7-10 ft	50-55 mph

* One section of road has a passing lane.

Route 7 Accident History

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission analyzed accident records from the State Police database of reported crashes provided by MassHighway. This analysis included crash information for the years 1995 to 1999. This data shows that there were 39 crashes recorded on Route 7 in New Ashford during this 5-year period. Fifty one percent (51%), or approximately half of these crashes occurred at intersections. Classification of all Route 7 crashes shows that one crash (2 percent) was fatal, 31 percent involved personal injury, and 67 percent were property damage only. The crash history is summarized in Table T5.

Table T5: New Ashford Crash Summary, 1995-1999								
Roadway	Non-Intersection Crashes				Intersection Crashes			
	Fatality	Personal Injury	Property Damage Only	Total	Fatality	Personal Injury	Property Damage Only	Total
Route 7	1	8	10	19	0	4	16	20

The accident data was also reviewed to determine the areas where accidents occurred most frequently, called accident clusters, which may be indicative of safety problem areas in need of corrective measures. This review indicated that there are two intersections along Route 7 that have had a significant concentration of crashes: at the southern intersection with Mallery Road and at Roys / Greylock Road. These two areas were also identified in the preliminary BRPC Access Conditions Analysis as "areas of concern" for their inadequate sight distances for viewing oncoming traffic. The southern Mallery Road intersection with Route 7 had four crashes over the 5 year period, while the intersection of Roys/Greylock Road and Route 7 had five. These crashes are equivalent to an accident rate of approximately 50 accidents per hundred million vehicles traveling past these intersections. Comparing the New Ashford accident data to the most dangerous intersections, or crash clusters, in the County as supplied by the BRPC Regional Transportation Plan, the crash rate at the New Ashford intersections is high for the sub-region. For comparison, the Regional Plan most dangerous accident cluster listing gives crash rates for Park Square in Pittsfield to be 150 accidents per hundred million vehicles and the intersection of Route 7 and Tyler Street in Pittsfield at 130 accidents per hundred million

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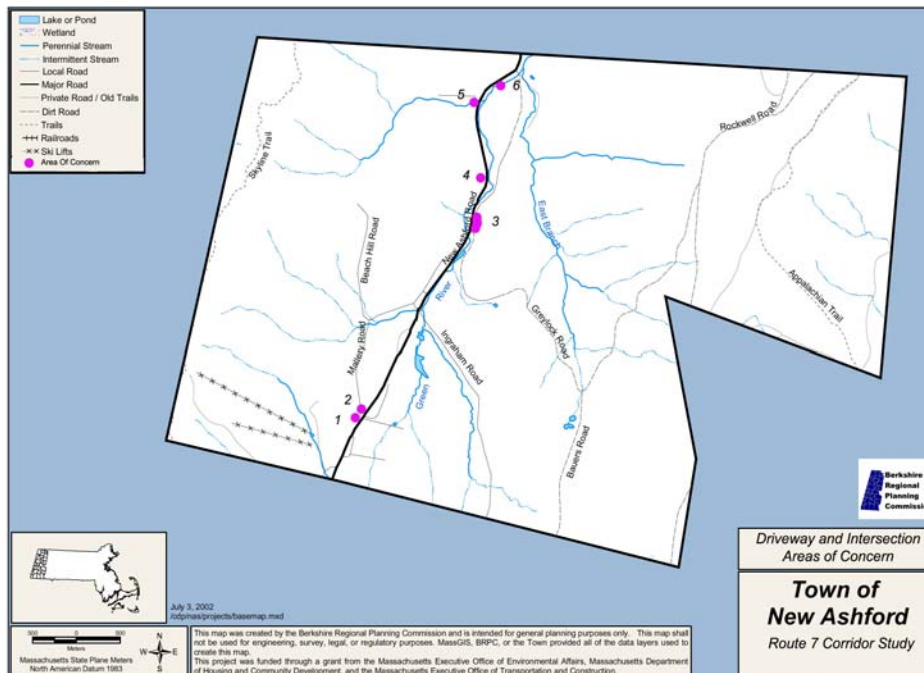
vehicles. In light of this regional comparison, the intersections with 50 accidents per hundred million vehicles in New Ashford appear to be a significant concern.

Route 7 Access Conditions Analysis

Introduction to the Analysis

Access conditions on driveways and road intersections were analyzed using aerial photography and an on-site field survey conducted in July of 2003. The first part of the analysis used Pictometry images, which are high-resolution aerial photographs linked to a Geographical Information System. Pictometry allows for moderately accurate survey and measurement, which is helpful for measuring the current sight-line distances onto Route 7 at each intersection and determining which intersections may not have adequate visibility for oncoming traffic. Using the Pictometry photos, each driveway and intersection was measured to determine their approximate sight-line distance onto Route 7 for both northbound and southbound lanes. Intersections were determined to have inadequate visibility if they did not conform to standards presented in the Berkshire Access Management Guidelines (2nd Edition), 2002 or MassHighway's *Highway Design Manual*, 1997. For an example of the standards used, the BRPC Guidelines recommend intersections on a 45 mph road to have at least 360 feet of sight-line visibility for safe access, while intersections on a 55 mph section of road are recommended to have at least 495 feet of sight-line distance. Preliminary Pictometry measurements identified several road and driveway intersections with Route 7 to have inadequate sight distances and were brought forth as "areas of concern" for further study. Two of these intersections were identified as potential accident clusters with a potential need for corrective measures. Resulting areas of concern from the Pictometry analysis can be seen below in Figure 1.

Areas of Concern



The combination of a preliminary site-survey and an accident data analysis yielded several "areas of concern" subject to further analysis from the field. Field analysis results and recommendations for safety improvements are summarized in the following pages.

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1. Mallery Road Restaurant Access

Existing Conditions



The former Mallery Road Steakhouse, opposite the EconoLodge on Route 7, is at the top of a hill immediately following a merge in southern traffic. The existing conditions are shown above. The posted speed limit on Route 7 is slightly reduced in this area from 55 mph to 50 mph, due mainly to the dense development and abundance of driveways and intersections in the immediate area. The 400-foot stretch of road has seven driveways and intersections on both sides of Route 7. Three signs appear for Pedestrian Crossing, No Passing Zone, and Falling Rock for the cliff just to the north of the area. Sight distances are adequate, but the numerous driveways give motorists a lot to look out for.

Alternatives for Safety Improvement



Consolidating the number of driveways at the former Steakhouse may be the most inexpensive and direct way to gain safer conditions in the area. The modified aerial photo above is a rendering of an alternative layout for access to the site. The layout shows that a dramatic effect may be obtained simply by not using the informal service entrance to the restaurant on Route 7, which is less than 100 ft. from the Mallery Road intersection and is opposite the Old Route 7 intersection. Since the service area is not paved, there are no curbs on Route 7, and there is already a driveway onto Mallery Road, an inexpensive and effective solution may be a simple grass planting along Route 7. Additional improvements may be to

consolidate the double front entrance into a single driveway and to add access to the service area from the main driveway, as pictured above. In order to enact these changes, the town may require some or all of them as part of permitting or appeals made to the zoning board of appeals

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in future development at the site. The town may also encourage these changes as safety and aesthetic improvements the owners may wish to enact voluntarily.

2) Mallery Road (south) and Route 7 Intersection



The intersection of Mallery Road and Route 7 is at the top of a hill immediately to the south of the large cliffs, just north of the former Mallery Road Steakhouse, and opposite the Old Route 7 intersection with Route 7. The existing conditions are shown above. The picture on the right shows the intersection as viewed by a vehicle that is traveling south, where we see visibility of Mallery Road reduced by the rock wall face of the hill to the right. The photo above also shows the intersection is located just as the two south directional lanes of traffic merge, and the speed limit is reduced to 50 mph from 55 mph. There is no stop sign or stopping line on Mallery Road as one reaches the intersection. Signs on Route 7 include warnings of pedestrian crossing, no passing, and a lane drop, which occurs at the same location as the intersection. There are no signs to warn drivers of either the Mallery Road or the Old Route 7 intersections.

Alternatives for Safety Improvements



Signs announcing the intersection should be included. Vegetation should be controlled and minimal grading be done on the sides of Mallery Road to increase the ability to see and be seen by Route 7 traffic, especially southbound traffic. Merging southbound traffic prior to the intersection, as opposed to occurring at the intersection as it currently does, may also reduce stress at the intersection by lowering the number of distractions to the drivers. These three improvements may be requested of MassHighway as part of its ongoing maintenance program. The town may wish to paint a stop line on Mallery Road and Old Route 7 to better define a stopping point for local traffic.

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3) Greylock / Roys Road and Route 7 Intersection

Existing Conditions



a) Aerial photo of Roys / Greylock Rd intersections.



b) Greylock Road intersection, from Rt. 7 looking south



c) Roys Rd intersection, from Rt. 7 looking north



d) Roys and Greylock intersections, looking south

This area includes two adjacent intersections on the east side of Route 7 slightly less than 100 ft apart with a secondary road connecting them. Greylock Road is an unpaved road leading into the Mount Greylock State Reservation, while Roys road is a paved local road with several residences. The secondary road is unnamed and does not appear on the assessor's maps, but it allows for access from Roys road to Greylock road without entering Route 7. The hilly terrain and curves reduce the posted speed limit to 50 mph.

The Greylock Road intersection (photo **b** above) appears at the base of a hill and on a curve in Route 7, which limit the ability to see northbound traffic at the intersection. The Roys Road intersection (photo **c** above) appears just south of a sharp curve in Route 7, which limits ability to see southbound traffic at the intersection. The sharp angle and the steepness of Roys Road as it enters the intersection also create a difficult situation for entering and exiting vehicles.

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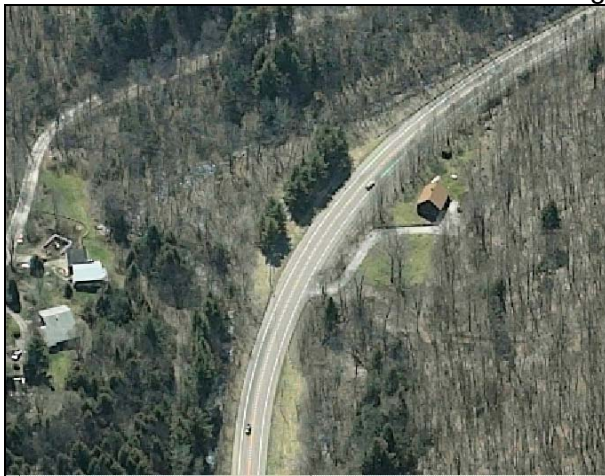


Alternatives for Safety Improvements

Vegetation to the north of Roys Road intersection, as shown in photo c, may be cut back to allow for additional visibility northward around the curve. MassHighway holds a wide right of way in this area and may be able to do this as part of normal operations. Vegetation to the south of the Greylock Rd is not as limiting as the hill slope. Therefore, signs announcing the presence of the intersections at the top of the hill may increase safety and make motorists more aware. Signs may be requested from MassHighway. Since the Greylock Rd intersection offers limited visibility south and the Roys Road intersection offers limited visibility north, it may be desirable to join the two roads at a single, more visible location at an adequate point between the two current intersections. The local Highway department may wish to coordinate efforts with MassHighway in order to enact this approach, which would involve cutting a small number of trees and a small amount of new pavement.

4) Residential Driveway on Curve 900 ft. North of Greylock Road / Route 7 Intersection

Existing Conditions



This location is a driveway that is on the inside of a sharp curve along a gradual hill. The location has a posted speed limit of 50 mph, and there are no signs. The picture above shows the existing conditions. The above picture demonstrates the lack of visibility northward from the driveway, as the vegetation blocks the view around the curve.

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Alternatives for Safety Improvements



Vegetation may be removed to allow for at least 400 feet of sight onto both lanes of Route 7. MassHighway holds a wide right of way in this area and may be able to conduct some of this clearing as part of its road maintenance program. Further clearing away from the immediate roadside may necessitate notification to the conservation commission. A sign, obtained from MassHighway, placed to the north of this driveway warning of a hidden driveway around the curve may also improve safety of this driveway.

5) White Road/Adjacent Driveways and Route 7 Intersection.

Existing Conditions



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This intersection appears on the outside of a substantial curve in Route 7 in northern New Ashford. The speed limit at the location is 50 mph. The pictures above show the existing conditions. There are signs announcing the continuing curve, but none announcing the White Road intersection. White Road is steep and prone to erosion, as shown by all the sediment on the road in the lower left hand photo above. There is an additional intersecting driveway, shown in the lower right photo.

Alternatives for Safety Improvements



Several improvements may be made to increase visibility onto Route 7 at the White Road intersection. The above picture demonstrates how re-grading the small hill and control of vegetation on the roadside to the north of White Road may increase visibility onto Route 7. It is most likely that these actions will occur along MassHighway's right of way, and could be implemented by MassHighway or by town forces with proper permitting and notification. An additional recommended option is to add signs announcing

the intersection on Route 7, which currently only announce upcoming curves. Additional visibility and clearance from vegetation should be given to the residential driveway, which enters White Road at the intersection as well.

6) Rest Area and Route 7 Intersection.



The last area of concern analyzed was the rest area in northern New Ashford. The area has a posted speed limit of 55 mph. The area appears to be intended for northbound traffic only, as signs announcing the area only appear to the south. Other signs in the area announce curves in the road.

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Recommended Alternatives

Recommendations for improving the safety of this rest area are to better define access to and from this site. For a relatively small rest area, there are several entrances and exits, none of which are labeled. Lack of definition may be confusing for motorists of both lanes, who must determine which of the four access points are intended to be an entrance and what is intended as an exit. The intended flow of traffic within the site is also not obvious. Better signage at and in advance of the site is recommended to alleviate this issue.

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Town Bylaws

The Town's Zoning Bylaws were reviewed to identify opportunities for enhanced access management of the Route 7 corridor. Traffic impacts from roadside driveways and side street intersections may be managed by controls on the type, intensity, and form of land development along the corridor. Awareness of the types of traffic different land activities generate may help set permitted uses for various zones that have less traffic-intense development. For instance, the Community Development Advisory Committee has discussed the potential for restricting fast food/drive-through restaurants in town, as they are seen as traffic intensive uses. Additionally, development standards and design guidelines may be established within Town bylaws as oversight for the form of new developments to ensure that the physical designs of new developments minimize access problems and safety concerns for the Route 7 corridor.

Development Type Controls: Typical Trip Generation vs. Permitted Land Use Types

New Ashford's Rural Business District encompasses the entire Route 7 corridor in New Ashford From Lanesboro to Williamstown. Gauging the traffic generating potential of land areas according to their allowable uses by zoning is a useful tool for both developing new land use zones, rezoning land, or simply comparing the intensity of alternative land activities. The following chart, developed by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, gives estimates of the daily traffic generated by some of the land use activities permitted and prohibited in the Rural Business District. The results show that certain uses that are currently permitted, such as fast food restaurants with drive-throughs and gas stations with convenience stores typically generate much higher vehicle trips per day than similar alternatives such as sit-down restaurants and convenience markets not attached to gas stations.

Daily (24-Hour) Traffic Estimates For Various Land Uses

Land Use Type	Typical Project Size	Typical Vehicle Trips/Day	Trips/Day Per Developed Acre	Permitted in the Business Zone?
Fast Food Restaurant w/Drive-Through	0.5 acres	1,489	2,798	Yes
Quality Restaurant	1	810	810	Yes
Motel	3	1,626	542	Yes
Convenience Mkt. (Open 15-16 hrs)	0.5	870	1,740	Yes
Gas Station w/Convenience Mkt.	0.5	1,303	1,606	Yes
General Office Building	17	2,191	129	No
General Light Industrial	27	1,399	52	Yes

Note: Typical site sizes are estimates only; trip rates may vary considerably.

Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation. (6th edition), 1997, Washington DC.

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The CDP economic development element determined that there are approximately 200 acres of land in New Ashford's Rural Business district that are without major constraints to development. The most recent road count data of Route 7 in New Ashford measured approximately 5,000 vehicles per day. The above chart shows that common land uses permitted in the district average approximately 1,250 vehicle trips per day per developed acre. With these parameters, a long-term projection of the full commercial buildout of 200 undeveloped acres in the Business District shows that up to 250,000 vehicle trips per day to the town may be added. Though this is a result that will most likely never occur, it is instructive to note the large impact that development could have upon local traffic under the current parameters.

Development Form Controls: Design Standards

Safe and coordinated access to land developments may be further enhanced through good design. Establishing driveway design standards may be implemented as voluntary measurements, as requirements of a Site Plan Review process, or as a town bylaw that requires access management techniques for all new and changes to existing sites. Access management guidelines have been implemented in several towns in Western Massachusetts, and model access management bylaws and standards are readily available at the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

The New Ashford Planning Board, in developing a Common Driveway Bylaw, has begun to implement a recommended access management technique that will minimize the number of intersections and therefore the number of vehicle conflict points along the Route 7 corridor. Additional review of local zoning has determined that the Route 7 Rural Business district may gain further benefit from implementation of driveway location and spacing standards. Proper spacing between adjacent driveways and between driveways and intersections is critical in providing adequate sight distance and safety, and effective access along an arterial such as Route 7.

Widely accepted engineering standards for adequate driveway spacing are summarized below:

Driveway Spacing Standards Based on Travel Speed

Posted Speed (MPH)	Minimum Spacing (ft)	Ideal Spacing (ft)
30	115	225
40	305	445
50	425	555
60	570	665
Source: American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). 2001		

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

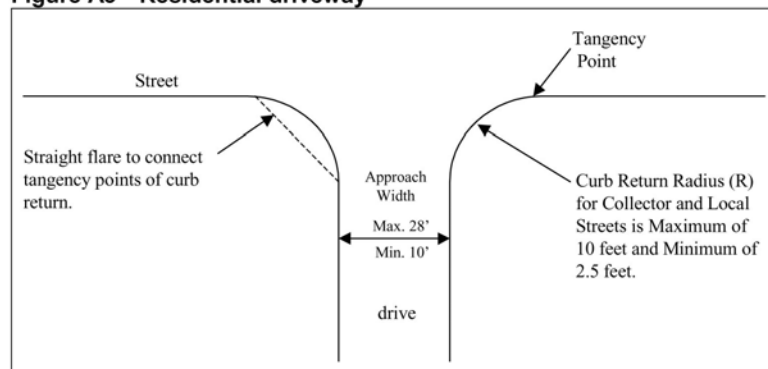
TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Sample Driveway Design Ordinance

- (d) The maximum width of residential driveway approach, shown in Figure A3 and measured at the property line, shall not exceed twenty-eight feet (28') in width, while the minimum width shall not be less than ten feet (10') in width.

Figure A3—Residential driveway



Source: "Iowa Access Management Handbook", Center for Transportation Research and Education at Iowa State University, October 2000.

Additional standards for guiding the actual design of the driveways and intersections themselves, such as the above Sample Driveway Design Ordinance, or the recommendations presented in the Access Conditions Analysis and the Site Plan review guidelines in the Economic Development section of the Community Development Plan may be collected and formalized within an Access Management Bylaw to the benefit of the town.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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New Ashford Transportation Needs Study

Introduction

The Transportation Needs Study presents a brief analysis of the existing conditions, resources, and transportation needs of people without access to or with limited access to private vehicles in New Ashford. The study begins with documentation of local transportation and transit goals collected during the Community Development Plan (CDP) process. Next, the Study presents an evaluation of existing conditions to estimate the size of the population without access to a car. The Study then outlines the existing transportation resources as seen in the BRPC "Inventory of Transportation Services." Finally, the Study presents a limited analysis of potential solutions and improvements for further use by the town or other agencies.

Local Transportation Goals and Objectives

As a rural town, New Ashford has limited access to public transit. The remoteness of the town and lack of local businesses leaves many residents dependent on cars to get to the grocery stores and doctor's offices in neighboring locations. However, fourteen percent of the respondents to the 2002 CDP survey of New Ashford residents stated that improved access to public transportation was a priority. The CDP Town forum enabled residents to clarify their concerns for public transit. At the forum, residents stated that public transportation is not viewed as an option for the town, or at least not a well-known option. Some opportunities may exist, but they are not publicized and little used. The resulting goal of the forum was to develop a more detailed picture of the existing public transportation services available to Town residents, and review opportunities to improve such services to best fit the needs of the community.

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

Census figures included in Attachment Transportation C of this report demonstrate that New Ashford residents rely overwhelmingly on private cars. Ninety-six percent (96%) of residents commute to work by either driving alone or carpooling. Accordingly, eighty-five of the town's ninety households own a vehicle. Having a vehicle is not always sufficient to meet the transportation needs of households with more than one person, for example, if the household has one vehicle and the car is at work with one person all day. Countywide, four out of every ten households having a car complain of insufficient access to the car. However, New Ashford has relatively high access to cars, as 71 of the town's 90 households reportedly had access to two or more cars per household.

The fact remains that 5 of the town's 90 households, or 6% of all households are without access to a vehicle, which is a significant number given the town's heavy dependency on private transportation and lack of options for alternative modes of travel.

Studies on access to transportation, such as "*Problems of the Carless*," (USDOT; Office of University Research, Office of the Secretary, 1976), have discovered that women and elderly are most likely to be disadvantaged by being without access to a car. New Ashford has a growing population and a growing number of older residents, which has raised the median age by over three years since the 1990 census even as the number of children in town has

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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increased. As the population shifts to include a higher percentage of older residents, there may be more people in Town with access to a vehicle but without the ability to drive themselves all of the time.

Options for Improving Transportation in New Ashford

There are several options available that may improve transportation for people of New Ashford without vehicles or with limited access to them, such as teenagers, senior citizens, families with a single car, people with low incomes, handicapped people, families with young children, and others. The recent “Northern Berkshire Community Transit Study” (BRPC, 2003) identified a range of actions New Ashford may wish to pursue to increase access in town, such as:

- Coordinating assistance for getting to medical appointments within and outside of the Berkshires
- General ride coordination for volunteer drivers and people who need rides
- Obtaining and operating a town van
- Increased education and communication about the regional transportation services available to residents of the town

Getting to Medical & Human Service Appointments

Getting to medical appointments is an issue that comes up regularly, with agencies saying there is more demand than they can meet. This is particularly a problem for regular appointments, such as dialysis. Even households with a car may find it useful to have additional options for getting to on-going treatment. This problem is compounded when people need to go to the broader regional medical centers such as Albany, Worcester, Springfield, or Boston. A related issue is getting to human service meetings (especially at night) or other important meetings.

This is a difficult need to meet. One option is to further coordinate volunteers through establishing a local Council on Aging or family support group, or a ride coordination committee as described in the following section.

Category:
Overall

Mainly Helps:
Seniors,
Handicapped

Time Frame:
Short

Project Cost:
Medium

Cost/Ride:
Medium

Increased communication and education can also help. For example, there is an array of special transportation services provided by public and non-profit health-related agencies that may not be widely known. Also, some people eligible for Medicaid transportation report not knowing about it. There is some discussion in Washington D.C. of providing transportation for people with Medicare too. Medical offices may be able to work more efficiently with existing transportation services. For example, some organizations report volunteers are more available in the morning but this isn't necessarily considered at doctors' offices when appointments are made.

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Pros

- There is a need being expressed and this may be an issue people care about enough to support
- There may be additional funding sources available

Cons

- People may not be willing to take a ride from a stranger
- Volunteers may be asked to commit to transporting one person on a regular basis
- Some offices and programs are concerned about helping coordinate rides for fear of liability
- Medical office front desk staff may feel too busy to further educate themselves on medical transportation options

Estimates

- For a person to spend two hours per week on outreach and coordination (approximately 100 hours/year) at a cost of \$25/hour would be \$2,500
- Copying & postage, especially for doctors' offices to promote resources available would be \$500
- Paying for lunch vouchers (\$5) or gas (\$5 coupons) for volunteers at a total of 10 per week would cost \$50 times 52 weeks for \$2,600. Discounts or donations might reduce this to \$2,000
- Rough cost total: \$5,000
- Rough effects: 15 additional rides per week for a year would round to an estimated number of 800 person assists

Who Might Do It

This may be done by a general volunteer coordinator or a single point of contact in the town such as the town clerk, a Council on Aging coordinator, or some other town staff or board member.

Examples/References

American Red Cross of the Berkshires-Joe Coates (413) 442-1506

Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) – Norma Powers (413) 499-9345

Transportation Association of Northern Berkshires (TANB)- Roger Brechner - Brechner@ctaa.org -(413) 664-0300

Ride Coordination

Rural towns are specially considered here because of the limited transportation options available and the level of need—people without cars in rural, mountainous areas may become dangerously isolated more quickly than in urban areas. Several ideas are relevant to rural towns, such as building upon the efficiency of people already gathering at a council on aging, or trying to further utilize existing services through a single point of contact. There are, however, two ideas of special relevance to this area: ride coordination and having a town van.

Category: Overall Mainly Helps: Rural Time Frame: Short Project Cost: Low Cost/Ride: Low

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Help coordinating rides may be useful and viable in a rural setting where there is often a strong sense of community and likelihood of people knowing each other. Particular applications would be to help local families or seniors get to the grocery, or help teenagers get to and from school after extra-curricular activities. A ride board oriented to seniors, families, or teenagers, or contacts at the school or in the towns could be established. Ride coordination or carpooling can also help with other transportation needs of the community.

Pros

- Low cost
- Potentially supports community cohesiveness by helping people who go to school or work outside the town stay somewhat linked to a local resource center
- May be the most flexible and locally acceptable approach

Cons

- People may be unwilling to accept any kind of assistance
- Liability and safety are always concerns

Estimates

- Eight bulletin boards with cards & pushpins at \$25 each = \$200
- Copies of one or two fliers to be distributed with a town mailing = \$200
- Use: at five people per week getting 2-way rides for 50 weeks per year (to account for holidays) = 500 person assists

Who Might Do It

- Town volunteer, Town staff or board member, Council on Aging, or the Parent Teacher Association

Examples/References

Regional ride-matching already available from Caravan for Commuters at 1-888-4-commute or www.commute.com.

Town Van

Rural towns have limited transportation options available, and people without cars or without access to them may become dangerously isolated more quickly than in urban areas. Fixed route bus service is not viable in a very rural setting and taxi service in the area has limited availability and high cost. Therefore, the town may find worth in evaluating dial-a-ride van service and/or having a van for various local needs, such as grocery shopping or youth recreation trips.

Obtaining a Town Van

One option for obtaining a town van is to appropriate town funds. Alternatively, the town may elect to become a BTRA member community and have the BTRA apply for a low-cost van for the town through the State's Mobility Assistance Program (MAP). The Mobility Assistance Program provides for capital assistance to public agencies for the purchase of vehicles and related equipment to be used in the provision of transportation services to residents in need. BTRA offers technical assistance and support in

Category: Transit
Mainly Helps: Everyone
Time Frame: Medium
Project Cost: Medium
Cost/Ride: High

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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obtaining a town van as well as coordinating maintenance of the vans. The town may prepare its own MAP van application, but the program is very competitive and applying through the BRTA may make for a more competitive application.

Operating a Town Van

Van coordination and operation is most commonly run by a local Council on Aging, but could be done by some other town group. New Ashford could establish a Council on Aging, or it may wish to join with Councils on Aging from neighboring towns. Council on Aging vans are allowed to be used for other purposes after the needs of elderly or handicapped people have been met. The vans can be painted so the name of the council on aging can be covered with a magnetic sign when in more general use. This could be important in terms of sensitivity to what vehicle is seen driving up to a person's home.

Pros

- A town van may be the most efficient transit solution in a rural area
- Local operation would be more successful
- Prior use in Florida, Clarksburg, Williamstown, North Adams, and Adams
- There are different types of service that can be provided; subscriptions for regular trips, reserved rides set up in advance, rides on-demand, or availability of a van for coordinated outings
- BTRA may apply for MAP vans for member communities and help and support them

Cons

- It costs money to run a van
- The town does not currently have a body, such as a Council on Aging, to operate the van
- BRTA MAP van applications require commitments for routine maintenance of the vans at BRTA
- Council on Aging vans are required to prioritize rides for seniors. BRTA will request that the vans also prioritize paratransit trips for handicapped people
- There is a growing waiting list for MAP vans

Estimates

Acquisition: In the MAP program, towns pay for 20% of acquisition costs of the vehicles, and all of the operating costs. For example, a lift-equipped van costs approximately \$40,000. Towns would provide approximately \$8,000, with the rest of the acquisition funds obtained from reimbursement grants.

Operation: On average it costs roughly \$25,000 per year for a Northern Berkshire Council on Aging (COA) to run a van. Local COAs are fully responsible for their own operating budgets and costs of MAP vans. A rough cost per passenger is on the order of \$5.

In 1995, the average cost (nationally) of running a rural transit vehicle was approximately \$27 per hour. Average cost per mile was \$2.35 (pp 42-43, TCRP Report 6, 1995)

Examples/References

Town of Florida – BRTA member community & MAP Van applicant - Jana Brule, Town Adm. – 662-2448

Williamstown Council on Aging – MAP van operators – Bryan O'Grady, COA Chairman – 458-8250

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority - Chuck MacNeil - (413) 499-2782

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Education and communication of special transportation services available to the town

Increased communication and education regarding established special transportation services available may be of benefit to local residents. The array of special transportation services provided by public and non-profit agencies (*See Attachment Transportation D*) may not be widely known. Some people may be eligible for Medicaid transportation and not be aware of it. Medical offices may be able to work more efficiently with existing transportation services, and it may be more timely and cost effective for the town to better utilize existing resources. Additionally, many existing transportation services simply need the support of additional local volunteers in order to provide transportation to a community. Education on the existing services may enable potential volunteers to support existing services of their choice while at the same time assisting with the transportation needs of the local community. Incentives for volunteering may also encourage local residents to volunteer.

Category:
Overall
Mainly Helps:
Everyone
Time Frame:
Medium
Project Cost:
Low
Cost/Ride:
N/A

Pros

- Many existing transportation services are available but not widely known
- Reinventing existing organizations may not be effective or efficient for the community
- Need for local volunteers at existing organizations may be addressed locally through outreach

Cons

- Existing regional services may not be as embraced as a locally run service
- Existing services face an ongoing need for volunteers

Estimates

- Eight bulletin boards with cards & pushpins at \$25 each=\$200
- Copies of one or two fliers to be distributed with a town mailing=\$200

Who Might Do It

The Town in coordination with BRTA, Transportation Association of Northern Berkshires (TANB), BRPC or other organization with knowledge of local transportation options.

Examples/References

Note: This has recently been put in place in Florida and Clarksburg
Berkshire Regional Transit Authority - Chuck MacNeil
67 Downing Parkway
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 499-2782

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413)442-1521

**Transportation Attachment A:
Reference Town Meeting Warrants for
Road Discontinuance and Discontinuance of Maintenance**

**Reference Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting
Town of Tyringham, MA
May 14, 2002**

Article 12: Seasonal Discontinuance of Maintenance

Town of Tyringham, Massachusetts -- Annual Town Report

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ **WARRANT FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING** ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
MAY 14, 2002 [CONTINUED]

\$395,138.00 or any other amount for support of Public Schools or take any other action in respect thereto.

Raise & Appropriate. Motion Passed. 16 students in grades K-6 and 18 students in grades 7-12. Tuition is \$4,700.00 K-6, and \$5,000.00 grades 7-12.

ARTICLE 11 - To see if the Town will vote to maintain separate Revolving Funds pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 44, Section 53E 1/2 for the following fees. Fees received by Town Officials shall be credited to the respective revolving fund and

ARTICLE 12 - To see if the Town will vote to close portions of Webster, Fenn, Brace, George Cannon and Breakneck Roads and or any other roads at certain times of the year as the Highway Superintendent and Selectmen deem necessary.

- 1.) Webster Road - From Mrs. Potter's driveway To Otis Town line.
- 2.) Fenn Road - Road to be closed after Yo Yo Ma's driveway.
- 3.) Brace Road - From Ruth Swart's driveway to Monterey town line.

Plumbing Inspector \$ 500.00
Wiring Inspector \$ 500.00
Cemetery Committee. \$ 1,000.00

Motion Passed.

ARTICLE 11a. - To see if the Town will vote to fund a revolving fund for the Police Detail account in the amount of \$5,000.00.

Free Cash - Motion Passed.

ARTICLE 12 - To see if the Town will vote to close portions of Webster, Fenn, Brace, George Cannon and Breakneck Roads and or any other roads at certain times of the year as the Highway Superintendent and Selectmen deem necessary.

- 1.) Webster Road - From Mrs. Potter's driveway To Otis Town line.
- 2.) Fenn Road - Road to be closed after Yo Yo Ma's driveway.
- 3.) Brace Road - From Ruth Swart's driveway to Monterey town line.

4.) George Canon Road - To be closed past The Music Shed to Mandlebaum's Driveway at Goose Pond.

5.) Breakneck Road - To be closed at Bridge to Jerusalem Road.

Motion Passed.

ARTICLE 13 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or otherwise provide the sum of \$22,000.00 or any other amount for the maintenance of Town machinery.

4.) George Canon Road - To be closed past The Music Shed to Mandlebaum's Driveway at Goose Pond.

5.) Breakneck Road - To be closed at Bridge to Jerusalem Road.

Motion Passed.

and appropriate or otherwise provide the sum of \$300.00 to establish a gifts and flowers account or take any other action in respect thereto.

Raise & Appropriate - Motion Passed.

ARTICLE 16 - To see if the Town will vote the "Dog License Refund" form estimated receipts to the Library account. The total amount is \$418.59.

Motion Passed.

ARTICLE 17 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or otherwise provide the sum of \$224.94 or any other amount for the payment of the Town's share of Health Insurance for Dog Officer/Animal Inspector.

Raise & Appropriate - Motion Passed.

ARTICLE 18 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or otherwise provide the sum of \$6,000.00 or any other amount for the payment of a Financial Audit as mandated by Federal Government.

Free Cash - Motion Passed.

ARTICLE 19 - To see if the town will vote, pursuant to the provisions of Section 4A of Chapter 40 of the Massachusetts General Laws, to authorize the Selectmen to enter into an inter-municipal agreement with other cities, town and political subdivisions for the group purchasing of supplies, commodities and services that the Town is

**Reference Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting
Town of Richmond, MA
May 28, 2003**

**Article 18: Road Discontinuance
Article 19: Official Map Adoption**

159

Noting there was a quorum, the Moderator, Douglas Chapman, opened the meeting at 7:31 PM and the Town Clerk, Edna Crewdson, read the warrant. The head table was introduced as was the Town Counsel, Sally Bell. Instructions as to the procedure for the meeting was given and the Moderator asked all non registered voters to identify themselves.

Total voters present: 167
Total voters – active 1070
inactive 82

WARRANT FOR THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Berkshire, ss

To any of the Constables of the Town of Richmond in said County, Greetings:

In the name of said Commonwealth, you are hereby directed to notify and warn the inhabitants of the Town of Richmond qualified to vote in Town affairs to meet in the Consolidated School of said Richmond on May 28, 2003, at 7:30 PM, and then and there to act upon the following:

Article 1- To hear and act upon the reports of the Town Officers and Committees and give authority and instruction in relation thereto. *The voters approved this article at 7:37 PM.*

Article 2- To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to determine the manner of repairing the highways and caring for the cemeteries for the year. (Approved by the Finance Committee) *Approved by voters at 7:38 PM.*

Article 3- To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate such sums of money as shall be deemed necessary for the upkeep and repair of the buildings, equipment, highways and cemeteries and for all other charges and expenses of the Town for the year and to set the salaries and compensation of all elected officers of the Town as provided by Section 108 of Chapter 41 of the General Laws. (Approved by the Finance Committee)

Article 18- To see if the Town will vote to discontinue the following roads:

ROAD #	ROAD NAME/DESCRIPTION
1	Foster Drive, so called, located at the old landfill.
2	Unnamed road extending 0.617 miles between the northwest end of Osceola Rd. Extension and the southeast end of Anthony Rd.
3	Unnamed road extending 0.280 miles between the northwest end of Anthony Rd. and the northeast quarter of Orchard Circle.
4	Unnamed road extending 0.312 miles between the northern end of Orchard Circle and the northern end of Dublin Rd.

Approved by voters at 9:03 PM.

Article 19- To see if the Town will vote to adopt an Official Map in accordance with the provisions of Section 81E of Chapter 41 of the General Laws. The map, dated May 28, 2003, approved by the Planning Board, entitled "Official Map, Town of Richmond, Massachusetts" by Mark Maloy and Melissa Jette of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, reflects the action taken under Article 18 (above) and is on file with the Town Clerk. *The voters approved this article at 9:16 PM.*

5

Reference Warrant for Official Map Adoption Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting Town of Sudbury, MA 1970

Article 36: Official Map Adoption

CONTROL COMMITTEE OF THE TOWN TO CO-ORDINATE, INITIATE AND STIMULATE ACTION ON PROGRAMS TO PREVENT DRUG ABUSE; AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED THAT SUCH COMMITTEE KEEP INFORMED ON THE PROGRAMS OF ALL DRUG ACTION COMMITTEES, DEPARTMENTS AND GROUPS WITHIN THE TOWN AND REPORT ON PROGRESS AT REGULAR INTERVALS THROUGH THE TOWN FATHERS AND NEWSPAPERS DISTRIBUTED IN THE TOWN.

Article 34: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 40A, Section 8, and all amendments thereto, which provides, in essence, that no proposed ordinance or by-law making a change in any existing zoning ordinance or by-law which has been unfavorably acted upon by a Town Meeting shall be considered on its merits by the Town Meeting within two years after the date of such unfavorable action unless the adoption of such proposed ordinance or by-law is recommended in the final report of the Planning Board required by Chapter 40A, Section 6, or act on anything relative thereto.

Submitted by the Planning Board and Committee on Town Administration.

Mr. Richard Davison moved for the Planning Board that the Town accept the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 40A, Section 8 and all amendments thereto.

Planning Board Report: (Mr. Richard Davison) Following the public hearings held on February 25, 1970, the Planning Board agreed to continue recommending passage of this article. Mr. Davison added that the report of the Committee on Town Administration as printed in the warrant concisely covers the reason for this article.

Committee on Town Administration Report: By accepting General Laws Chapter 40A, Section 8, the Town would protect itself from having to consider previously defeated zoning by-law amendments within two years after their defeat unless the Planning Board submits a report recommending their adoption. As the matters that must be considered by the Town at its Annual Meeting increase in quantity and complexity, the Committee on Town Administration feels that it is advantageous to provide for some limitation on reconsidering zoning by-law amendments which the Planning Board—which is the elective body most concerned with the zoning by-law—does not support.

After discussion, the Planning Board's motion was defeated.

No further action was taken under this article.

Article 35: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 40A, Section 20, and all amendments thereto, so that no appeal or petition for a variance and no application for a special exemption which has been unfavorably acted upon by the Board of Appeals shall be reconsidered on its merits within two years after the date of such unfavorable action except with the consent of all but one of the members of the Planning Board, or act on anything relative thereto.

Submitted by the Planning Board.

Mr. Richard Brooks moved for the Planning Board that the Town accept the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 40A, Section 20 and all amendments thereto.

Planning Board Report: (Mr. Richard Brooks) The Planning Board recommends adoption of this article. At the public hearing no opposition was voted. The purpose of this article is to take advantage of the state enabling legislation which limits the inefficient repetitive appeals to zoning board of appeals for two years separation.

After discussion, the Planning Board's motion was defeated.

No further action was taken under this article.

Article 36: To see if the Town will vote to adopt an official map in accordance with the provisions of Section 81E of Chapter 41 of the General Laws, a copy of which, dated: January 1970, approved the Planning Board, entitled: "Official Map of the Town of Sudbury", by George D. White, Town Engineer, is on file in the Town Clerk's office, or act on anything relative thereto.

Submitted by the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board.

Board of Selectmen Report: (Mr. Martin Doyle) The town map under Section 81E entitles any city or town to record a map showing the public ways, parks and any other private ways which they are entitled to. A town map may seem to be a rather inconsequential thing. However, it means that when we register a road or a way within the Town, we also have to have a detail registered with the Town Clerk which shows where the layout of drains, sewers, gas mains and electric mains are within that public way. It entails a certain amount of work on the part of the Town Engineer. As you are aware, the Town Engineer reports to the Board of Selectmen.

This year we have appropriated the sum of \$5,000 towards the Town Engineer's account for starting this work. Over the next five to ten years it will cost the Town that amount also. However, several years ago when Willis Road became an article for action by the Town Meeting as to whether it should be adopted by the Town, it cost the Town a certain amount of money to determine whether Willis Road was a town way or not.

The intent of this article is to insure that town ways are properly delineated, that we do not enter into arguments with builders and developers in the future as to whether or not a road is a town way, and that we have a proper record of what is laid within the town way to prevent confusion.

There are at present 299 streets in Sudbury. 209 of these appear on the Official Town Map. The 299 streets include those in proposed subdivisions. However, even in a matter of accounting for 209 streets there is room for confusion and we should have a proper record of these. We recommend that you vote for this article.

Planning Board Report: (Mr. Richard Brooks) The Planning Board favors adoption of this article which will settle for all time which are or are not to be considered public ways in the Town of Sudbury.

Finance Committee Report: The Finance Committee agrees with the sponsors of this article, that an official map of Sudbury, with well delimited street boundaries, is necessary. The Town Engineer's budget has \$5,000 included for subcontract survey services, the major portion of which is for this project.

Highway Commission Report: (Mr. Richard Duggan) The Highway Commission is also in favor of this article, but possibly for a slightly different reason. The work that will be done on the Official Town Map will help the Highway Department get ahead in the engineering it needs to lay out the roads that have to be rebuilt. We will not run into the problem yearly of having just one road to work on. We should always have two or three ahead of us.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED: THAT THE TOWN ADOPT AS THE OFFICIAL MAP OF THE TOWN OF SUDBURY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 81E OF CHAPTER 41 OF THE GENERAL LAWS THE MAP DATED JANUARY 1970 APPROVED BY THE PLANNING BOARD, ENTITLED "OFFICIAL MAP OF THE TOWN OF SUDBURY," BY GEORGE D. WHITE, TOWN ENGINEER, A COPY OF WHICH IS ON FILE IN THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE WITH SAID MAP INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

Article 37: To see if the Town will vote to amend its zoning by-law to change from residential zone B2 to a Limited Business District, the following described property:

Beginning at a point on the south side of the Boston Post Road at the junction of the westerly side of Raymond Road.

**Reference Warrant for Road Discontinuance
Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting
Town of Warwick, MA
May 9, 1988**

Article 17: Road Discontinuance

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ARTICLE 12: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Franklin County Technical School District to accept an Equal Educational Opportunity Grant (EEOG) from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the amount of \$13,929.00, in additional educational aid for fiscal year 1989.

ARTICLE 13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, appropriate from free cash, transfer, borrow or otherwise provide the sum of \$10,000.00 for the purpose of widening, excavating, installing drainage and gravel, and constructing a cul-de-sac turnaround on Hastings Pond Road, a distance of .35 miles, to fund improvements to the road accepted by the Town under Article #3 of the November 9, 1987 Special Town Meeting.

ARTICLE 14: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40A:4G, which raises the limit of expenditures not requiring public bidding from \$2,000.00 to \$4,000.00.

ARTICLE 15: To see if the Town will vote to rescind Article #9 of the May 11, 1987 Annual Town Meeting, thereby retaining \$20,000.00 in the Capital Stabilization Fund.

ARTICLE 16: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, appropriate from free cash, transfer, borrow or otherwise provide the sum of \$6,475.00 (\$3,145.00 tuition, \$3,330.00 transportation) for the Fiscal Year 1988 Warwick School Budget to cover the unanticipated costs of a special needs student.

ARTICLE ~~14~~¹⁷: To see if the Town will vote to discontinue all public roads in Warwick except those on the attached list of Public Ways

ARTICLE 18: To see if the Selectmen will petition the Franklin County Commissioners regarding the following County roads;

1. to accept a section of Route 78 between Hotel Road and Athol Road.
2. for discontinuance of 1829 layout of Highway #11 (5th Massachusetts Turnpike) westerly from the White Road to end (thought to be the southwest corner of the Spooner house; a distance of about 3,000 feet, more or less).
3. for discontinuance of Highway #1, laid out in 1761, Record Book 0, Page 44, from the Northfield Town Line, perhaps along a portion of the White Road, past Balancing Rock and the Old Fort to its end, and retaining as a town road ANY portions of the White Road, or other town roads with the same layout.
4. for discontinuance of a portion of Highway #2, laid out in 1774, Book 0, Page 106 (part of which may be known as Round the Mountain Trail or as Old Northfield Road) from its intersection with the present Northfield Road at Wendell Road to the Northfield Town Line, retaining any portion of Flower Hill Road which has the same layout, as a town road.
5. for discontinuance of Highway #6, laid out in 1822, Book I, Page 194, from the last discontinuance of Spooner Road, easterly to the White Road, a distance of about 2,000 feet, more or less; also, the portion from Northfield Road westerly and northerly across Leland Hill Road to the 1774 layout of the Northfield Road.
6. for discontinuance of a portion of Highway #2, laid out in 1774, Book 0, Page 106, westerly from Gale Road to the present Athol Road, also known as Pedeman Hill.
7. for discontinuance of Brush Valley Road (known on County records as Dubovik Road) from Orange Road to its end.
8. for a map of County roads in Warwick, color coded, with County number and layout date, overlayed on USGS Topographical sheets, and a second map showing discontinued County roads in the same form as the first map, but adding the date of discontinuance.

Reference Warrant for Road Discontinuance Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting Town of Warwick, MA May 9, 1988

ARTICLE 19: To see if the Town will take action regarding the following Town roads, with each road a separate action:

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Road #	Name	Action Requested
1	Hastings Heights	change mileage from 1.55 to 1.84 miles
3	Royalston	discontinue from Tully Brook Road to Reil's driveway.
7	Wendell	change description from "to Orange Road" to "to intersection of Revere Hill Road". Add a new road named "Revere Hill": "from Orange Road to intersection of Wendell Road and Northfield Road, 0.25 mile" and change mileage of Wendell Road from 5.6 to 5.35 miles.
9	Store	change name to Northfield Road and add 0.55 mile.
10	Soderman	discontinue
13	Shaw Place	change mileage from 0.15 to 0.12 mile.
14	Wilson	discontinue the center portion from 1,000 feet southeasterly of the intersection of Flagg and Chestnut Hill at pole #10-733/5 about 50 feet past River's driveway, to the southeast side of Wilson Brook (which is about 1,100 feet northwesterly of intersection with Wendell Road), and change the name of East Wilson Road and West Wilson Road.
15	Flagg	discontinue
17	Shepardson	discontinue portion north of White Road (which is also known as Spooner Road), change mileage from 2.45 to 1.69 miles and change description from "to Northfield Road" to "to White Road".
18	Shepardson Place	change description from "to" to "toward".
19	White	change mileage from 2.35 to 2.8 miles
22	Mt. Grace Avenue	change description from "from Store Road" to "from Orange Road across Northfield Road" (Store Road) and change mileage to 0.15 mile.
23	Leland Hill	change mileage from 0.15 to 0.19 miles
26	Hastings	change name from "Hastings" to "Hastings Pond"
28	Tully Brook	discontinue
32	Smith Road	change mileage from 0.19 to 0.16 miles
33	Whipple Place	discontinue
34	Robbins	change mileage from 0.80 to 0.55 miles
35	Rum Brook	discontinue the center portion, starting 1,000 feet westerly from Richmond Road at the top of a knoll just westerly of Black Brook to a point 1,400 feet easterly from Old Winchester Road, meaning to be the west bank of Rum Brook, and changing the name to East Rum Brook Road and West Rum Brook Road, respectively.
36	Sevens Place	change description from "to" to "toward".
40	Beech Hill	change Description from "Thompson's" to "Doubleday's".

Article 19: Road Discontinuance/Alteration

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Road #	Name	Action Requested
43	South Holden Road	discontinue portion from 10 feet east of Sammy Lane to end and change description from "to Holden place" to "to Sammy Lane", a distance of 0.22 mile.
43	North Holden Road	change mileage from 0.15 to 0.12 mile.
44	Wheeler	discontinue 0.06 mile and change from "westerly loop off Orange Road" to "northerly off Orange Road to Dead End".
45	Paul	change description from "to" to "toward"
46	Pine	change description from "from Shepardson Road to Wilson Road" to "from Wendell Road to dead end".

ARTICLE 20: To see if the Town will vote to establish a revolving fund for self-supporting services of the Town Forestry Committee, as authorized by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44:53D, and further, to raise and appropriate, appropriate from free cash, transfer or otherwise provide the sum of \$500.00 to establish this fund.

ARTICLE 21: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44:57, allowing the Treasurer, on behalf of the Town to contract with an employee to defer a portion of that employee's compensation.

ARTICLE 22: To see if the Town will vote to reappropriate \$21,000.00 of unused Revenue Sharing Funds to design and construct a fire escape for the Town Hall.

And you are directed to serve this Warrant, by posting up attested copies thereof at the Town Hall and the Community Store in said Town, 7 days at least before the time of holding said meeting.

HEREOF FAIL NOT, and make due return of this Warrant, with your doings thereon, to the Town Clerk, at the time and place of meeting, as aforesaid.

Given under our hands this 2nd day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and eighty-eight.

Jon M. Cooke)
J. David Young) Selectmen of Warwick
Mickey Williamson)

A true copy Attest: Rodney F. Whipple, Constable

Franklin, ss.

PURSUANT TO THE WITHIN WARRANT, I have notified and warned the inhabitants of the Town of Warwick May 2, 1988 by posting up attested copies of the same at the Town Hall and the Community Store 7 days before the date of the meeting, as within directed.

Rodney F. Whipple, Constable of Warwick

Reference Warrant for Road Discontinuance

Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting

Town of Warwick, MA

May 9, 1988

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PUBLIC ROADS--(as referenced in Article #17, Annual Town Meeting May 9, 1988

1. Hastings Heights Road: from Athol Road to Orange Town Line 1.55 miles
2. Athol Road: from Orange Road to Orange Town Line 3.55 miles
3. Royalston Road: from Athol Road to 1200 feet east of Chase Road 0.55 mile. Also, easterly from Tully Brook Road to Reil's driveway 0.40 mile.
4. Winchester Road (Route 78): from the end of Orange Road at Warwick Center to State Line (NH) 3.15 miles
5. Orange Road (Route 78): from end of Winchester Road at Warwick Center to Orange Town Line 5.00 miles
6. Hockanum Road: from Orange Road to Wendell Road 0.80 mile
7. Wendell Road: from Orange Town Line to Orange Road 5.60 miles
8. Northfield Road: from Northfield Town Line to junction of Wendell Road 4.00 miles
9. Store Road: from Wendell Road to junction of Orange and Winchester Roads at Warwick Center 0.45 mile
10. Soderman Road: from White Road to Soderman place 0.25 mile
11. Quarry Road: from Wendell Road to Northfield Town Line 1.55 miles
12. Omitted
13. Shaw Place Road: from Wendell Road westerly to Shaw place 0.15 mile
14. Wilson Road: from Wendell Road to junction of Flagg and Chestnut Hill Roads 0.85 mile
15. Flagg Road: from junction of Chestnut Hill and Wilson Roads westerly and southerly to end at woods 0.35 mile
16. Chestnut Hill Road: from junction of Flagg and Wilson Roads to Wendell Road 1.05 miles
17. Shepardson Road: from Wendell Road to Northfield Road 2.45 miles
18. Shepardson Place Road: from Shepardson Road westerly to old house 0.25 mile
19. White Road: from Northfield Road by southerly loop back to Northfield Road 2.35 miles
20. Kirk Road: from Orange Road easterly to Kirk place 0.05 mile
21. Omitted
22. Mount Grace Avenue: from Store Road to old Cook house 0.05 mile
23. Leland Hill Road: from Northfield Road to Flower Hill Road 0.15 mile
24. Flower Hill Road: from Northfield Road to Winchester Road 2.35 miles
25. Buzzell Place Road: from Flower Hill Road westerly to Buzzell house 0.05 mile
26. Hastings Road: from Orange Road to Cadwell's driveway 1.10 mile
27. Hotel Road: from junction of Orange and Winchester Roads to Athol Road 0.05 mile
28. Tully Brook Road: from Athol Road to Royalston Road 1.00 mile
29. Omitted
30. Chase Road: from Royalston Road to Athol Road 0.55 mile

List of Roads Referred to in Article 17

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31. Richmond Road: from Athol Road to State Line (NH) 2.80 miles
32. Smith Road: (re-opened 3/31/75) 1,000 feet from Richmond Road 0.19 mile
33. Whipple Place Road: from Richmond Road westerly to Whipple place 0.05 mile
34. Robbins Road: from Old Winchester Road to Winchester Road 0.80 mile
35. Old Winchester Road: from Athol Road to State Line (NH) 2.85 miles
36. Stevens Place Road: from Old Winchester Road easterly to Stevens Place 0.15 mile
37. Rum Brook Road: from Richmond Road to Old Winchester Road 0.75 mile
38. Gale Road: from Athol Road to Orange Town Line 2.55 miles
39. Omitted
40. Beech Hill Road: from Gale Road southerly to Thompson place 1.10 mile
41. Brush Valley Road: from Beech Hill Road to Orange Road 1.25 miles
42. Bliss Hill Road: from Orange Town Line to Royalston Town Line 0.20 mile
43. South Holden Road: from Wendell Road easterly to Holden place 0.35 mile - North Holden Road: from Orange Road westerly to house 0.15 mile
44. Wheeler Road: westerly loop off Orange Road 0.20 mile
45. Paul Road: from Orange Road easterly to house and buildings 0.10 mile
46. Pine Street: from Shepardson Road to Wilson Road 0.18 mile
47. Garage Road: from Winchester Road to Town Garage 0.40 mile
48. Rockwood Road: from Hastings Road to Orange Road 0.10 mile

REPORT OF THE ACTION TAKEN ON THE ARTICLES IN THE WARRANT FOR THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING May 9, 1988

Prior to the commencement of the Annual Town Meeting, a brief ceremony was conducted by the Moderator, Helen E. Whipple, commemorating the first town meeting held in Warwick on this same date 225 years ago, May 9, 1763. The Annual Town Meeting for May 9, 1988 was called to order by the Moderator. The following action was taken on the Articles in the warrant by the 97 voters present:

ARTICLE 1: VOTED: To accept the reports of Town Officers and Committees.

ARTICLE 2: VOTED: to authorize the Town Treasurer with the approval of the Selectmen, to borrow money from time to time in anticipation of the revenue of the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1988, in accordance with the General Laws Chapter 44;4, and to issue a note or notes therefore, payable within one year, and to renew any note or notes as may be given for a period of less than one year, in accordance with the General Laws Chapter 44;17.

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Attachment Transportation B: Legal Status of Roads and Official Maps

What is a Legal Status of Roads Map?	What is an Official Map?
A map showing the names, locations, distances, maintenance and liability responsibilities, and legal status or ownership of all roads in a Town. This is an unofficial, advisory document with no legal authority under Massachusetts General Laws.	A map showing the accepted names, locations, distances, maintenance and liability responsibilities, and legal status or ownership of all roads and parks in a Town. This is a formal document, accepted by Town Meeting vote, with legal authority under Massachusetts General Laws Chap 41, Sec. 81E-I.

The procedures for creating a Legal Status of Roads Map and an Official Map are very similar, except that Official Maps require legislative action, namely adoption of the map by Town Meeting vote. The research process for either kind of map can be involved, requiring investigation of Town and County records as well as extensive public input and feedback. In the end, one thing will distinguish the two kinds of maps: a Legal Status of Roads map is, despite its name, not a legal document under Massachusetts General Laws, whereas an adopted Official Map is.

Why Pursue Status of Roads or Official Maps?

Legal Status of Roads Maps can help a municipality identify and understand the potential problems or inconsistencies in legal, geographical or historical records regarding its roads. The map will display all roads and attempt to specify the legal status or possible statuses of roads in question. It will, however, do nothing to officially establish legal road status or resolve inconsistent records. A Legal Status of Roads Map is thus not as powerful a document as an Official Map. Official Maps *do* establish legal road statuses and resolve inconsistent records. While Official Maps have yet to be extensively tested in the Massachusetts courts, they can provide a critical tool in a municipality's land use control and legal planning arsenal. In the one case where an Official Map was challenged in a Massachusetts court over an issue of land development (*Warwick v. Rivers*, 1994), the court ruled in favor of the municipality based on its Official Map.

The municipalities in Massachusetts with Official Maps on file with the Department of Housing and Community Development are: Burlington, Georgetown, Northboro, Sudbury, Warwick, Weston, Wilmington and Worcester. The BRPC has obtained copies of a number of these Official Maps for use as models. As of May 2003, the Town of Richmond became the first Berkshire municipality to adopt an Official Map, pending Town Meeting vote later this month. The Towns of Alford, Florida, Peru and Tyringham have Official Maps as transportation items in their CDP scopes of work, with Hinsdale also expressing an interest in pursuing an Official Map. The Towns of Dalton, Hancock and New Ashford have requested Status of Roads maps as part of their CDP transportation elements. The BRPC is in the process of producing these documents.

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Pros and Cons

The following is a chart of advantages and disadvantages for municipalities considering a Legal Status of Roads Map.

Legal Status of Roads Map

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Provides a single visual display of legal status or questions of legal status (ownership, maintenance and liability responsibilities) of roads.	A significant amount of effort and research are required to develop an accurate and meaningful Legal Status of Roads Map.
Does not require legislative action, public hearings, or Town Meeting adoption	Not a formal legal document with authority in cases of land use control or legal liability
Deals only with roads	Does not deal with parks
Shows road distances, road layouts or locations, functional classes, other road characteristics	Records may not agree on road characteristics; map will not settle disputes

The following is a chart of advantages and disadvantages for municipalities considering an Official Map.

Official Map

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Provides a tool for local land use control, particularly as related to ANR, subdivision and strip development.	A significant amount of effort and research are required to develop an accurate and meaningful Official Map.
Provides a formal graphic depiction of locally recognized ways and parks.	The map must be amended & updated each time a new way is added, discontinued or modified.
Identifies ownership of all ways within a municipality.	To be most effective, an Official Map needs to be followed up with corollary actions such as the discontinuance of roads and local zoning by-laws.
Establishes official road distances and functional classes, road and park layouts or locations, other characteristics	Requires updating if road and park characteristics change

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BRPC Process for CDP Legal Status of Roads/Official Map Projects

1. Ask Town for its own official list of roads and ways and any relevant documentation.
2. Print out an orthomap (a large-scale aerial photo) of the Town, with a GIS overlay of roads and ways cataloged by administrative status (e.g. MassHighway, Town, Private, Unknown) in MassHighway's 2001 Road Inventory File (RIF). Provide a draft of this orthomap to the Town planning or select board for feedback on status of roads and parks shown and not shown.
3. Digitally scan the 1988 County Engineering Map (the last available revision) to make a blown-up version of the Town, and then identify and research the map's Book and Page citations from the County Commissioners' records (available at the Registry of Deeds in Pittsfield, MA) for roads marked as "abandoned for use," "discontinued by vote," or otherwise altered in any way.
4. Draft a status of roads or Official Map report, documenting Town, MassHighway RIF, County Engineering, County Commissioner and road atlas (1998 *Official Arrow Street Atlas for Western Massachusetts*) records of roads and ways, identifying any inconsistencies in road names, distances, locations and legal status.
5. Meet with Town's Community Development Advisory Committee to discuss the BRPC Official Map draft report, orthomap questions and County Commissioners' records (if any)
6. Decide with the Town whether any roads or ways require discontinuance by Town Meeting vote (under M.G.L. Chap 82, Sec. 21), *discontinuance of maintenance* by Select Board (M.G.L. Chap 82, Sec. 32A), a change of status from public way to "private statutory way" by Select Board and Town Meeting vote (M.G.L. Chap 82, Sec. 21), or alteration or addition by Select Board. Note that each of these actions is a separate local action, independent of the adoption of an Official Map (Chap 41, Sec. 81 E-I).

Pursuing these actions is by BRPC recommendation only. In theory, Official Map adoption will establish the legal status of ways as shown, without separate actions on roads in question. These following actions will make certain that the status of roads in question is clarified and on record before Official Map adoption.

Discontinuance by Town Meeting vote under M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 21 completely ends the public right of passage along a road or way: the Town ends all legal responsibility for the road's maintenance and its liability for use. In most cases, the discontinued road can no longer serve as frontage or access for development of land abutting the discontinued road, including strip or frontage development and Approval Not Required (ANR) development under the Subdivision Control Law (Chapter 41, Sec 81 K-81GG). Depending on the Town's zoning by-laws and subdivision regulations, new development can only occur along land abutting a discontinued road via the full subdivision approval process, which can often be lengthy and expensive. Discontinuance is thus an important tool in 1) legal responsibility and liability and 2) growth management.

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Discontinuance of maintenance under M.G.L. Chap 82, Sec. 32A is a relatively new law (approved May 27, 1983) and has yet to be extensively interpreted by the courts. BRPC's present understanding is that this action results in the cessation of the Town's responsibility for maintenance and liability for use of the road (so long as the road is adequately posted as not maintained), but the *road remains a public way with a public right of passage, and with the potential for strip and ANR development*. Discontinuance of maintenance in Section 32A is a Select Board action intended for roads that have become "abandoned and unused for ordinary travel and that the common convenience and necessity no longer requires said town way ...to be maintained in a condition reasonably safe and convenient for travel...."

Statutory private ways are actually public roads, with public right of passage, but no responsibility by the Town for maintenance. The abutters provide maintenance. This is a good option for the Board of Selectmen if it is unclear that the road in question meets the "unused for ordinary travel" requirements of Sec. 32A but the Town wants to end maintenance and legal liability obligations for the road. Towns can re-institute maintenance along a statutory private way, or along part of one, by town ballot vote or by town meeting by-law. In practice, the Select Board can recommend discontinuing the road in question by Town Meeting vote, and then lay it out as a statutory private way and vote to accept it as such at the same Town Meeting. According to a Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling (*Casagrande v. Town of Harvard*, 1979), statutory private ways are not considered sufficient for public access under the Subdivision Control Act, and therefore cannot be used as frontage for ANR lots or strip development. It is up to local interpretation of Town zoning and subdivision regulations whether statutory private ways meet the public access requirements for the full subdivision approval process. In some cases, statutory private ways may have to be laid out again and accepted at Town Meeting as full-fledged Town roads, with public right of passage *and* maintenance.

NOTE: Towns can re-establish maintenance of a statutory private way or a portion of one by town ballot vote (M.G.L. Chap 40, Sec. 6D) or by a Town-wide by-law (M.G.L. Chap 40, Sec. 6N).

Laying out or altering ways is prescribed by M.G.L. Chap 82, Sec. 21. A Select Board can add or alter roads, either public with maintenance or private without, that may not appear on any map or that may have been discontinued or discontinued for maintenance but that the Town now requires for "ordinary travel."

7. Draw up a draft Official Map showing all accepted public and private ways and parks, with a key and table of roads as well as a chart of official road distances on the back of the map.
8. Draft official map article language for Town Meeting warrant and schedule, announce and hold all necessary public hearings or comment periods for alterations to road status (where applicable).

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9. Vote at Town Meeting to alter any roads in question and then, in a separate action, vote on the Official Map, showing all accepted parks and road locations, distances and names. Official Map adoption and amendments pass by simple majority vote.
10. Submit the final Official Map to the Registry of Deeds and to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), as stipulated in M.G.L. Chap. 41, Sec. 81E-I. The state requests that, for the sake of accuracy and ease of updating, official maps be provided in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) format.
11. SUBSEQUENT CHANGES to the Official Map (M.G.L. Chap 41, Sec. 81F), *except plans approved under the Subdivision Control Law*, must be adopted by Town Meeting with two additional requirements:
 - ❑ The select board must hold a public hearing, after at least 10 days official advertisement and notice to abutters, prior to any vote on the action. The planning board may modify or remove any way, "which is not a public way," without a Town Meeting vote, so long as the amendment is uncontested at the public hearing. In the event the amendment is contested, special procedures are required as outlined in M.G.L. Chap 41, Sec. 81F.
 - ❑ A majority vote at Town Meeting is required for amendment of public ways or parks shown on the map or for addition of ways or parks to the map. Variances to plans approved by the Planning Board require a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting.

An approved subdivision plan is to be added to an Official Map as soon as the plan's certificate of approval is recorded. No Town Meeting vote is required to add the roads or ways in the plan to the Official Map. (M.G.L. Chap 41, Sec. 81E)

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TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Attachment Transportation C: Existing Transportation-Related Data

Gathered & Analyzed to Better Focus Transportation Ideas

Historic and Current Population Counts – 1990 and 2000

Population in the county is not changing uniformly. In general, the population of rural areas is increasing while the urban centers are losing population. New Ashford's population gain was the highest percentage in the region, but is actually a small number of people.

Community	1990	2000	1990-2000 % Change
New Ashford	192	247	29%
Northern Berkshires	41,462	38,629	-7%
Berkshire County	139,352	134,953	-3%

Resident Births 1990 and 1997

Births are down in New Ashford, in all North Berkshire Communities and also in the County.

Community	1990	1997	1990-1997 % Change
New Ashford	7	2	-71%
Northern Berkshires	496	378	-24%
Berkshire County	1,786	1,351	-24%

Population by Age 2000

Over 30% of the population of New Ashford is under the age of 15 or over age 65. Countywide, there is roughly an even split between people whose transportation options may be limited by youth or advancing age. New Ashford has a higher percentage of transportation-limited youth than the County.

Community	<15	>65	Total
New Ashford	52	23	247
Northern Berkshires	6583	7103	38,629
Berkshire County	24,455	24,223	134,953

Children Attending Public School by Residence

Though some New Ashford children may attend schools in other communities, the data below gives a sense of changing demand and general need for transportation. The increase in demand in New Ashford was greater than that of the northern Berkshires or the county.

Community	1990	1997	1990-1997 % Change
New Ashford	24	29	21%
Northern Berkshires	5,603	5,461	-3%
Berkshire County	19,579	19,878	2%

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Population Densities per Square Mile

New Ashford is a rural town with limited population densities, which limit the areas ability to maintain viable fixed-route transportation service.

Community	Land Area (square miles)	1990 Pop. / sq. mi.	1997 Pop. / sq. mi.
New Ashford	14	14	18
Northern Berkshires	205	217	202
Berkshire County	946	150	150

Commuting To Work

The majority of residents in New Ashford and the County commute to work by car.

Community	Workers 16 years and over	Car, truck, or van - - drove alone	Car, truck, or van - - carpooled	Public transportation (including taxicab)	Walked	Other means	Worked at home	Mean travel time to work (minutes)
New Ashford	138	117	15	0	2	0	4	19.8
		85%	11%	0%	1%	0%	3%	
Berkshire County	64,058	50,702	6,213	938	3,392	493	2,320	19.2
		79%	10%	1%	5%	1%	4%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Vehicles Available Per Household

New Ashford has a much higher number of vehicles available per household than the Bekrshire County average. 6 % of households in New Ashford have no car.

Community	None	1	2	3 or more
New Ashford	5	14	51	20
	6%	16%	57%	22%
Berkshire County	6,140	22,302	20,879	6,685
	11%	40%	37%	12%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

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Attachment Transportation D: Transportation Services Available to New Ashford Residents

(Excerpted from *The User-Friendly Guide to Northern Berkshire Transportation Services*, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, October 2001.)

Index of Services

American Cab Co.
American Cancer Society
American Red Cross
Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC)
Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority (BRTA)
Berkshire Works
Bonanza Bus Lines
CARAVAN for Commuters
County Ambulance, Inc.
County Rainbow Taxi, Inc.
Elder Services of Berkshire County
Lenox Taxi and Limousine
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission- North Adams
MassHealth Transportation Program (Medicaid Transportation)
North Adams Ambulance Service
Transport the People, Inc.
VA Van Services
Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.
Veteran's Taxi
Village Ambulance Service

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Detail of Transportation Services

American Cab Co.

420 Curran Memorial Highway
North Adams, MA 01247
(413) 662-2000
7 Days, 6 am – 1 am
Areas Served: all of Berkshire County
Clientele: able bodied people
Criteria: none
Fare: call for fares
Additional Info: They accept BRTA taxi tickets.
They also operate a service to airports.

American Cancer Society

788 South Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 445-0018
Monday-Friday: 9 am – 5 pm
Areas Served: all of Berkshire County
Clientele: able-bodied elderly and non-elderly
Criteria: cancer-related appointments
Fare: free

American Red Cross

480 West Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 442-1506
Monday-Friday 6 am – 8 pm
Areas Served: all of Berkshire County (note: unable to provide service within home town/city – only offers transport between towns/cities in Berkshire County and to regional medical resources such as in Boston)
Clientele: able-bodied elderly and non-elderly, not able to transport clients with oxygen tanks.

Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC)

428 Merrill Road
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 499-4420
Monday – Friday 6:30 am – 5:30 pm
Area: Berkshire County
Clientele: clients of the Department of Mental Retardation, other contracting human service agencies
Criteria: day care and sheltered workshops only
Fare: free

Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority (BRTA)

67 Downing Parkway
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 499-2782
(800) 292-BRTA
Monday-Saturday
Areas Served: much of Berkshire County
Clientele: all
Fare: fixed route service is \$.75 per town traveled, half-fare for people over 60 or with disabilities (file form with BRTA)
Additional Services:
Contracts to provide curb-to-curb (taxi tickets) and door-to-door (para-transit) services for people who met certain criteria. They are also the Access-to-Jobs transportation contact for people transitioning off social services (call for information)

Berkshire Works

37 Main St.
North Adams, MA 01247
(413) 663-1111
Monday-Friday 8:30 am – 5 pm

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Criteria: medical necessity. Call in advance to set up time.

Fare: free

Additional Info:

They rely on volunteer drivers and can always use more.

Bonanza Bus Lines

(888) 751-8800

www.BonanzaBus.com

7 days

Areas Served: Berkshire County between Vermont & New York City

Clientele: ambulatory

Fare: for example, Williamstown-NYC \$35 one-way

Additional Info:

Stops in Williamstown, then Pittsfield for transfers to Peter Pan to travel east or west.

CARAVAN for Commuters

(888) 4-COMMUTE

www.commute.com

Monday - Friday

Areas Served: Massachusetts

Clientele: commuters

Fare: free

Additional Info:

Matches commuters willing to carpool or share rides

County Ambulance, Inc.

175 Wahconah Street

Pittsfield, MA 01201

(413) 499-2527

24 hours

Areas Served: all of Berkshire County

Clientele: all

Criteria: income requirement, transportation for job search and training only

Fare: free

County Rainbow Taxi, Inc.

10 Pleasant Street

Pittsfield, MA 01202

(413) 499-4300

24 hours

Areas Served: all of Berkshire County with advance notice

Clientele: all except wheelchair bound

Fare: call for fares

Elder Services of Berkshire County

66 Wendell Avenue

Pittsfield, MA 01201

(413) 449-0524

Monday-Friday 8 am - 5 pm

Areas Served: mainly northern and central Berkshire County

Clientele: able-bodied and disabled elderly, but not wheelchair bound

Criteria: must be at least 60 years of age

Fare: free

Additional Info:

They rely on volunteer drivers and can always use more.

Lenox Taxi and Limousine

8 Fairview Avenue

Lenox, MA 01240

(413) 637-3014

Sunday-Saturday 6 am – 12 am

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Areas Served: all of Berkshire County

Clientele: disabled elderly and non-elderly, able-bodied elderly

Fare: \$27.60 initial fare plus \$2.20/mile

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission- North Adams

85 Main Street, Room 426

North Adams, MA 01247

(413) 663-5391

Monday-Friday 8:45 am – 5 pm

Areas Served: mainly northern and central Berkshire County

Clientele: non-elderly disabled

Criteria: medical, vocational evaluations, and work only

Fare: free

MassHealth Transportation Program (Medicaid Transportation)

(800) 841-2900

TTY for Hard of Hearing (800) 497-4648

Areas Served: all of Massachusetts

Clientele: MassHealth clients going for approved medical treatments

Fare: free

Additional Info:

MassHealth provides non-emergency transportation service as authorized by the client's medical provider. This only applies to going to and from a MassHealth provider for a MassHealth covered service.

To use this program, ask your medical provider to complete a PT-1 Form/Request for Transportation Services. This form needs to be sent to the MassHealth Transportation Unit for approval. If approved, you will receive written notification outlining how to arrange rides.

The program guideline is that it is for when public and/or private transportation is not otherwise available, although there are exceptions. Please call the number above for further information.

Areas Served: all of Berkshire County

Clientele: able-bodied persons only

Extra Services: child car seats provided upon request

Fare: call for fares, limousine service is approximately \$35.00/hour

Transport the People, Inc.

10 Pleasant Street

Pittsfield, MA 01202

(413) 443-7111 24 hours

Areas Served: Berkshire County to destinations in the Northeast

Clientele: all except non-ambulatory

Fare: call for prices

Criteria: primary destinations are airports

VA Van Services

Community Care at the Eagle Building, Pittsfield

(413) 499-2672 or

Veterans Services, Leeds

(413) 582-3078

Monday – Friday, mainly morning and early afternoon

Areas Served: New England

Clientele: veterans

Criteria: medical appointments at various VA hospitals

Fare: free

Additional Info:

First come, first served basis. Afternoon appointments are more difficult. They rely on volunteer drivers and can always use more.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



North Adams Ambulance Service

10 Harris Street
North Adams, MA 01247
(413) 664-6680

Monday-Friday 8 am – 4 pm

Areas Served: all of Berkshire County and southern Vermont

Clientele: disabled elderly and non-elderly, able-bodied elderly

Fare: \$23.00 base fee plus \$1.25 per mile (after five miles)

Veteran's Taxi

376 State St.
North Adams, MA 01247
(413) 663-8300

7 Days, 7 am – Midnight

Areas Served: all of Berkshire County

Clientele: all

Fare: call for prices

Additional Info:

As of September, 2001 they do not accept BRTA taxi tickets.

They also operate a limousine service.

Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.

163 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01202
(413) 499-0256

Tuesday-Thursday

Areas Served: Berkshire County

Clientele: veterans and their families

Criteria: medical appointments at VA hospitals only

Fare: free, donations requested

Additional Info:

First come, first served basis. This service is only between the Berkshires and the VA hospitals in Albany and Northampton.

Village Ambulance Service

30 Water Street
Williamstown, MA 01261
(413) 458-4889

7 Days, 24 Hours

Areas Served: Williamstown, Hancock, New Ashford

Clientele: sick/handicapped people in stretchers

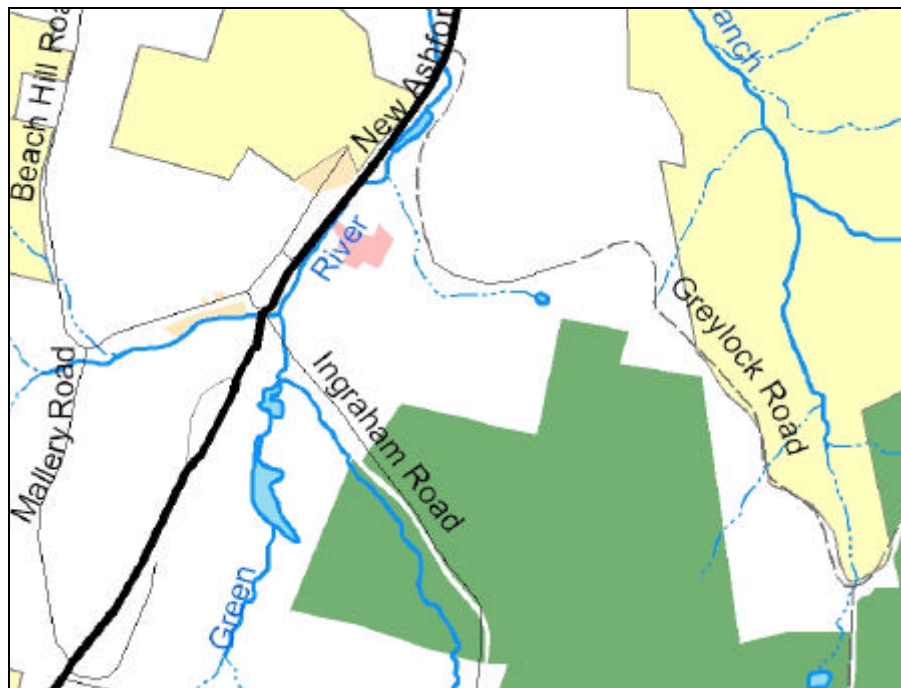
Criteria: medical need to go to doctor's appointments (note - this is not a chaircar service)

Fare: **Call for information**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



GIS Mapping



GIS Mapping

Introduction to GIS Mapping
Introduction to Development Suitability Maps
Base Maps

8

8-1
8-7
8-8

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Introduction to GIS Mapping

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are quickly becoming a staple of our times. Defined broadly, GIS is a computer-based system “for capture, retrieval, analysis, and display of spatial (locationally defined) data.” The essential elements in this definition for local governments are “spatial” and “analysis”: where are things, why do we want to know about them, and how can our community use this information to make better decisions?

GIS is a system of computer software, hardware, data, and personnel to help manipulate, analyze and present information that is tied to a specific location on the earth. Aspects of GIS include:

spatial location – usually a geographic location
information – visualization of analysis of data
system – linking software, hardware, data
personnel – the key to the power of GIS

GIS applies modern computer graphics and database technology to the efficient, cost-effective management and planning of the local government’s assets. It provides enhanced capabilities for data storage, retrieval, and analysis. GIS does this by linking (1) maps and (2) databases. This marriage lets us easily explore the relationship between (1) location and (2) information.

The real key for small city governments is that GIS quickly integrates *information with location*. Through its use of computer technology, GIS provides a better, faster, easier way for local officials to find answers to questions and carry out analyses based on spatial relationships.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission uses GIS in projects covering almost all aspects of planning. This includes environmental, land use, community development, transportation, economic and housing projects. BRPC uses our GIS for map creation, data development and spatial analysis.

Throughout the Community Development Plan, GIS has been used to create a series of base maps illustrating what is in each community and has allowed community officials to determine where the most suitable locations are for various types of development / preservation. Some communities also used suitability maps to assist them in determine where the best locations for development / preservation were. These suitability maps were created by evaluating the importance of various environmental, housing, economic, and transportation items and plotting the best and worst locations based on the combination of all these factors. The final maps presented throughout the report show the decisions that were arrived at by the community. In this section, the base maps are presented as reference to show what is currently in the town. The descriptions of the mapped items that you will find within these base maps are listed below.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Description of Map Attributes

Environmental Resources

Drinking Water

Aquifers – shows medium and high yield aquifers as delineated by USGS Water Resource Division. The original data is from the USGS 1:48,000 hydrologic atlas series on groundwater favorability.

Interim Wellhead Protection areas – shows the primary, protected area for PWS groundwater sources in the absence of an approved Zone II. The radius around the well is determined by the pumping rate in GPM of the well. Wellhead protection areas are important for protecting the recharge area around public water supply (PWS) wells.

Lakes/Ponds Resource Area – shows a 100 ft. buffer around the lakes and ponds that are on the USGS topographical maps. This buffer shows the area that has an immediate impact of the lakes and ponds.

Outstanding Resource Water – shows waters which constitute an outstanding resource as determined by their outstanding socioeconomic, recreational, ecological, and / or aesthetic values and which shall be protected and maintained as determined under Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards of 1995

Wellhead Protection Zone I – shows a 400 ft. buffer around public water supply points.

Wellhead Protection Area Zone II – shows the primary, protected area for PWS groundwater sources based upon the area of an aquifer which contributes to a well under the most severe pumping and recharge conditions that can realistically be anticipated. Wellhead protection areas are important for protecting the recharge area around public water supply (PWS) wells.

Water Bodies and Protection Areas

FEMA 100yr. Floodplain – shows areas of possible risk associated with flooding. This layer was created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM)

Lakes / Ponds Resource Areas – 100 ft - shows a 100-foot buffer around lakes and ponds that defines the resource area that contributes to the lake/pond. The lakes and ponds are derived from USGS topo maps.

River Protection Area – 200 ft. – Shows a 200-foot buffer delineating the resource area of perennial streams. These areas were created as an addition to the long-standing Wetlands Protection Act. The law establishes protected riverfront areas that extend 200 feet from the mean annual high-water line.

Surface Water Protection Area Zone A – shows land between the surface water source and the upper boundary of the bank, the land within a 400 foot lateral distance from the upper

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



boundary of the bank of a Class A surface water source and the land within a 200 foot lateral distance from the upper boundary of the bank of a tributary or associated surface water body. These areas are included in the Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations as Surface Water Supply Protection Zones.

Surface Water Protection Area Zone B – shows the land within one-half mile of the upper boundary of the bank of a Class A surface water source or the edge of the watershed, whichever is less. Zone B always included the land area within a 400 ft lateral distance from the upper boundary of the bank of the Class A surface water source. These areas are included in the Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations as Surface Water Supply Protection Zones.

Wetland Resource Areas – shows a 100-foot buffer around wetlands that defines the resource area that contributes to the wetland. The wetlands are derived from USGS topographical maps.

Wetlands – shows wetlands derived from USGS topographical maps.

Soils / Geology

Excessively Drained Soils– shows soils that have too much or too rapid loss of water, either by percolation or by surface flow. The occurrence of internal free water is very rare or very deep. This layer was derived from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database.

Highly Erodible Soils – shows soils that are highly susceptible to erosion from wind and/or water. This layer was derived from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database.

Hydric Soils – Soils that are wet long enough to periodically produce anaerobic conditions, thereby influencing the growth of plants. This layer was derived from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database.

Poorly Drained soils– shows soils that do not lose water very rapidly. The occurrence of free water is common. This layer was derived from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database.

Scenic Landscapes – shows areas identified as having distinctive or noteworthy scenic landscapes as part of the Massachusetts Landscape Inventory Project, Department of Environmental Management, 1981.

Slopes Greater than 15% - shows slopes that are greater than 15% based on slope information derived from either 3 or 10-meter contours generated by MassGIS

Biological

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern – shows the location of areas that have been designated ACECs by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs. This designation requires

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



greater environmental review of certain kinds of proposed development under state agency jurisdiction with the boundary.

Contiguous Natural Lands – shows large, contiguous tracts of natural land. “Contiguous” lands are defined to be at least 250 contiguous acres and “Natural” lands are defined based on the land use codes for water, forest, shrubland, pasture and wetland. The data is part of the Massachusetts Resource Identification Project (MRIP).

Natural Land Riparian Corridors – shows contiguous natural lands within a 100-meter corridor encompassing perennial streams and river features. These areas within the riparian corridor remain in a “natural state”, potentially functioning as a corridor for select species movement, as well as additional ecological purposes. These data is part of the Massachusetts Resource Identification Project (MRIP).

NHESP BioMap Core Habitat - Depicts the most viable habitat for rare species and natural communities. The polygons may consist of many individual species or natural communities.

NHESP BioMap Supporting Natural Landscapes – buffers and connects the Core Habitat polygons and identifies large, naturally vegetated blocks that are relatively free from the impact of roads and other development. The quality of undeveloped land considered in the landscape analysis was evaluated based on four major components: natural vegetation patch characteristics, size of relatively road less areas, sub watershed integrity, and contribution to buffering Bore Habitat for plants and exemplary communities.

NHESP Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife – shows estimations of the habitats of state-protected rare wildlife populations that occur in Resource areas. These habitats are based on rare species records maintained in the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program’s (NHESP) database.

NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species – shows areas that represent estimations of important state-listed rare species habitats in Massachusetts. These habitats are based in rare species population records maintained in the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program’s (NHESP) database.

Riparian Corridors – shows a 100-meter corridor, which encompasses perennial streams and river features. The 100 meter buffer distance is a subjective value derived from existing conservation plans, as well as current literature. The data is part of the Massachusetts Resource Identification Project (MRIP).

Vernal Pools – shows a 100-foot buffer around NHESP Certified Vernal Pools. Certified Vernal Pools are protected if they fall under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations. They also are afforded protection under the state Water Quality Certification regulations, the state Title 5 regulations, and the Forest Cutting Practices Act regulations.

Community

Developed

Commercial Land – shows land that is classified as commercial in the most recent land use update.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Gravel Pits / Mining - shows land that is classified as Gravel / Mining in the most recent land use update.

Industrial Land – shows land that is classified as industrial in the most recent land use update. Industrial land is defined as Industrial, Mining, and Waste Disposal.

Multi-Family Residential - shows land that is classified as Multi-Family residential in the most recent land use update.

Residential Land – shows land that is classified as residential in the most recent land use update. Residential land is defined as lots smaller than ¼ acre lots, ¼ to ½ acre lots, lots larger than ½ acre, and multi-family lots.

State Registered Historic Resources – shows land that is listed with the State Register of Historic Places as being of historical interest.

Village / Commercial Centers – an area defined by the community as representing the village or community center.

Non-Developed Land

Agriculture Land – shows land classified as agriculture in the most recent land use update. Land that is defined as agriculture is composed of cropland, pasture, and woody perennial.

Agricultural Preservation Restriction Land – shows land that is permanently protected as agricultural land due to an APR designation

Buildable Land – shows land that was determined to be buildable based upon existing development, protection, and restricted land during the 1999/2000 Buildout Analysis

Forested Land – shows land that is classified as forest in the most recent land use update.

Non-Protected Open Space – shows land that is classified as open space, but is not permanently protected.

Partial Constraints – shows land that is buildable but is limited based on land characteristics, such as slope, wetlands, and proximity to water.

Protected Open Space – shows land that is classified as open space and is permanently protected.

Recreational Resources – shows land that is classified as recreational in the most recent land use update. Recreational land is defined as Participation Recreation, Spectator Recreation and Water based Recreation.

Housing and Population Densities

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Owner Housing Density – The percentage of housing that is owned by the resident on a per acre basis. The values are derived from the Census 2000 data.

Population Density - The population of the census block on a per acre basis. The values are derived from the Census 2000 data.

Rental Housing Density - The percentage of housing that is rented by the resident on a per acre basis. The values are derived from the Census 2000 data.

Seasonal Housing Density - The percentage of housing that is seasonal on a per acre basis. The values are derived from the Census 2000 data.

Infrastructure

Roads

Dirt / Unpaved Roads – roads that are considered dirt or unpaved based on the latest MassHighway inventory.

Local Roads – roads that are considered local roads based on the latest MassHighway inventory.

Minor Roads – roads that are considered collectors based on the latest MassHighway inventory.

Major Roads / Highway Access – roads that are considered arterials or interstate on the latest MassHighway inventory.

Other Transportation

Para Transit – This data layer is only useful for regional analysis. A town that is a member of BRTA receives para transit

Transit access – Roads that have existing BRTA bus service.

Rail Access – Existing rail lines that are currently used.

Air Access – The area surrounding the airports that are considered part of the airport complex.

Bike Trails – The Ashuwillticook bike trail from Lanesborough/Pittsfield line to downtown Adams.

Utilities

Public Water – a line approximating the location of the public water lines. This data was verified by DPW staff during summer of 2001.

Sewer – a line approximating the location of the sewer lines. This data was verified by DPW staff during summer of 2001.

Solid Waste Facilities – Compiled by DEP to track the locations of landfills, transfer stations, and combustion facilities.

Bureau of Waste Prevention - Major Facilities – facilities that are regulated by the DEP. These are considered to have the greatest environmental significance. Facilities included are:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Large Quantity Generators of Hazardous Waste
Large Quantity Toxic Users
Hazardous Waste Recyclers
Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage and / or Disposal Facilities
Facilities with Air Operating Permits
Facilities with Groundwater Discharge Permits

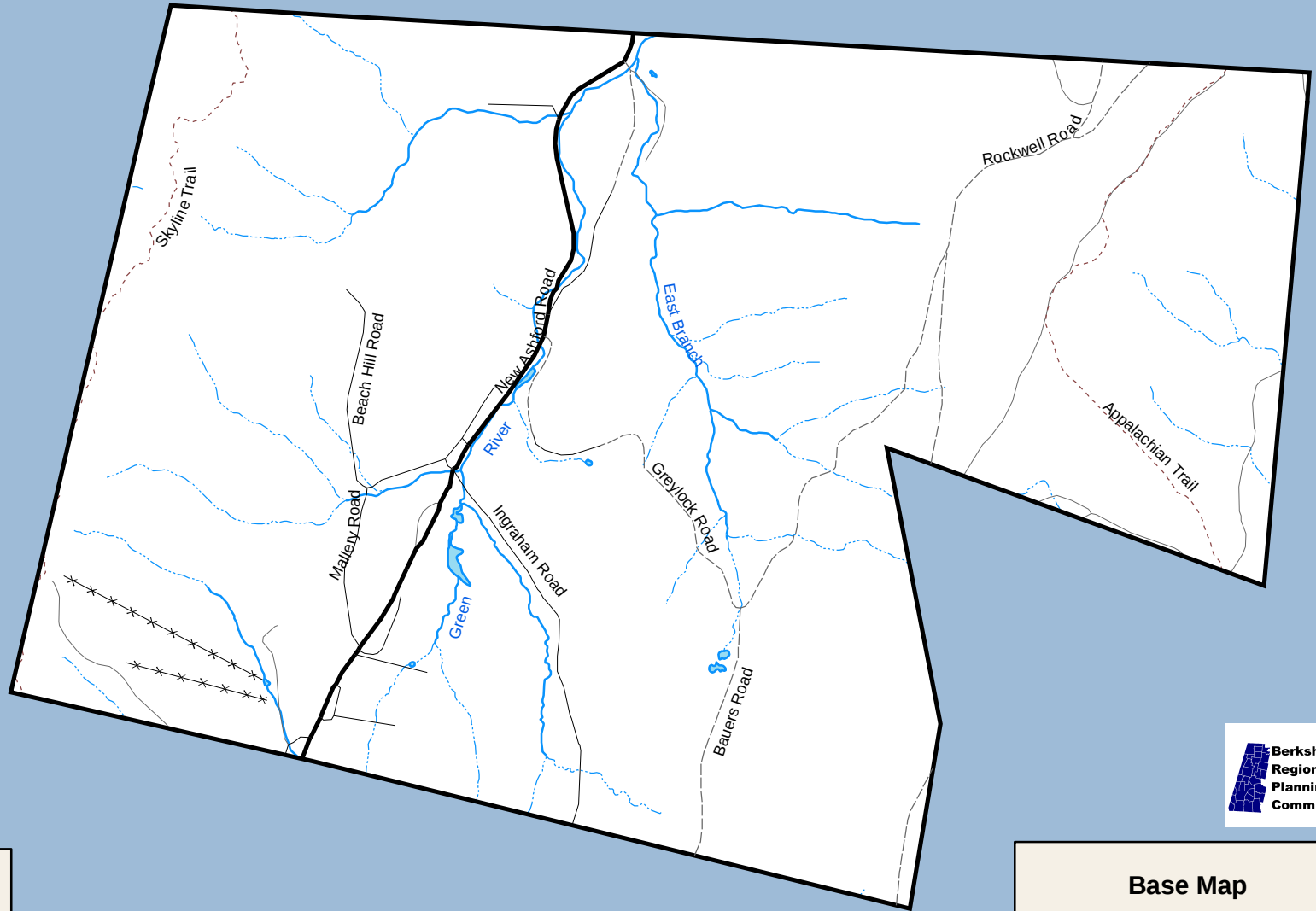
Introduction to Development Suitability Maps

As part of the Community Development Plan, BRPC has been working on a way to measure the suitability of land attributes for various development types. Development suitability maps show the areas within a community that are suitable for various types of development. The maps show a gradient from dark green (optimum) to light green (acceptable) to white (neutral) to light red (not preferred) to dark red (worst case). The suitability of any given piece of land is based on the existing land features that are found on that land, like wetlands or slope, or in proximity to the land, like roads or sewer. Each attribute is given a weight based on the combination of the attribute's importance in enabling certain types of development to occur and the attribute's conduciveness to a certain type of development. For example, areas with fertile soils are both important to a farm's success and conducive to agriculture, so areas with quality soils would be given a high rating for agricultural use. On the other hand, road infrastructure may be important for enabling commercial development to occur, but dirt road may be not conducive to commercial development. Therefore, areas along dirt roads would not be given as high a score as areas along paved roads.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) has devised regional values for each potential land feature for each development type. These values are combined for all land features and the result is shown in these development suitability maps.

These maps are intended to provide guidance for general planning purposes only and do not mean that development should or will occur in specified areas.

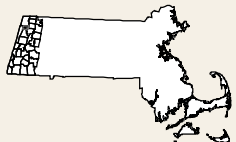
-  Lake or Pond
-  Wetland
-  Perennial Stream
-  Intermittent Stream
-  Local Road
-  Major Road
-  Private Road / Old Trails
-  Dirt Road
-  Trails
-  Railroads
-  Ski Lifts



Base Map

Town of New Ashford

Community
Development Plan



July 3, 2002
/cdp/nas/projects/basemap.mxd

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Meters
Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983

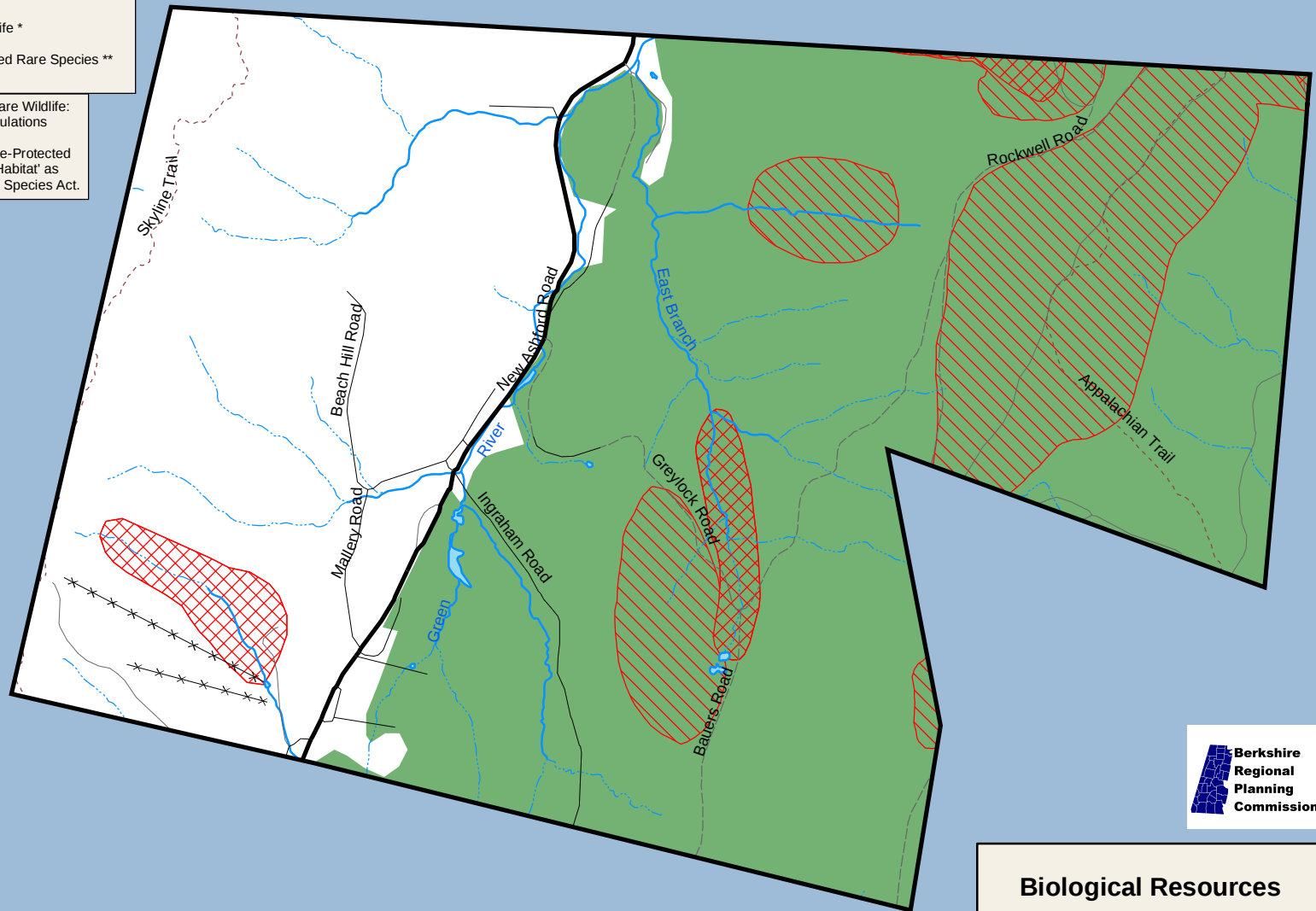


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This project was funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Construction.

-  NHESP BioMap Core Habitat
-  Estimated Habitats for Rare Wildlife *
-  Priority Habitats for State-Protected Rare Species **

* NHESP 1999-2001 Estimated Habitats for Rare Wildlife:
For Use with the MA Wetlands Protection Regulations
(310 CMR 10).

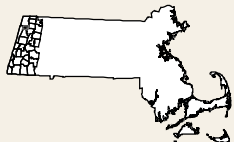
** NHESP 1999-2001 Priority Habitats for State-Protected
Rare Species: NOT equivalent to 'Significant Habitat' as
designated under Massachusetts Endangered Species Act.



Biological Resources

Town of New Ashford

Community Development Plan



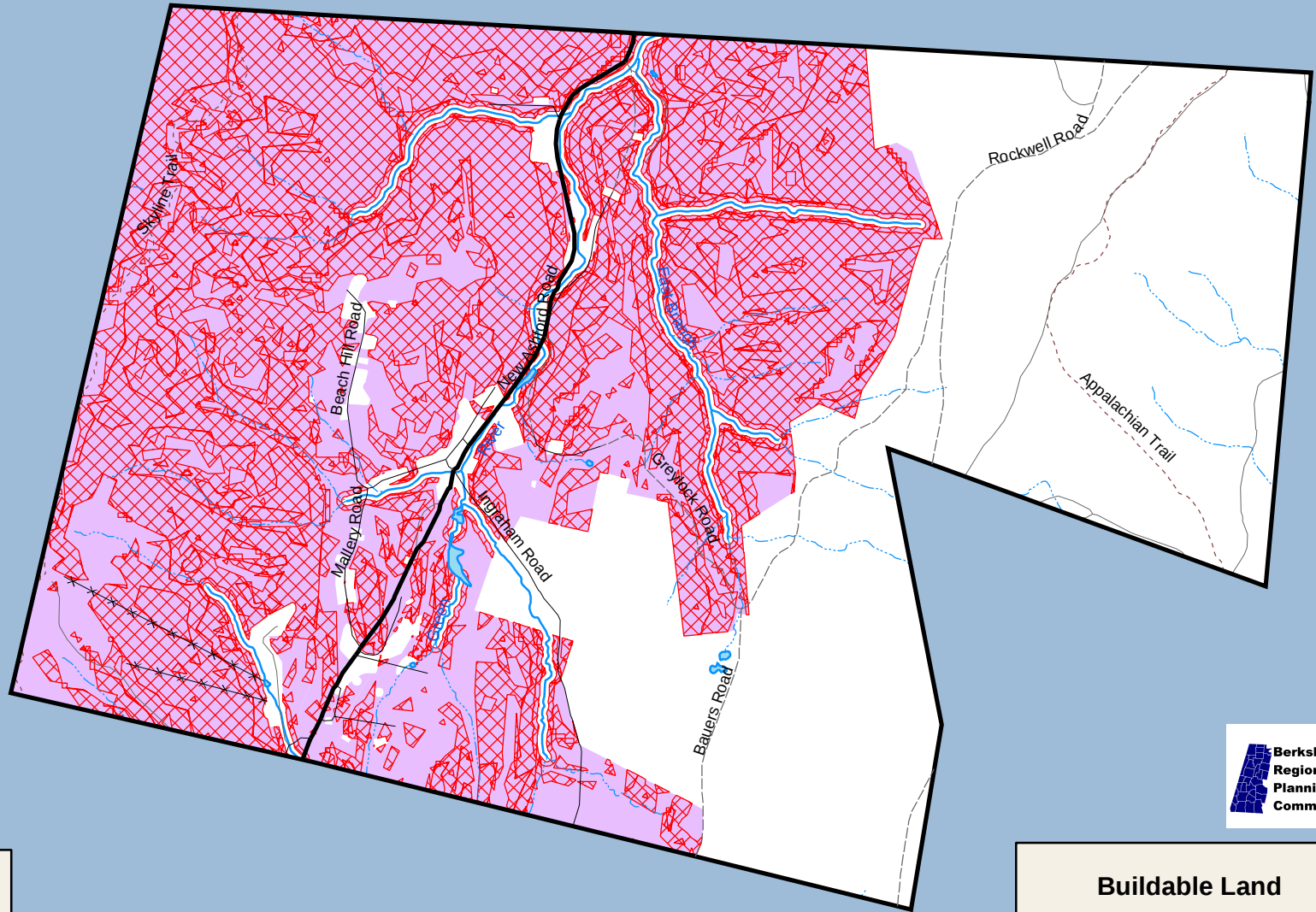
July 3, 2002
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North American Datum 1983



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-  Partial Constraints
-  Buildable Land



Buildable Land

**Town of
New Ashford**

Community
Development Plan



July 3, 2002
/cdp/nas/projects/buildableland.mxd

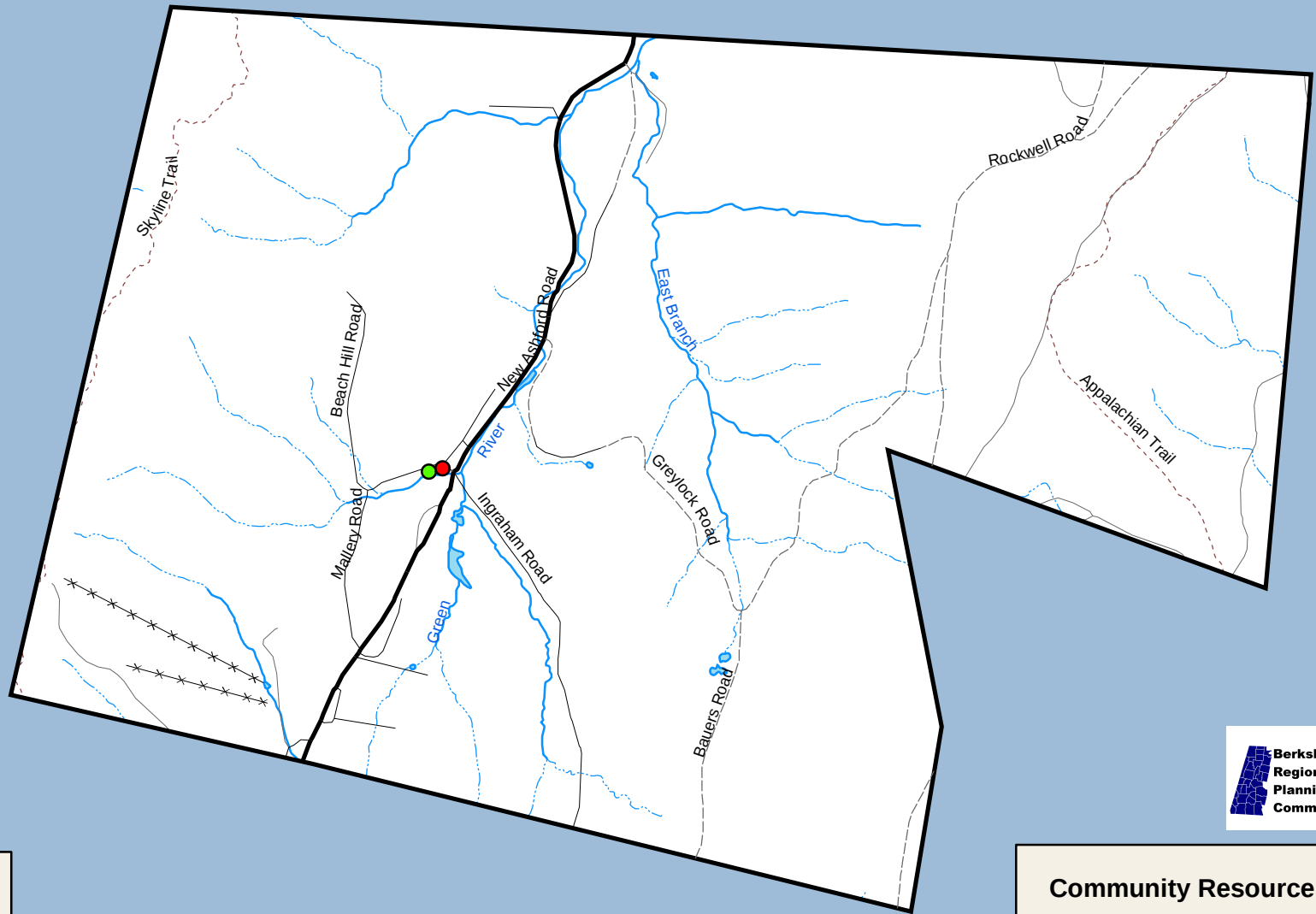
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Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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- Fire
- Town Hall



Community Resources

Town of New Ashford

Community Development Plan



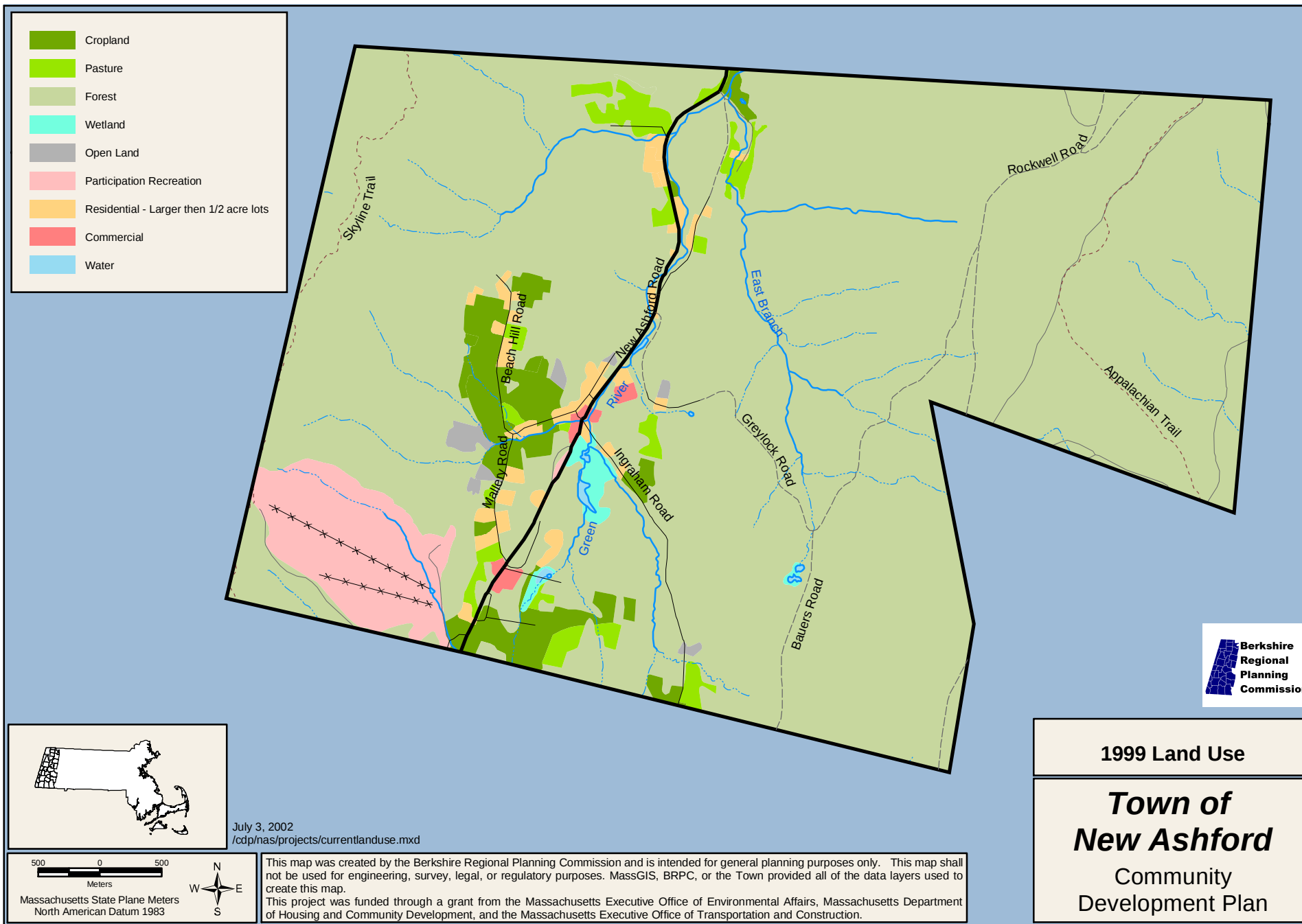
July 8, 2002
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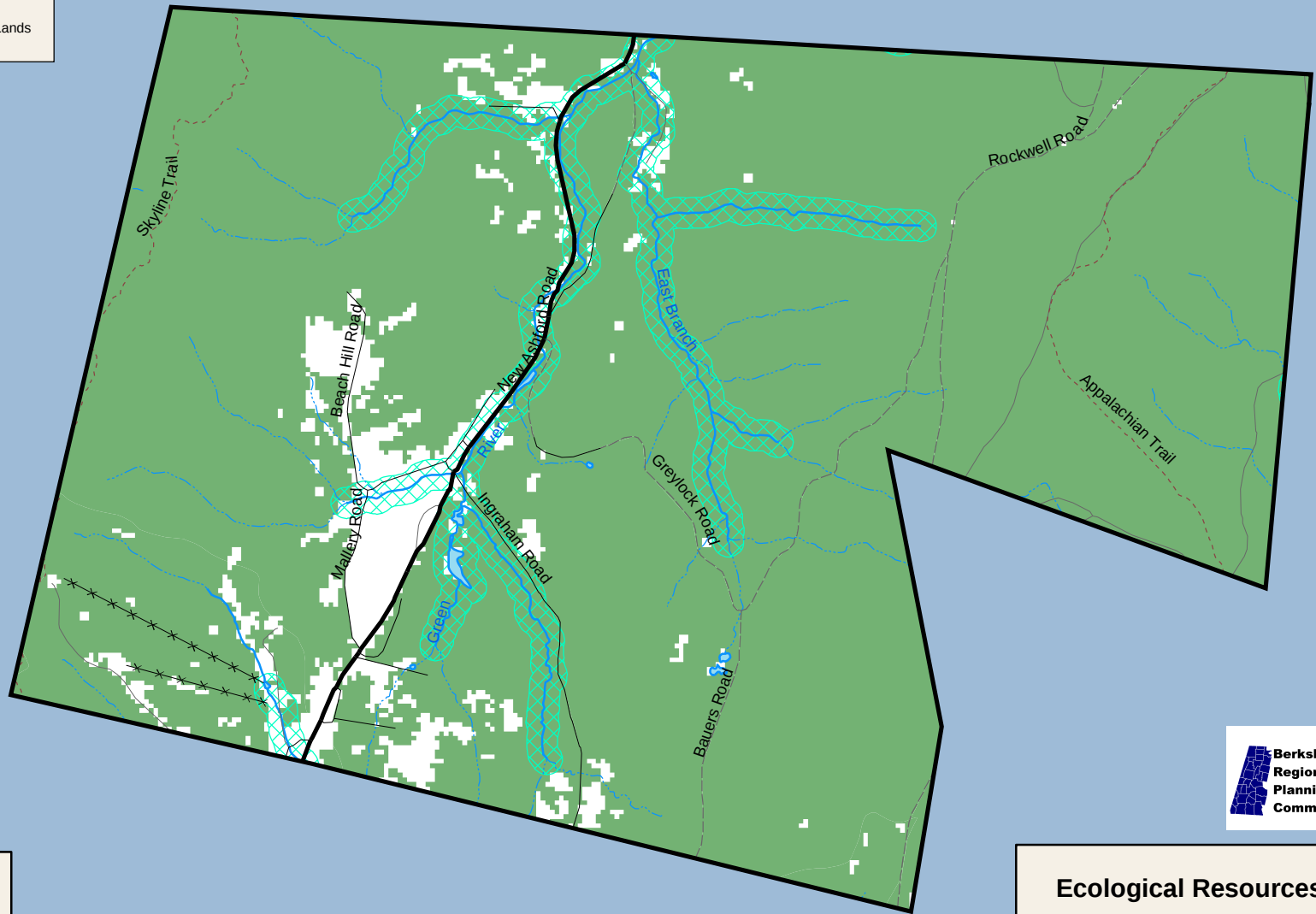
Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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- MRIP Riparian Corridor
- MRIP Contiguous Natural Lands



Ecological Resources

Town of New Ashford

Community Development Plan



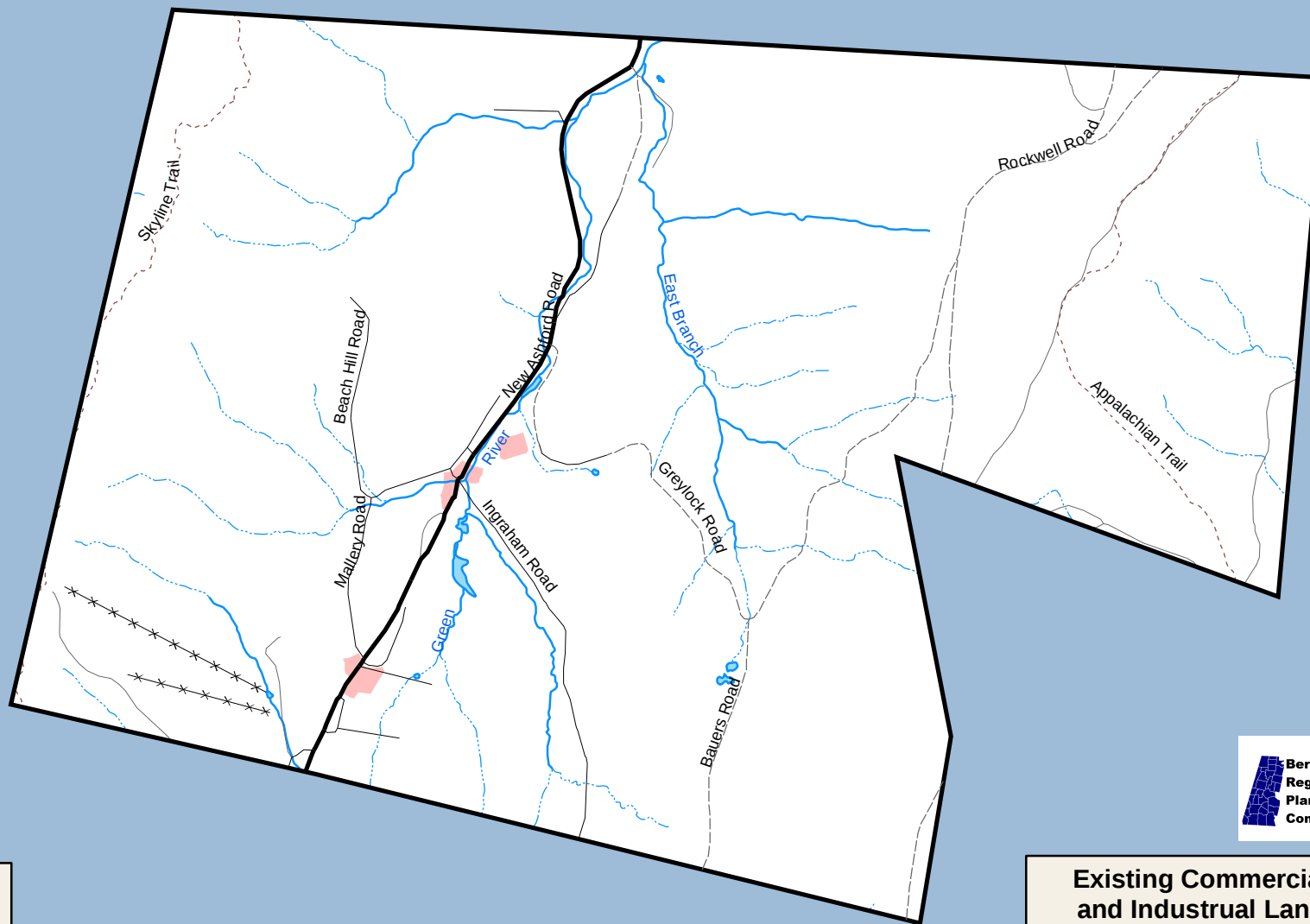
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Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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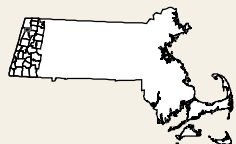
Commercial



Existing Commercial
and Industrial Land

**Town of
New Ashford**

Community
Development Plan



July 8, 2002
/cdp/nas/projects/existingcommind.mxd

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Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983

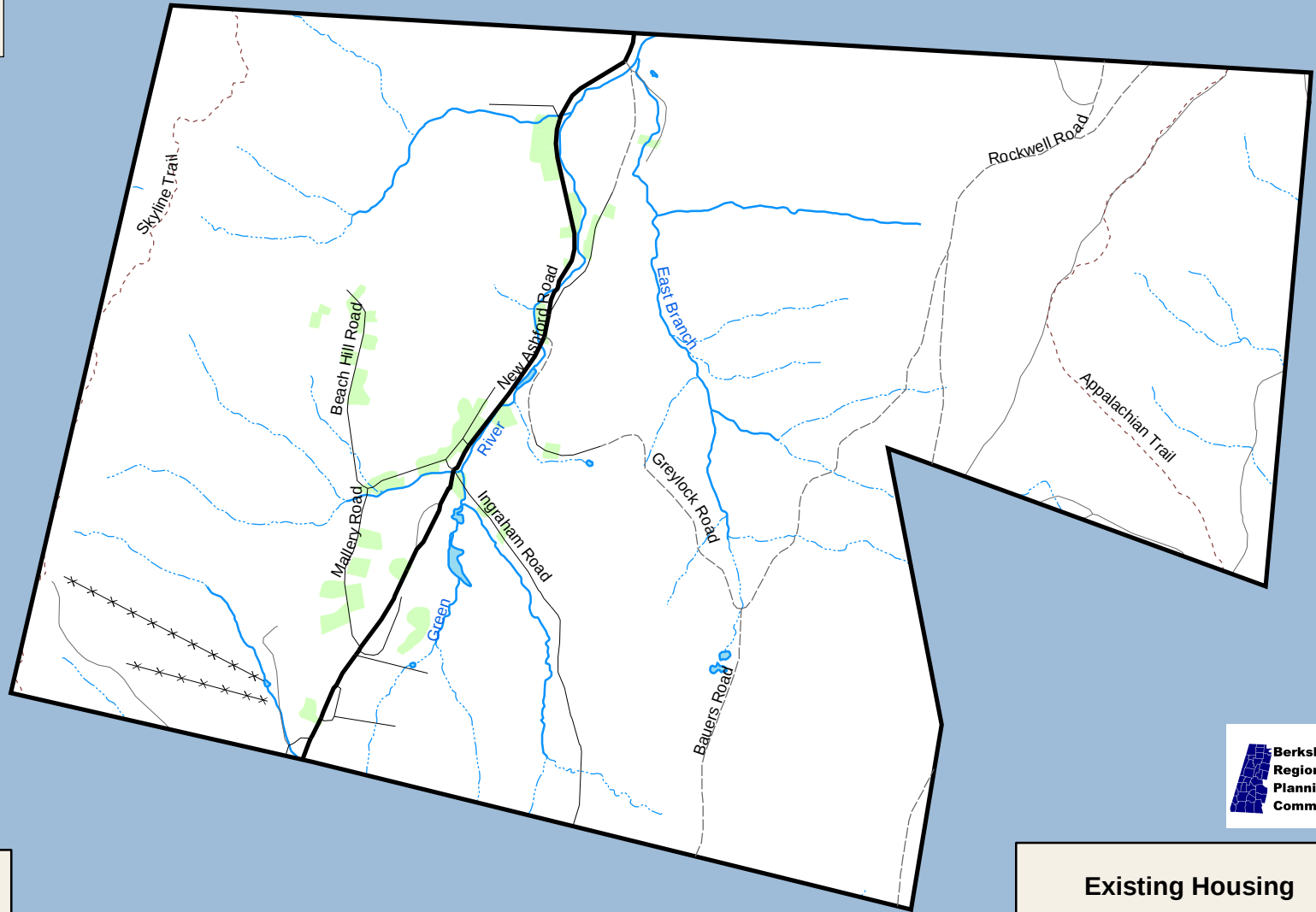


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Residential Lot Size

 Larger than 1/2 acre lots



Existing Housing

***Town of
New Ashford***

Community
Development Plan



July 8, 2002
/cdp/nas/projects/existinghousing.mxd

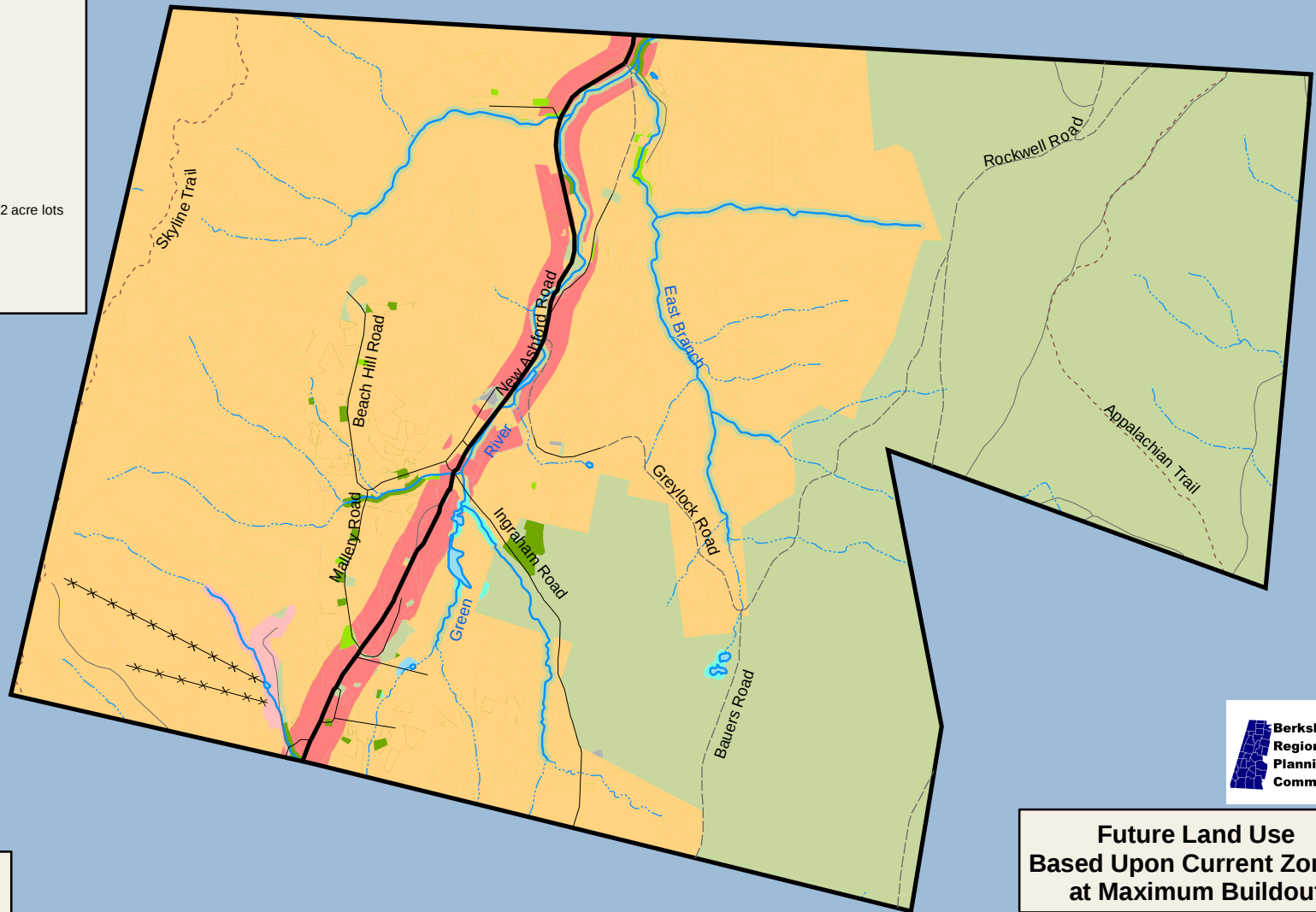
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Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



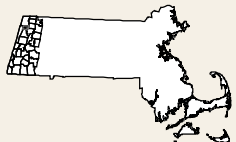
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-  Cropland
-  Pasture
-  Forest
-  Wetland
-  Open Land
-  Participation Recreation
-  Residential - Larger then 1/2 acre lots
-  Commercial
-  Water



**Future Land Use
Based Upon Current Zoning
at Maximum Buildout**

***Town of
New Ashford***
Community
Development Plan



July 3, 2002
/cdp/nas/projects/futurelanduse.mxd

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Meters

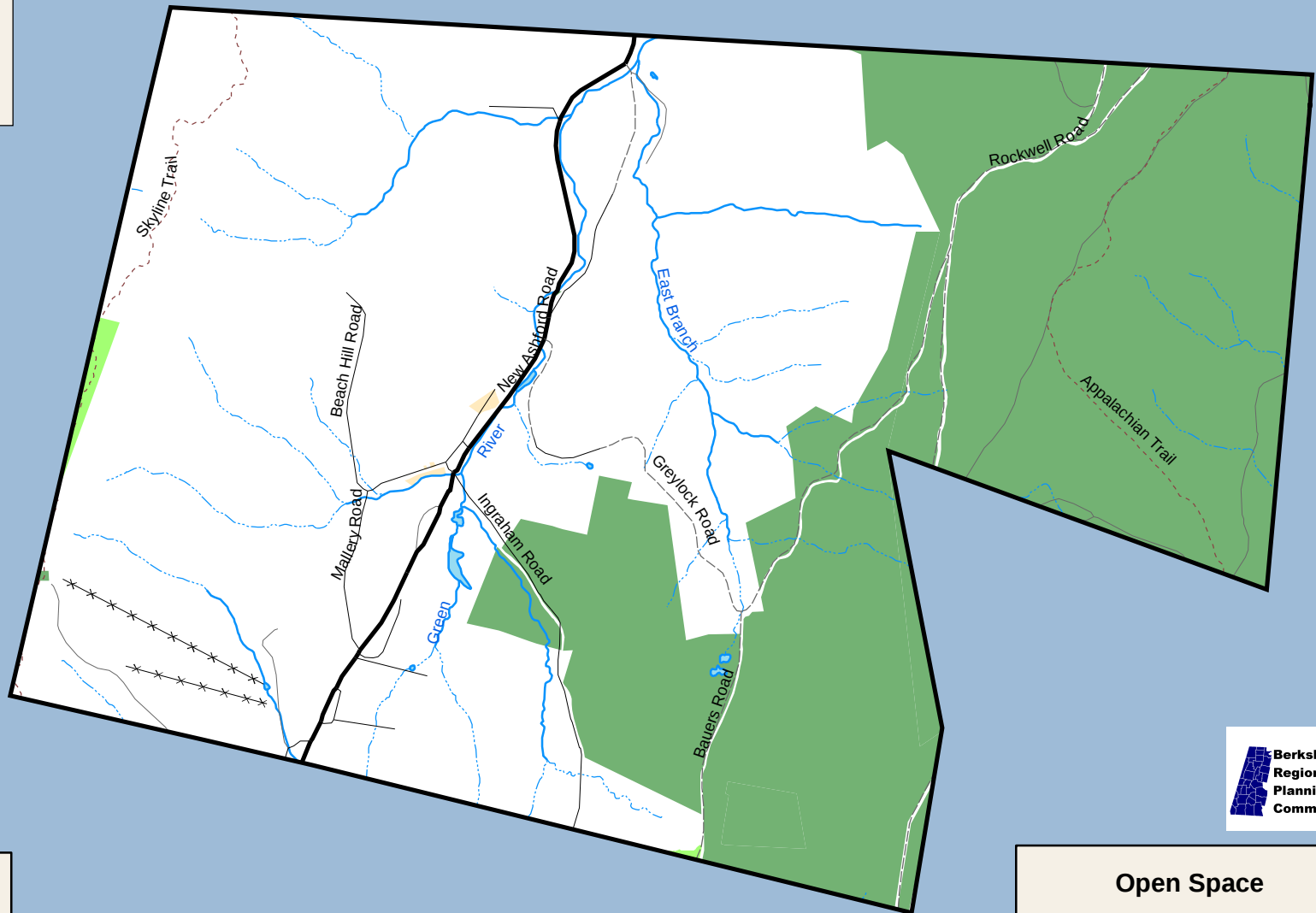
Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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Open Space Protection

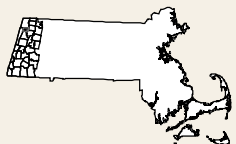
- State
- Municipal - Not protected
- Private - Ch61A



Open Space

**Town of
New Ashford**

Community
Development Plan



June 11, 2003
/cdp/nas/projects/openspace.mxd

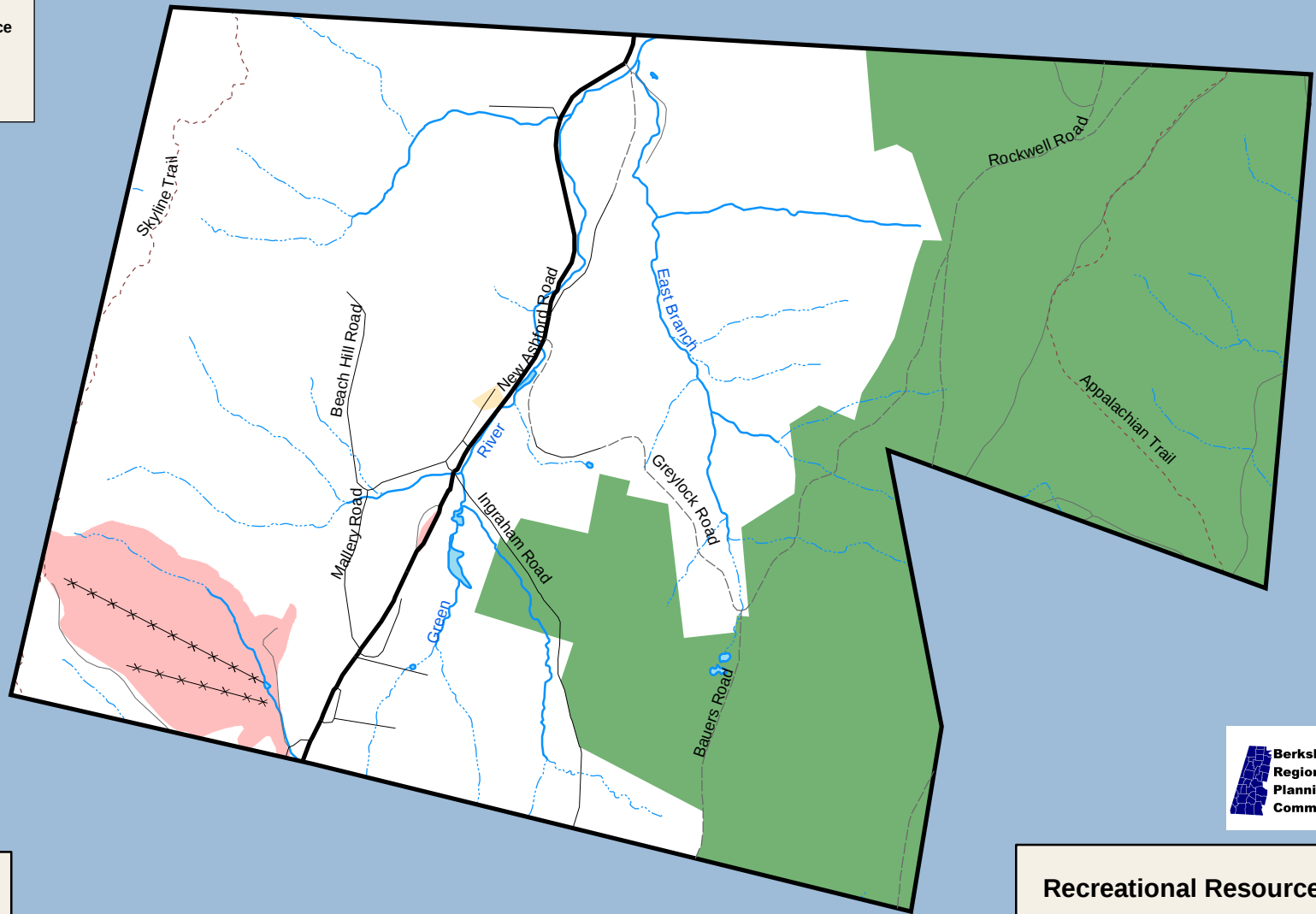
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Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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- Participation Recreation
- Publicly Accessibly Open Space**
 - State
 - Municipal



Recreational Resources

Town of New Ashford

Community Development Plan

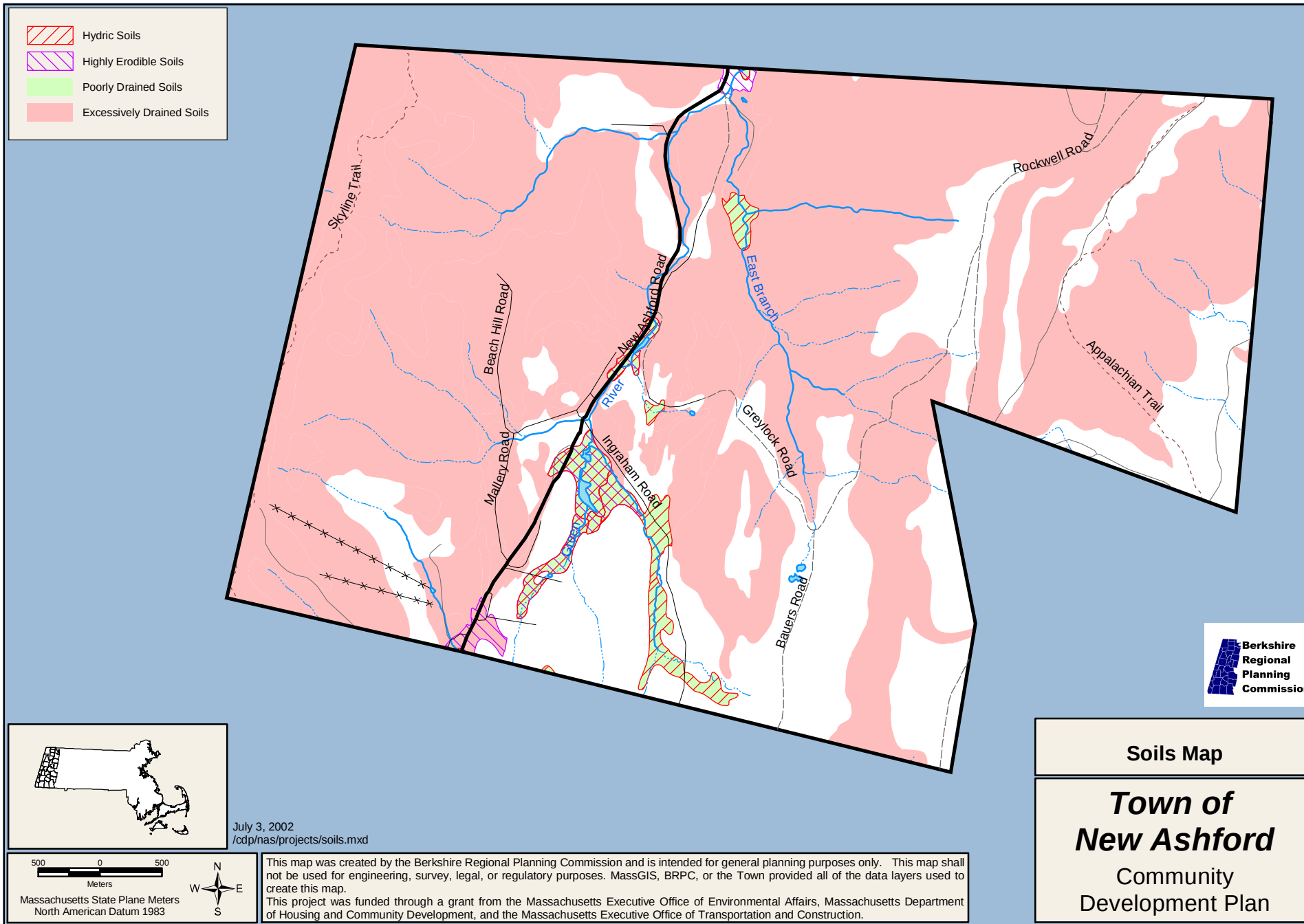


July 8, 2002
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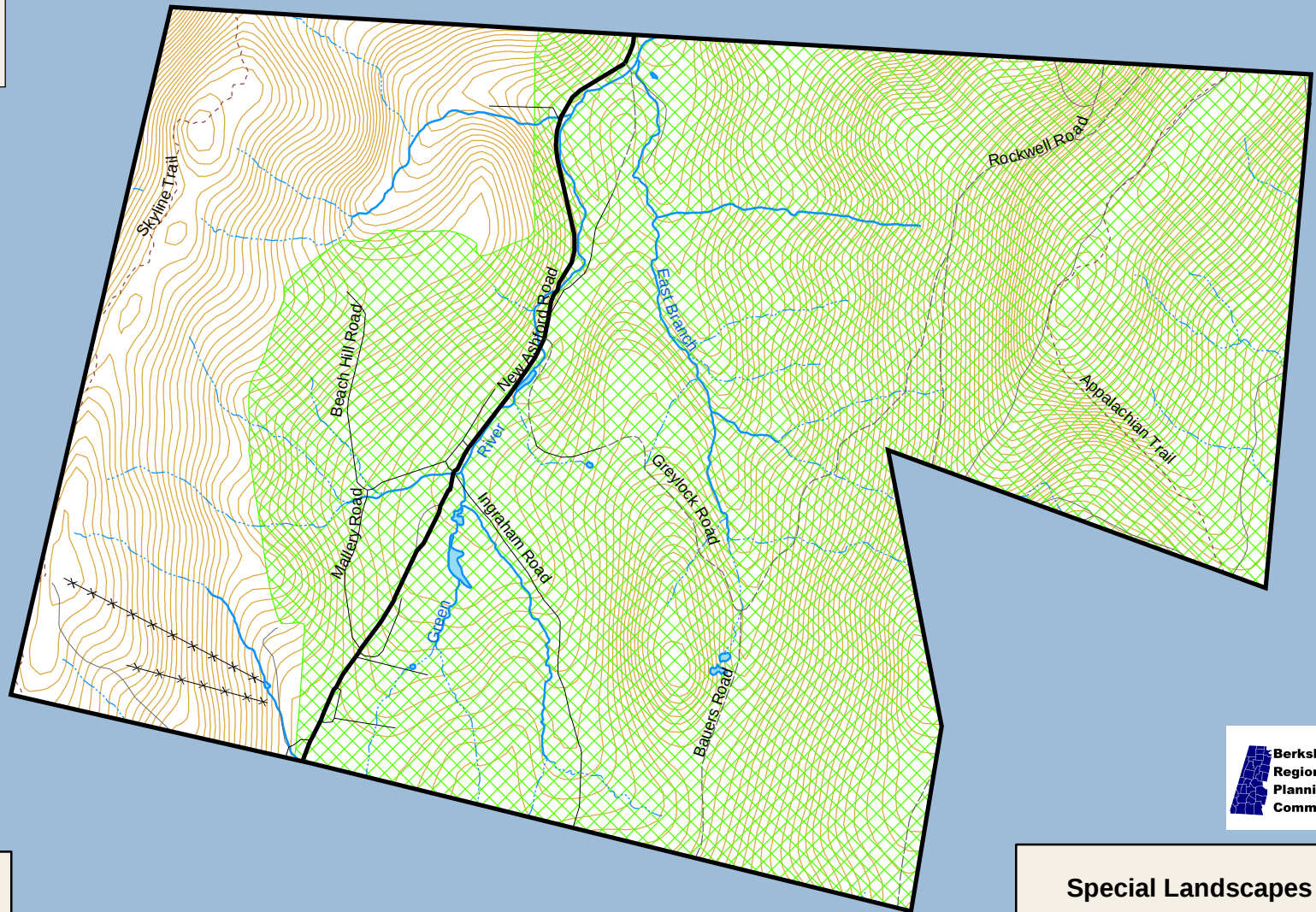
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Meters
Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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- Scenic Landscape
- Contours - 10 m Interval
- Slope > 15%



Special Landscapes

**Town of
New Ashford**
Community
Development Plan



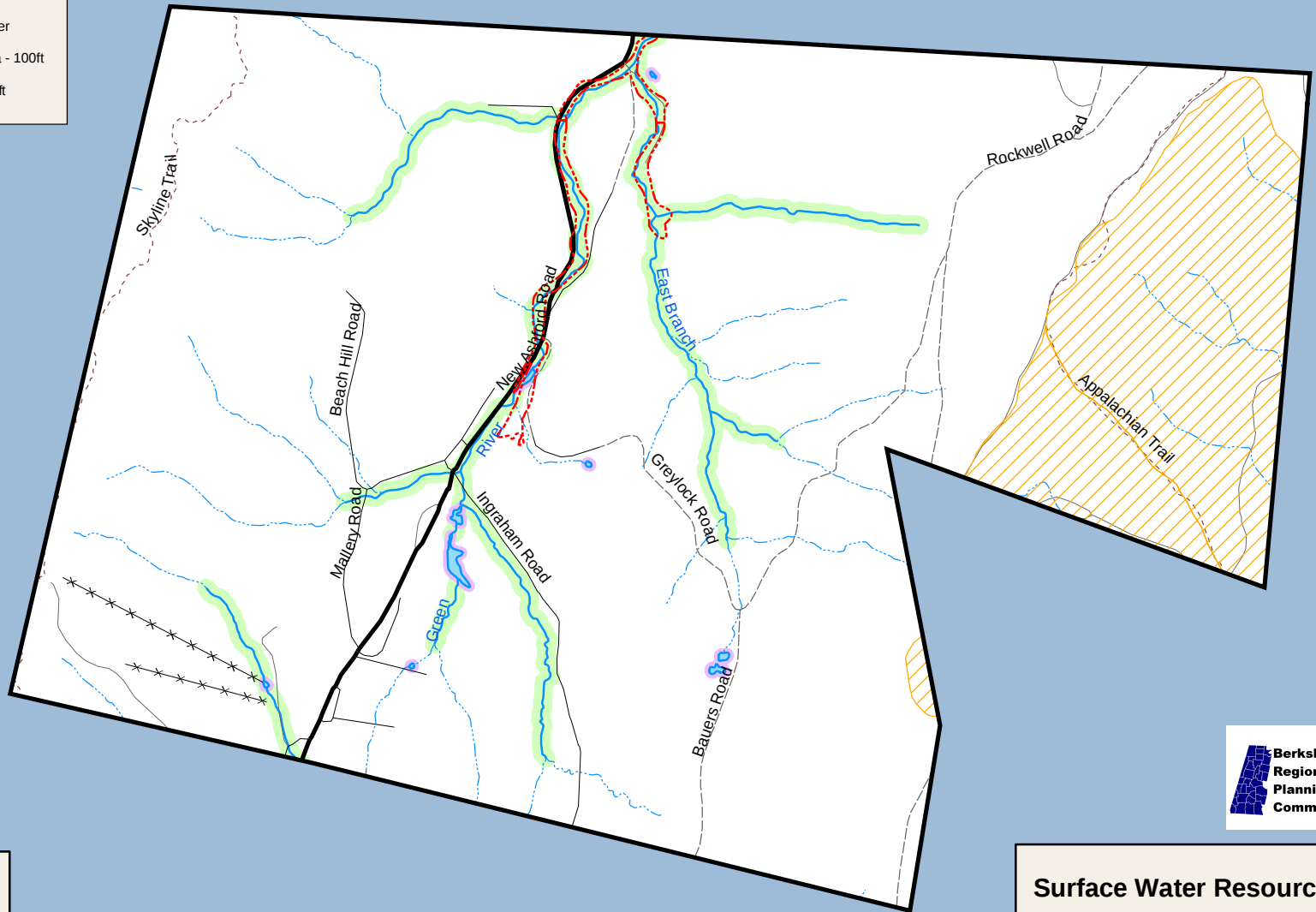
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North American Datum 1983



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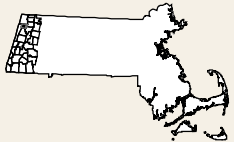
-  FEMA 100yr Flood Zone
-  Outstanding Resource Water
-  Lake / Pond Resource Area - 100ft
-  River Protection Area - 200ft



Surface Water Resources

Town of New Ashford

Community Development Plan



August 16, 2002
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Meters

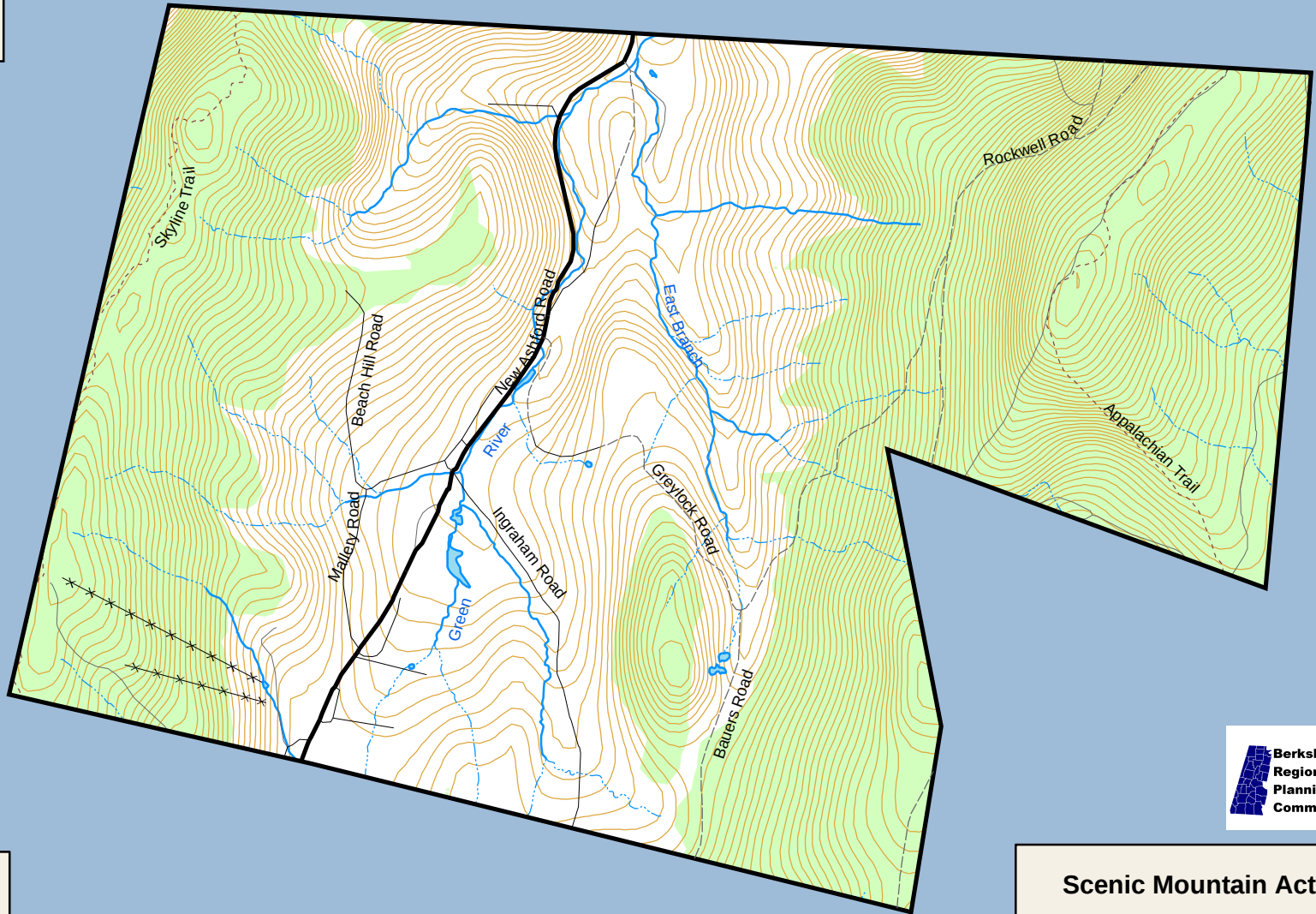
Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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10 meter contour interval

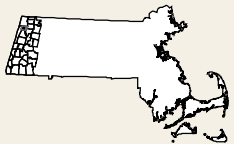
Elevation > 1700 ft



Scenic Mountain Act

**Town of
New Ashford**

Community
Development Plan



March 3, 2003
/cdp/nas/projects/sma.mxd

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Meters

Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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Rental Unit Density

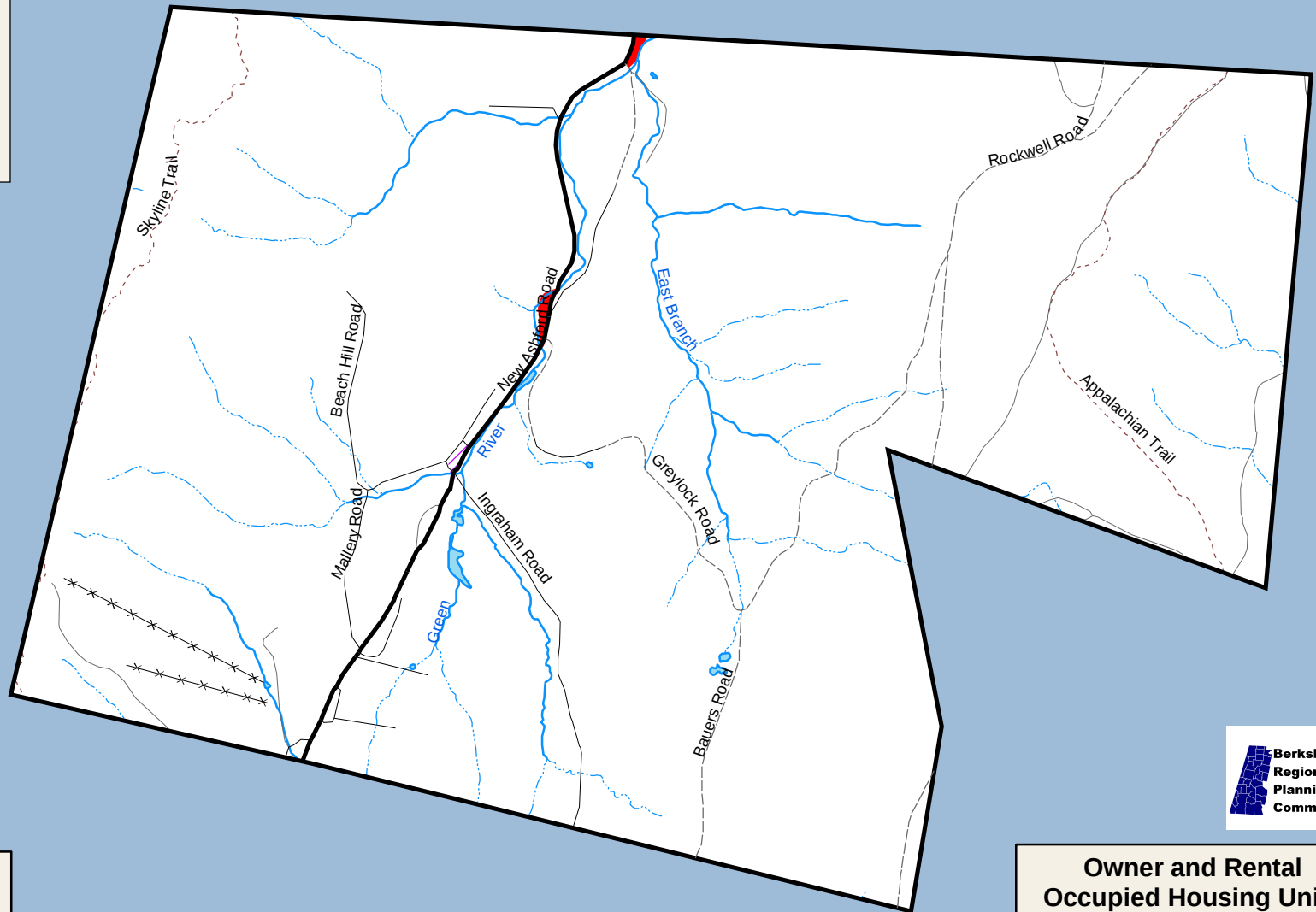
Less than .5 units/acre

 Greater than .5 units/acre

Owner Unit Density

 Less than .5 units/acre

 Greater than .5 units/acre



Owner and Rental
Occupied Housing Units

**Town of
New Ashford**

Community
Development Plan



July 8, 2002
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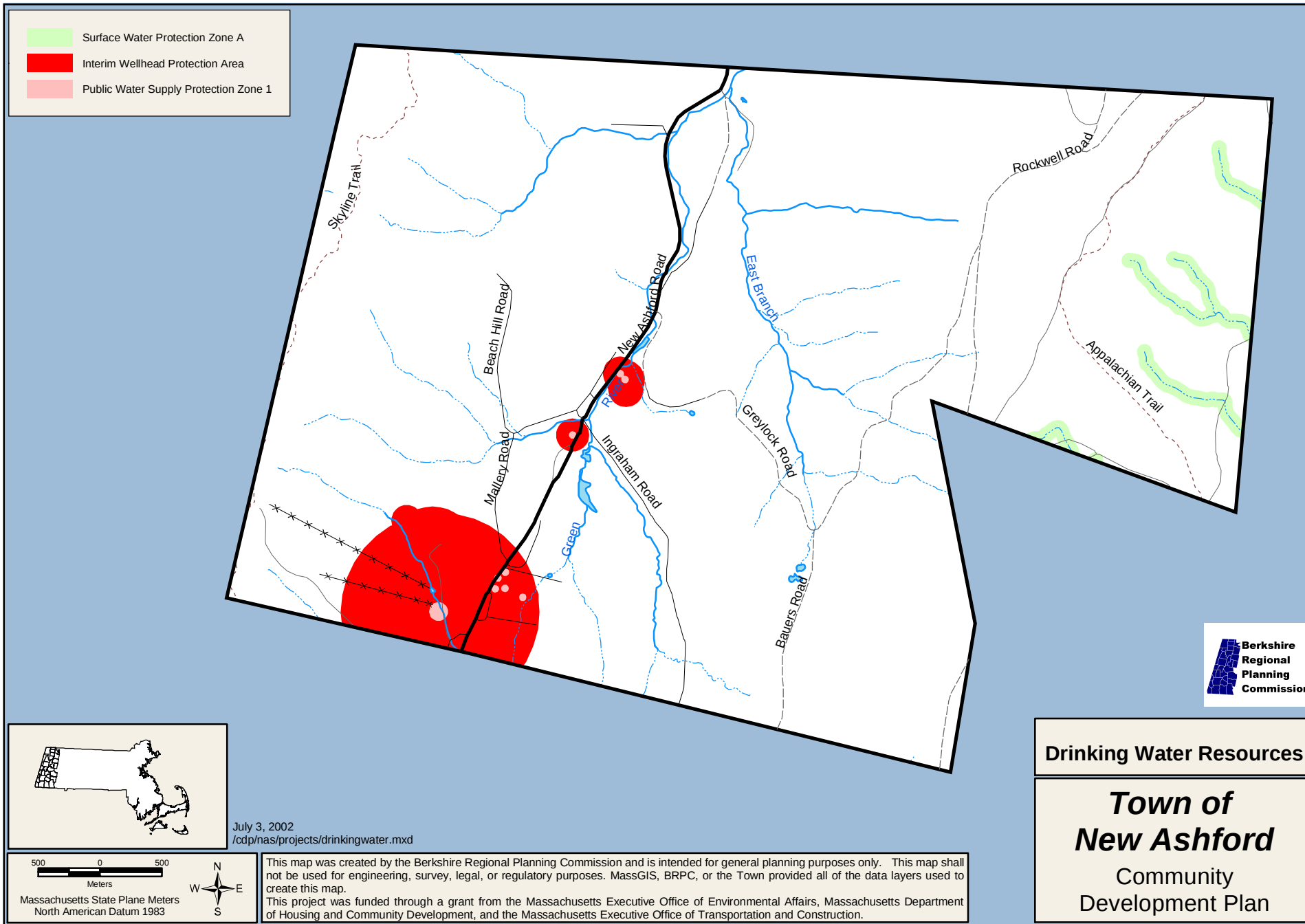
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Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Appendix



Appendix

Economic Development Data Profile for New Ashford	9-1
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Results of the 2002 New Ashford Town Survey	9-22
Minutes from the Town Forum and CDP Meetings	9-29
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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Appendix: Economic Development Data Profile for New Ashford

Introduction

This section examines the socio-economic trends in New Ashford and in the surrounding area of Berkshire County that affect economic development. Planning to maintain an adequate supply of businesses while balancing concerns related to open space, natural resources, housing, transportation, infrastructure, and community services is a challenging task. Planning for economic development begins with analysis of detailed information on the local economy in order to identify specific concerns and potential areas in which the town may encourage business and employment. Several factors may indicate the community's economic stability, strengths and potential areas in which to guide business development that emulates the character of the community. Some of these factors are:

- Supply and diversity of local employment opportunities
- Size, education, and skill level of the Local Labor Force
- Supply of affordable housing and transportation available for local workers
- Amount of existing businesses, buildings, infrastructure, or developable land for new businesses
- Local commercial tax rates, regulations and permitting processes that are conducive to business
- Economic trends and characteristics of the regional economy
- Financial, educational, and developmental resources available

This section presents information and analysis on potential factors that may indicate the Town's strengths and weaknesses in terms of economic development. Economic development is closely linked with the fiscal stability of the town and local residential tax rates. Therefore, planning for new commercial development should include community concern for land preservation, other developments. In order to weigh the fiscal costs of different types of development on the town and local taxpayers, the economic profile includes a detailed analysis of fiscal costs of different types of developments within the Town.

Demographics, Population and Labor Force Characteristics

Historical Population Counts

The population of New Ashford has increased by over 35% since 1970. The population of the surrounding area of Berkshire County has been decreasing steadily since 1970 by an average of approximately 3% every 10 years.

Table E-1 Historical Population Counts

	New Ashford, MA	Berkshire County
1970	183	149,402
1980	159	145,110
1990	192	139,352
2000	247	134,953

Source: U.S Census 2000 and Census Figures from BRPC Data Book, 2001

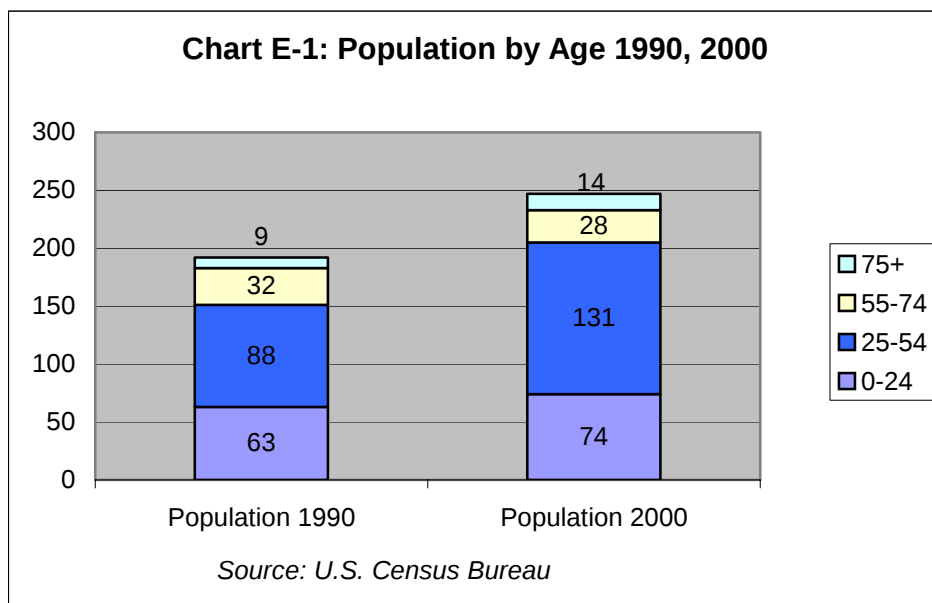
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Population By Age

The population of New Ashford has been increasing steadily for the past 20 years. The past ten years have seen an especially dramatic increase in New Ashford residents. From 1990-2000, while the population of the surrounding area of Berkshire County has decreased by 3.2%, the year-round population of New Ashford increased by over 28%. The majority of this increase was in residents of the age group 25-54, whose population increased 48.8% from 1990-2000. Young residents aged 0-24 also increased by over 17% from 1990-2000, while the number of residents over age 55 stayed roughly the same.



Employment and Labor Force

According to the Massachusetts Dept. of Employment and Training, the Town's Total Labor force as of April 2002 was 126. This number has risen only slightly since 1995. New Ashford residents experienced a 5.6% unemployment rate in April 2002, which was higher than the statewide unemployment rate of 4.4%. Chart E-2 and Table E-2 detail the employment figures for New Ashford residents from 1995 to 2002 as compared to the State.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD

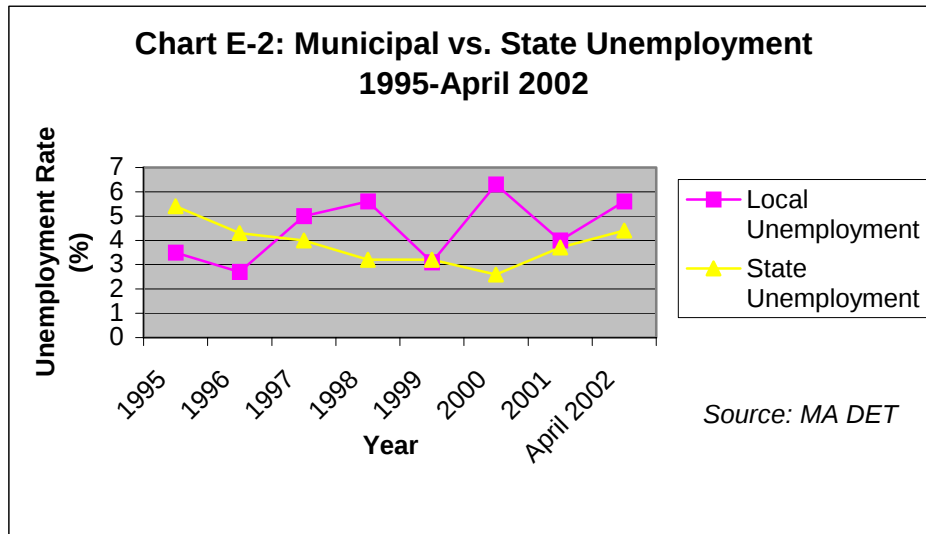


Table E-2: Municipal Unemployment vs. State Unemployment				
Year	Local Labor Force	Local Unemployed	Local Unemployment Rate	State Unemployment Rate
1995	113	4	3.5	5.4
1996	113	3	2.7	4.3
1997	120	6	5.0	4.0
1998	126	7	5.6	3.2
1999	127	4	3.1	3.2
2000	127	8	6.3	2.6
2001	124	5	4.0	3.7
April 2002	126	7	5.6	4.4

Source: MA Department of Employment and Training

Local Household Income Levels

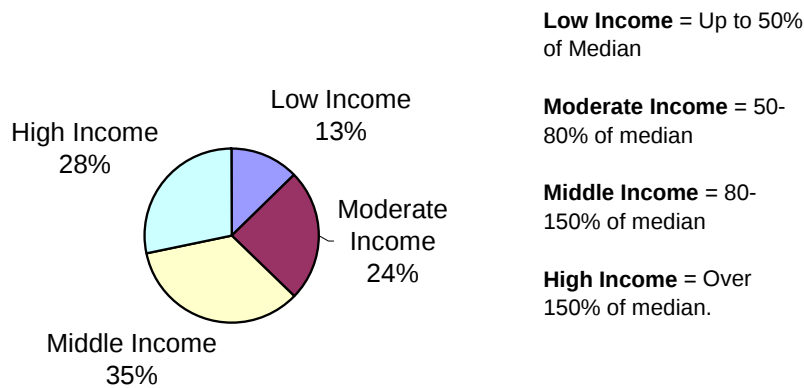
In the US Census of 2000, the Town had a median household income of \$51,250. Eleven percent (13%) of the Town's households earned \$25,760 or less, which is considered low income by EO418 guidelines (earning up to 50% of the Town's median income). Twenty-four percent (23%) of the town earned between \$25,760 and \$41,000, which was considered moderate income (earning 50-80% of the median income). Over 28% of the Town's households were considered high-income, earning over \$76,875 a year.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Chart E-3: Household Income Levels, 2000



Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

Educational Attainment

According to the 2000 census, 91% of the Town's residents aged 25 years or older had at least a high school degree, while 41% had at least a bachelor's degree. Throughout Berkshire County, 85% of this demographic have high school diplomas and 26% have bachelor's degree.

Local Educational Opportunities

Residents in Town have access to higher education (Associate's Level) and technical training programs at Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield. The Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams also offers undergraduate and graduate level programs accessible to both day and evening students. Two other residential private colleges serve the region: Williams College and Simon's Rock. Simon's Rock offers high school age students the opportunity to enroll in college programs. The University of Massachusetts also offers a MBA program in Pittsfield. Additional opportunities for technical training or skill-building are viewed as critical to workforce development in the region.

Workforce Development Programs

Residents in Town have access to a number of workforce development programs and economic development organizations offering workforce development activities, access to training grants, youth employment and training opportunities, strategic planning resources, and much more. These economic development programs and organizations are listed elsewhere in this report page with a description of the activities and resources in which they are involved.

Local Economic Characteristics

Municipal Taxes Property Values, and Parcel Counts

The total assessed value of all single-family residential property in 2002 was \$9,547,000. The total value of all residential property was \$14,673,300, and the total assessed value of all property in town was \$22,048,500. The tax rate was \$9.19 for all residential property and open space, and \$12.98 for all commercial and personal property. Table E-3 shows New Ashford's tax assessments are largely based on residential tax levies. Over 68% of Assessed property

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



value is in residential property, while slightly over 31% of assessed property value is in commercial and personal property in town.

Table E-3 New Ashford Fiscal Year 2002 Total Assessed Values by Class

	Residential	Open Space	Commercial	Ind.	Personal Property	Total
Assessed Value	\$14,673,300	448,100	5,160,200	0	1,766,900	22,048,500
Tax Levy	134,848	4,118	66,979	0	22,934	228,879

Source: MA Department of Revenue

Table E-4 New Ashford Taxable Parcel Counts for FY 2002

Single Family	Multi Fam.	Condo	Apt	Misc. Res.	Vacant Land	Open Space	Com.	Ind.	Other Usage	Total
75	3	0	0	4	99	14	18	0	8	221

Source: MA Department of Revenue

Table E-5: All Parcel Counts From the Town Assessor- July 2002

	PARCELS	TOTAL ACRES
Single Family	84	971
Multi Family	4	4
Condo	0	0
Apt	0	0
Misc. Residential	2	1160
Vacant Land	96	983
Open Space	14	1028
Commercial	16	1064
Industrial	0	0
Chapter 61	2	24
State Lands	7	3213
Municipal	1	1
TOTAL	226	5582

Source: New Ashford Town Assessor's Office, July 2002

Local Business Characteristics

Local Business Inventory

As of July 2002, the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training lists 10 businesses in Town employing a total of 95 employees. Many of the local jobs are seasonal, ski area jobs that may not be included in the figure.

The local economy is largely influenced by seasonal tourism relating to Brodie Mt. Ski area. The great majority of jobs in Town are in the service industry. According to figures from the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training (DET), New Ashford's businesses employ 95 people with an average wage of \$474.30 a week, or \$24,663 a year. At this level, it would take more than two people in a household working full time to earn the median household income of \$51,250.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Approximately 70% of the Town's employers and over 92% of Town jobs are in service producing Industries. 30% of Town employers and 8% of jobs are in goods producing industries. Average wage of goods producing employees was \$258 a week, or \$13,416 a year. The other 3 businesses and 8 employees are in goods producing industries, which earn employees an average weekly wage of \$690, or \$35,880 a year.

Table E-6: Employment and Wages			
	Employers	Jobs	AVG weekly wage
Total for Goods Producing Industries:	3	8	690.01
Total for Service Producing Industries:	7	87	258.59
Total For All Industries:	10	95	474.30

Source: MA Dept of Employment and Training

Regional Business Overview

According to an analysis of employment in the Berkshires by the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board ("Blueprint") 9 industry segments (Table E-7) are defined as "critical" to the region since these 9 provide the preponderance of employment opportunities, or about 78% of the jobs – in the region.

TABLE E-7 – Critical Industries in Berkshire County

Industry	(% Workforce)
Health & Human Services	16.1%
Travel & Tourism	14.0%
Retail	13.6%
Education	11.2%
Paper/Plastics	8.7%
Construction	5.3%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	4.1%
Business Services	2.8%
Applied Technology	2.5%
Total:	78.3%

Source: Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, 2001

Current Local Growth Trends

While the population has increased steadily, the total annual payroll and total number of jobs available in New Ashford has been on a steady decline since 1985. The total annual payroll of businesses located in New Ashford has decreased, and the number of jobs has decreased by almost 60% since 1985. Average annual wages have increased slightly since 1985.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Table E-8: Employment and Wages by Industry						
Year	Total Annual Payroll	Avg. Annual Wage	Establishments	Total	Construction	Services
1985	\$2,107,200	\$8,012	4	263	conf.	conf.
1986	\$1,714,000	\$7,171	6	239	conf.	226
1987	\$1,773,400	\$9,188	6	193	conf.	167
1988	\$2,350,100	\$11,929	7	197	5	170
1989	\$2,314,112	\$11,747	9	197	5	conf.
1990	\$1,663,256	\$9,089	9	183	conf.	conf.
1991	\$1,459,945	\$10,735	9	136	conf.	120
1992	\$1,503,998	\$11,481	9	131	7	114
1993	\$1,622,731	\$10,402	8	156	conf.	139
1994	\$1,824,846	\$11,698	7	156	conf.	141
1995	\$1,727,436	\$11,073	6	156	conf.	142
1996	\$1,879,445	\$11,254	7	167	conf.	149
1997	\$1,789,016	\$11,181	9	160	4	141
1998	\$1,856,497	\$12,295	10	151	5	117
1999	\$1,679,084	\$12,625	11	133	5	91
2000	\$1,627,035	\$14,791	9	110	Conf	67

conf. = confidential

Source: [MA Dept of Employment and Training](#)

Current Regional Growth Trends & Emerging Industries

The 2001 Regional Employment Board Workforce Development Blueprint has identified business services atop 5 other industry sectors with growth rates in employment in excess of 10%, represent the region's "emerging" industries (Table E-9).

TABLE E-9: Emerging Industries in Berkshire County - 2001		
Industry:	Growth Rate(%):	% of Workforce Employed:
Business Services	25	2.8%
Misc. Retailing	18	4.5%
Spec. Trades Contractors	18	2.6%
Gen'l. Building Contractors	18	1.0%
Amusement & Recreation	15	2.3%
Personal Services	12	1.2%
Source: Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, 2001		

Another recently recognized growth area in Berkshire County is in the Technology Enterprise sector, which is comprised of four major types of activity: Software and Systems Design; Design and Art; Content and Publishing; and Information Technology (IT) Business Consulting. The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute recently completed the first major study of the growth of technology enterprise sector in Berkshire County. The study, *Technology Enterprise in Berkshire County: Economic Analysis, Feb 2002*, reports that since 1993, the Technology Enterprise sector has grown at a higher rate than every major division of the Berkshire economy in terms of firm growth, employment growth, and real annual payroll growth. The study shows

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



that payroll for Technology Enterprise firms increased by 190% from 1993-2002, while total payroll in the region increased by only 13.5%.

Future Growth Areas Regionally

Berkshire County's future base is very much tied to its strong past manufacturing base industries – though with substantially fewer employees, but unprecedented output value as measured by Gross Regional Product

Economic forecasts provided by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission using the REMI model indicate that while the service sector will continue its upward trajectory in numbers of employees, high technology and high productivity manufacturing will continue to be the structural and economic base of the region's economy. Job growth within the major sectors of the regional economy is slated to continue and remain roughly the same proportionally out to 2025. Services are expected to continue to climb in employment to almost 50% of total employment by 2025, with healthcare services being the leading employer regionally within this sector. Increasing numbers of service jobs can be expected to affect overall wages and income in this region.

Technology Enterprise is also expected to continue to increase its substantial impact on Berkshire County's economy. According to an anonymous survey by the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, companies associated with this sector reported a positive business outlook, with 75% expecting increased revenues over the next three years and 96% reporting they are likely to remain in Berkshire County for the next 5 years.

Employment Outlook

Concerns have been raised both by the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board and the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training's publication on regional workforce trends that much of the job growth taking place in the Berkshires is in low wage segments of the service and retail sectors. At the same time, businesses throughout the region have experienced a difficulty in recruiting qualified employees with job skills and technical abilities matching employer needs.

The number of higher paying small, or "micro" businesses has been growing in the area. The role of small or "micro" businesses is of interest in Town and in the surrounding region for its importance in economic development – especially because of changes in where and how people work. Advances in telecommunications technology and the growth of personal computers in the home have meant many more people can – and do – work at home as self-employed contractors and consultants. Results of the Donahue Institute study on Technology Enterprise found that Berkshire County was home to 1,500 Technology Enterprise sole proprietorships, as well as 154 employer firms with an average of eight employees. This contrasts with the 39 per firm average in manufacturing businesses, and the 15 per firm in the average services industry business in Berkshire County.

Self-employment has been increasing at a faster rate than wage and salary employment both regionally and on a national level. Data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis for 1998 for the Berkshire region indicate that proprietorships (both farm and non-farm) represent about 18% of total regional employment, and have increased in number about 2.8% from 1994.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Factors Influencing Future Economic Development in New Ashford

Workforce Availability

Companies in emerging sectors of the Berkshire economy, especially Technology Enterprises, are highly dependent on the attraction and retention of a well-educated and professional workforce. A variety of creative and intellectual skills are in demand along with specific technical expertise. Although the population of New Ashford has increased, the population remains low and is not conducive to attracting businesses that require a large workforce with a specific skill set.

Housing availability for a Future Work Force

Housing information provided by town officials and the 2000 census show evidence that demand continues to be placed upon newly constructed housing. Census figures show 13 units, or 12% of the housing stock was listed as vacant. Median contract rent rose only 16% from 1990 to 2000, climbing from \$465 to \$542, while the state median contract rent increased by over 33% during this time. Approximately 3% of the town's housing stock is seasonal. The 2000 vacancy rate for housing units in Town increased slightly from 7% to 12%.

Land Availability for Future Business

Assessor data as of July 2002 shows two parcels of vacant, developable commercial land covering a total of 17 acres in Town. 512 acres on 7 parcels are listed as accessory to commercial parcels as unprotected woodlands and unprotected agricultural lands.

Compatibility with Existing Land Use & Regional Plans

The Town currently has business/residential zoning expanding through the entire Route 7 corridor, which has a few larger existing commercial buildings in the center of town. The town also has lenient bylaws permitting home occupancies, making home businesses and small-scale enterprise a viable option for current and future residents and possibly an important part of the town's future economy.

Infrastructure, Service Demands & Available Utilities

New Ashford does not have a municipal water and sewer systems. According to the BRPC 2001 Data Book, 100% of the population is served by on-site waste disposal. Western Massachusetts Electric Company provides electricity service for the Town, but no gas service is provided. Trash disposal is done at the Town Transfer station, however trash pick-up service is provided for a fee.

Tourism, Recreation and New Seasonal Residences

The Town of New Ashford Planning Board has received plans for resort development within the Planned Unit Resort District in the vicinity of Brodie Mountain. Plans call for over three hundred new seasonal housing units at the resort. Currently, according to table E-5, the town has approximately eighty-four housing units. Increased residential development in town may increase demand for necessary goods and services such as food and fuel, and may contribute to local service industry jobs related to travel and tourism.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Local and Regional Workforce Development Programs

Listed below are key organizations – both public and private – and a brief summary of recent activities in support of regional economic development and/or recent assessments or studies, which have fostered understanding of regional economic issues:

Berkshire Council for Growth

Leading the coalition-building effort has been the Council for Growth, established in 1998 as a regional outgrowth of the Cellucci Administration's Berkshire Jobs Task Force. The Council and its committees, in partnership with volunteers from many private businesses and support from the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, have coordinated/spearheaded a number of important regional initiatives including a regional jobs website, www.berkshirejobs.com.

Berkshire Applied Technology Council

Formed in 1997/1998 as a partnership of businesses and government, local schools, Berkshire Community College, and regional 4-year colleges, the Council's mission is to establish the Berkshire region as a technology center of excellence. The Council's goal is to address the workforce needs of manufacturing companies and industries in the region through a long-range strategy of technology-focused educational initiatives. Providing state of the art educational programs, the Berkshire Applied Technology Council addresses the need for technically trained employees. Berkshire Applied Technology Council has sponsored the following:

TECHPATH: This workforce/educational program was developed in 1997 to link high school to associate to baccalaureate degrees with a high technology curriculum specifically integrating local industry applications. The TECHPATH program is designed to be accessible to incumbent workers, as well as a seamless link in motivating and developing future high tech workers. Over 50 students are currently enrolled in the program.

WOMEN ON TECH PATH PROGRAM: A collaboration with Berkshire Community College, this project will offer after-school training to 22 young women (from the 11 regional public schools) in engineering, graphics/animation, and information technology. A follow-up summer program – the Internet Academy – will also provide job shadowing and electronic networking components.

Berkshire Connect

A regional initiative cited by the Federal Communications Commission in 2000 as a national model for efforts to improve telecommunications access in rural or under-served areas with a cost-effective solution to help drive regional economic activity. The partnership agreement with Global Crossing/Equal Access Networks has resulted in building sufficient telecommunications infrastructure and services to support the needs of businesses and industry in this region at a competitive and affordable price.

Berkshire County Regional Employment Board (BCREB)

The BCREB is the local organization responsible for assisting employers with workforce development activities, access to training grants, youth opportunities, and strategic planning & oversight. It helps access the following programs: Career Center, Workforce Training Fund, Department of Employment and Training, Berkshire Training and Employment Program, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Advantage Employee Network and Full Employment Program. It also promotes the School-to-Work Initiative, Summer of Work and Learning and Welfare-to-Work Initiative. Two key documents published by the BCREB are its Workforce Development Blueprint (1998, 2000 & 2001 draft) and Workforce Needs Assessment (May, 2000).

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TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



Economic Development Organizations

There are a number of regional and local economic development organizations, each with defined geographic service areas and unique missions. These include:

- Berkshire Enterprises: Berkshire Enterprises runs ten-week training programs addressing a wide range of issues that serve as the foundation for new entrepreneurs. The focus is on business plan development, financing, marketing and management.
- Berkshire Housing Development Corporation
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- Berkshire Training and Employment Program
- Berkshire Visitors Bureau
- Community Development Corporation of Southern Berkshire
- Division of Employment and Training
- Lee Community Development Corporation
- Massachusetts Office of Business Development
- Northern Berkshire Community Development Corporation
- Northern Berkshire Industrial Park and Development Corporation
- Pittsfield Economic Development Authority
- Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Appendix: The Fiscal Analysis: Land Use vs. Costs of Community Services

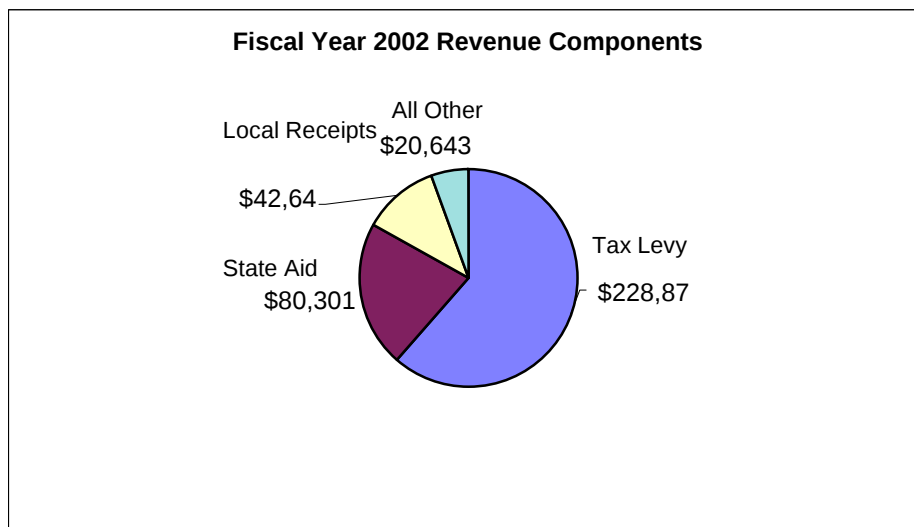
Introduction

The Fiscal Analysis is an attempt to outline the net impact that certain types of uses have upon the town's annual finances. The analysis determines land use for a parcel of land by the parcel's Property Class, as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Single family housing, multi-family housing, vacant land, industrial and commercial are each examples of property classes. In theory, each parcel of land places a certain cost burden on the town according to its use. Businesses rely on the town to maintain roads in order to move goods and services, and residents rely on the town to educate their children in public schools. To make up for these shared costs, each parcel of land is given an assessed value, by which the land is taxed, and an annual source of revenue, or tax levy, is generated income for the town.

TOWN REVENUES and INCOME

Fiscal Year 2002 Revenue Components

The tax levy isn't the only source of income for the town. In fact, it is one of four general town income sources. The Chart titled *Fiscal Year 1987-2001 Revenue Components* outlines the town's four sources of income at the most general level: Tax Levy, State Aid, Local Receipts, and Other Sources. Total revenues for the town in 2002 totaled \$372,471, with Tax Levy comprising 61% (\$228,879), State Aid at 22% (80,301), Local Receipts at 11% (\$42,648), and Other Sources comprising 6% (\$20,643). The following charts outline these four general revenue components in greater detail.



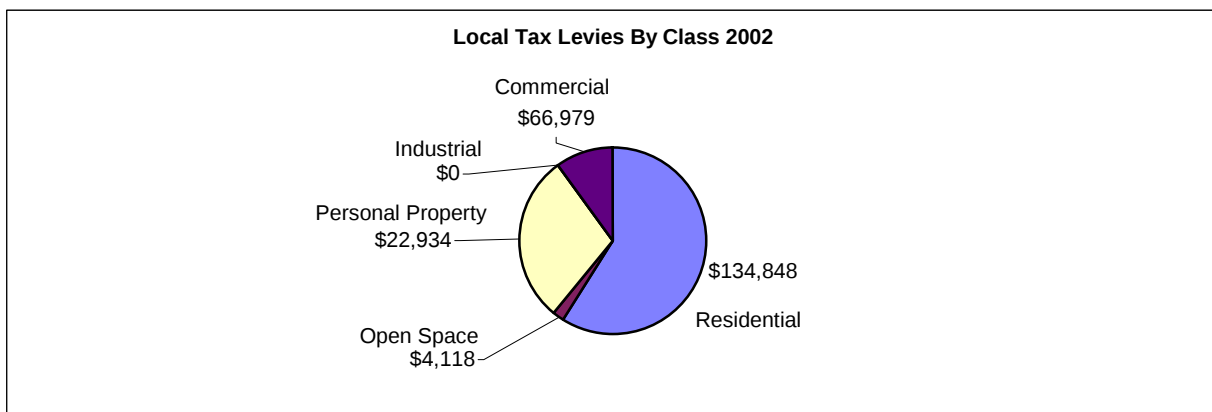
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

TOWN OF NEW ASHFORD



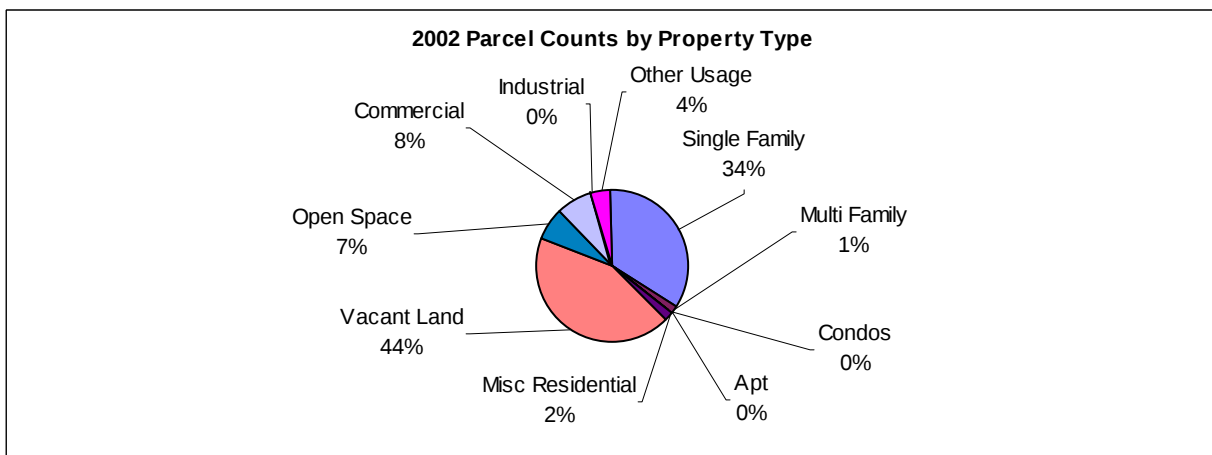
Local Tax Levies by Class 2002

The first type of revenue source is the Tax Levy. In 2002, the Town received \$372,471 in total revenues and receipts. Over half of this (\$228,879), was from the local tax levy. The local tax levy is largely based on four property classes covering Residential, Open Space, Commercial, and Industrial properties. The fifth property class is Personal Property, which is gained from taxes on second home furnishings and certain types of equipment and machinery. A broad tax base, derived from an even distribution of parcel types, reduces the town's dependence on any one population. The majority of the town's local tax levy in 2002, 59.9% of all town levy, was from residential property, which is single family homes, multi family homes, apartments, condos, and vacant residential land. Twenty-nine percent of the tax levy (\$66,979) is from commercial property.



Fiscal Year 2002 Parcel Counts by Property Class

Local Tax Levies are assigned by land parcel. The chart titled *2002 Parcel Counts by Property Class* shows the makeup of the town's land parcels. A broad tax base, derived from an even distribution of parcel types, reduces the town's dependence on any one particular business or use. The town has 221 total taxable parcels. The largest grouping of town parcels, 99 parcels (45%), is vacant land, while 75 (34%) are used for single-family homes. The previous section showed that commercial parcels comprise 29% of the town's tax base, but the parcel counts chart shows that commercial revenue comes from a very small number of parcels comprising only 8% of the town's parcels. This suggests a lack of diversity in the commercial tax base and a large fiscal dependence of New Ashford on a very small number of parcels.



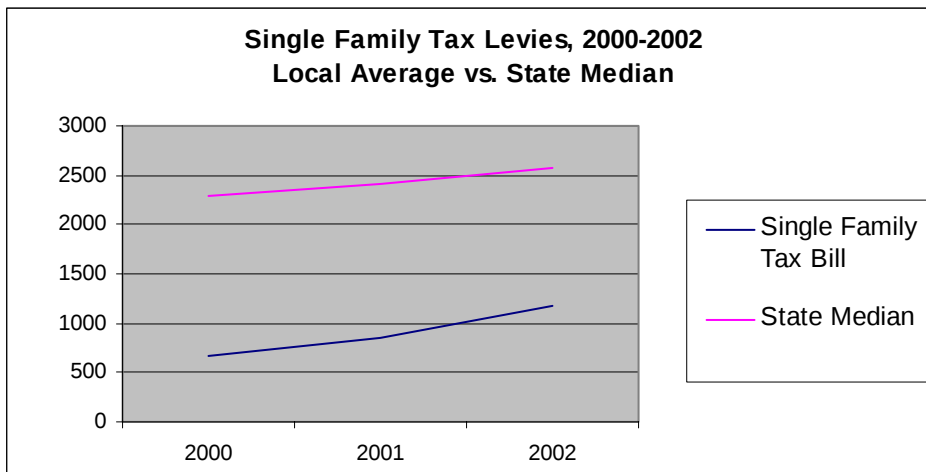
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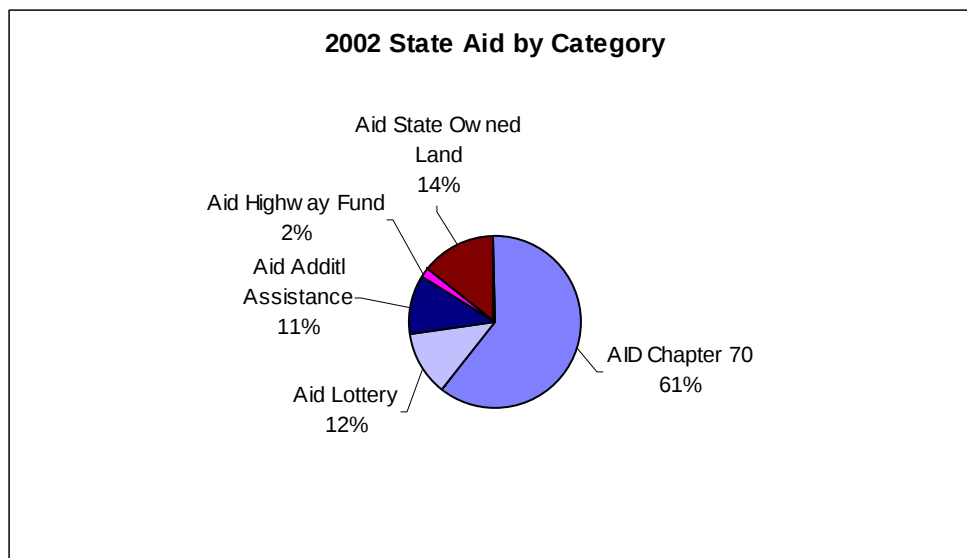
Single Family Tax Levies

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue's *Property Class Definitions*, demonstrates that Residential Tax Levies are gained from Single Family tax levies, multi-family and apartment tax levies, and condominium tax levies. This chart details the residential levies from single-family residential parcels in New Ashford. The chart shows that single family levies resulted in \$87,737 in town revenue, or 65% of the residential tax levy. Data from the town assessor shows that the second largest contributor to the residential tax levy was vacant land, generating \$27,752 in levies, or 21% of the total residential levy. The remaining residential levy was generated from multi-family and mobile home parcels.



State Aid to New Ashford by Category, 2002

State Aid is not always a stable form of revenue, and is subject to budget cuts annually. Nineteen percent (22%) of New Ashford's 2002 total receipts were from State Aid, totaling \$80,301. The majority of State Aid to New Ashford (\$48,420 or 60%) was Chapter 70 funding for education. The second largest contributor was PILOT funds for State owned lands (\$11,528 or 14% of State Aid) and the next largest contribution was Lottery monies (\$9,445 or 12% of State Aid).



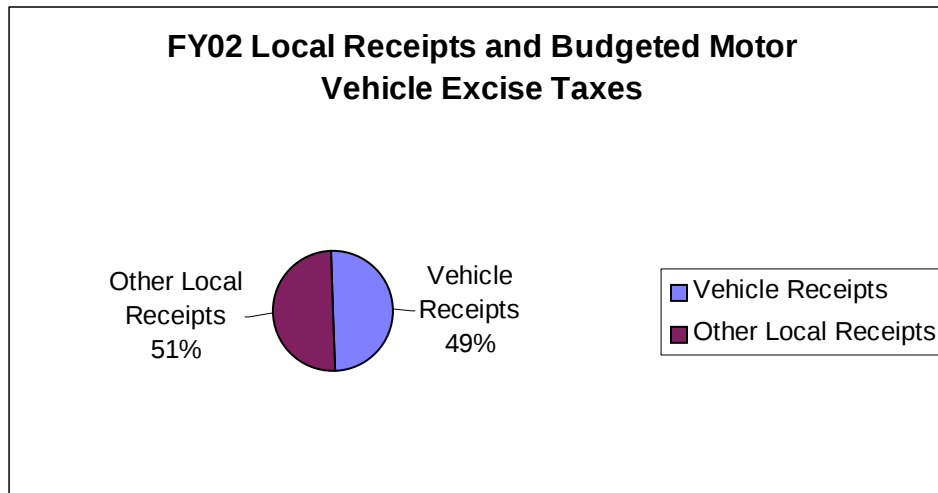
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Fiscal Year 2002 Local Receipts and Actual Motor Vehicle Excise

The last component of the town's annual revenue to be detailed is local receipts. Local receipts amounted to \$42,648, or 11% of the town's annual revenue in 2002. Local receipts include revenues from auto excise taxes, penalties, fines, and permits. Auto excise receipts are the largest component of Local Receipts, comprising \$21,000, or forty nine percent (49%) of all local receipts.



Other Revenue

Twelve percent (6%) of New Ashford's 2002 revenues were from Other Sources. These sources include chapter 90 highway funds, free cash, and other miscellaneous State sources that vary year to year.

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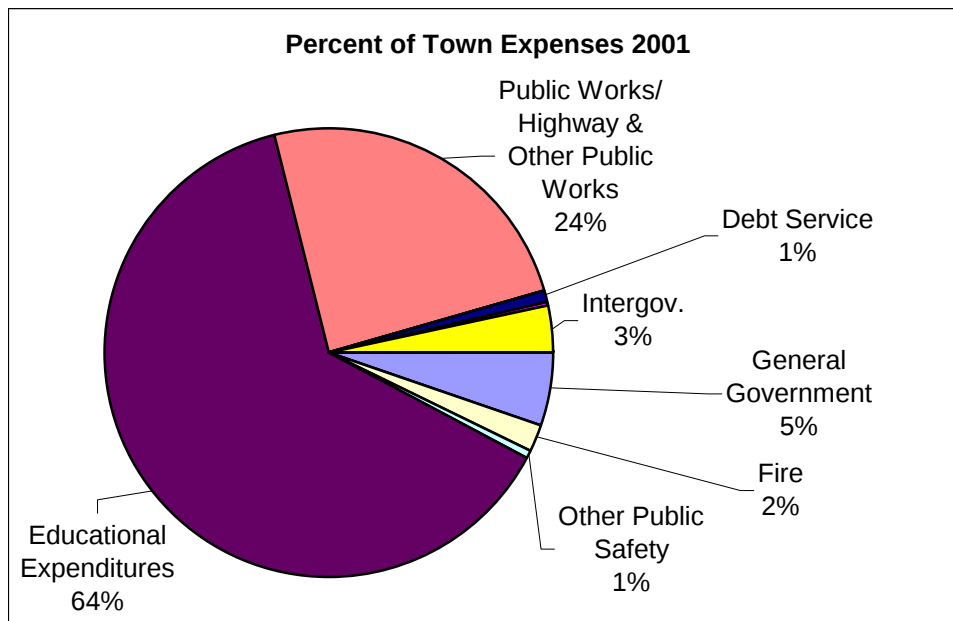
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TOWN EXPENDITURES

Local Expenses by Function 1987-2001

Tax levies, as described above, are put in place to pay for necessary town expenditures. The chart titled *Percent of Town Expenses 2001* outlines how the town's annual revenues are spent to pay for various town expenses. The expenses are called "General Fund" expenses related to operational costs of maintaining local government, town utilities and infrastructure, health, and education. Schools are such a major part of most towns' expenses that many times it is useful to separate them into school vs. non-school expenses. Such an analysis in New Ashford shows that school expenditures have been steadily increased while non-school expenditures have been steady or decreasing as a trend.

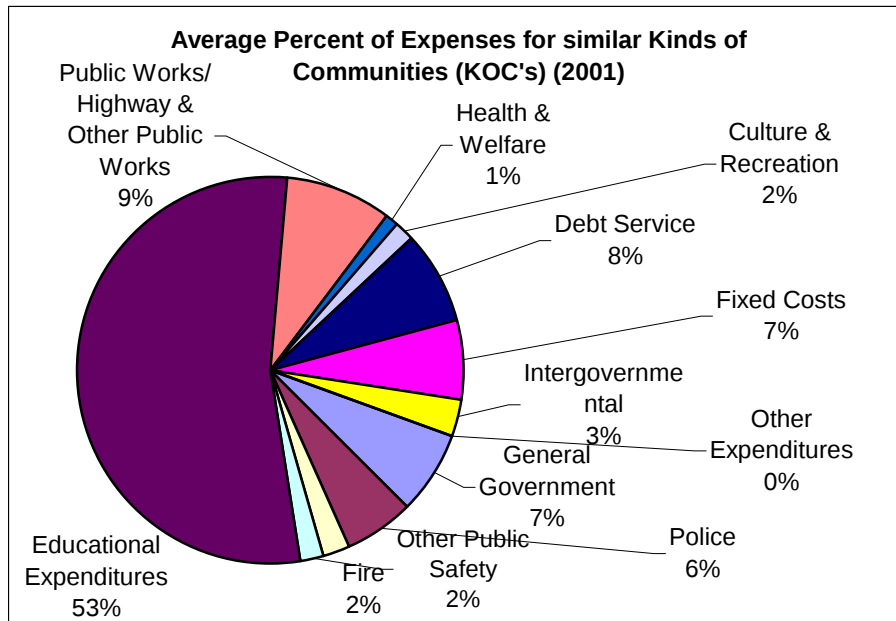


Overall Town Expenditures by Source Comparison. (New Ashford vs. Similar Communities)

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue categorizes towns by Kind Of Community, or KOC. The KOC is a grouping formed to compare towns with other towns of similar sizes, with similar infrastructure and budgets. Using this comparison for New Ashford, we see that New Ashford's expenses are well below those of similar kinds of communities. New Ashford places a greater emphasis on education and public works spending, and less on debt services, fixed costs, and police. The high percentage of spending on education is typical for Berkshire County towns with limited infrastructures and low overall town and governmental expenses.

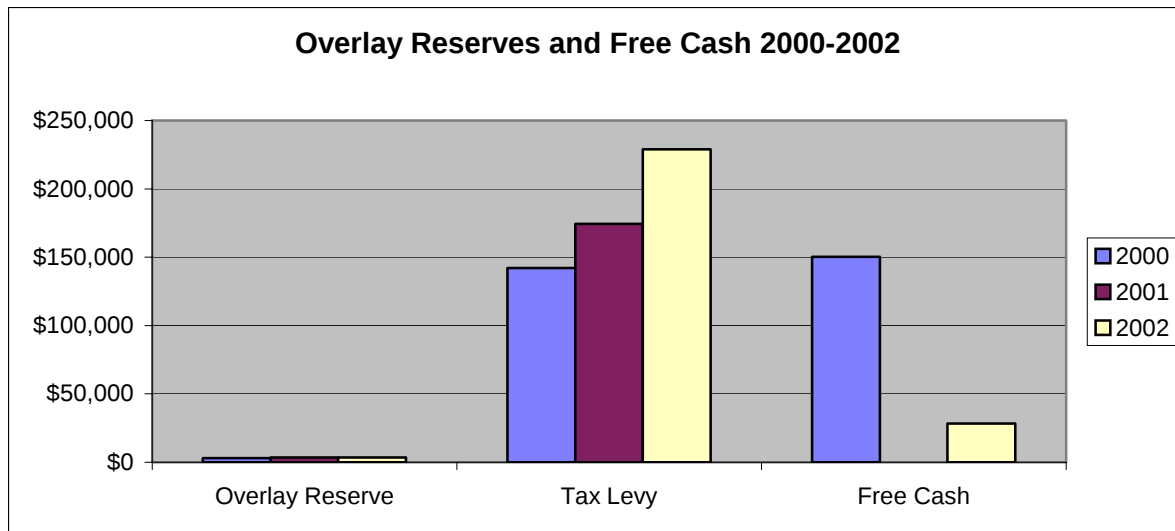
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Overlay Reserves and Free Cash FY2000-2002

Overlay reserves and free cash are kept on hand in order to pay for various town expenses and purchases not covered by the town's general fund and operational expenses. In 2002, New Ashford has contributed approximately 1.6% of the town levy to overlay reserves, which amounted to \$3,555. Free cash in 2000 was \$150,245, while there was no free cash in 2001, and \$28,306 in free cash in 2002.



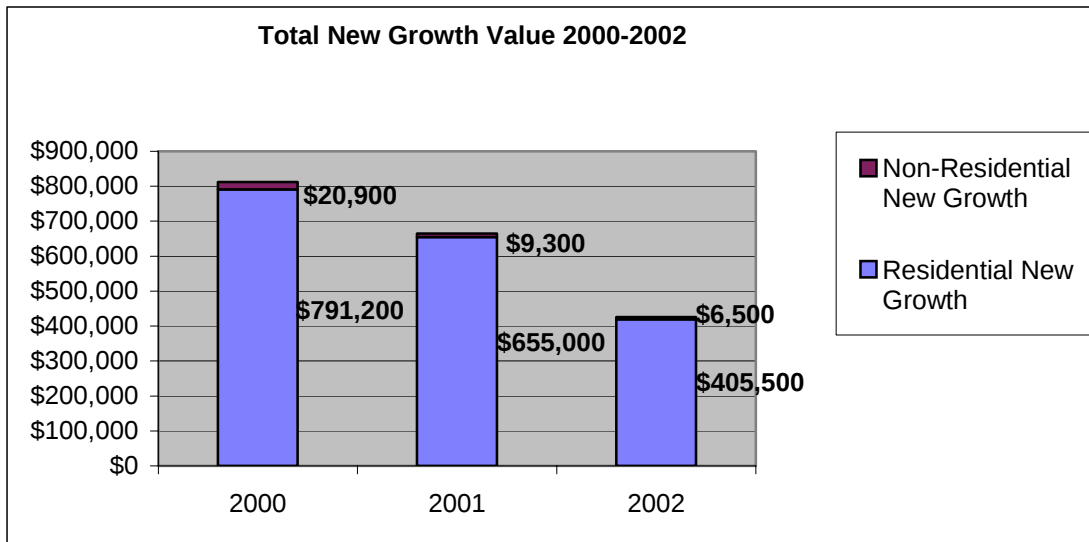
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Fiscal Year 2000-2002 New Growth Analysis

New Growth is a measure of the amount of new value added to the town's tax levy. New Ashford's new growth from 2000 to 2002 has been approximately 98% residential, and has steadily decreased in the past three years, showing that the level of new construction in New Ashford has decreased. New Growth in 2000 added \$812,000 in new taxable property value to the tax rolls. Growth in 2001 amounted to \$664,300. New growth in 2002 added approximately half of the 2000 level at \$412,000 in new value.



RESULTS OF THE FISCAL ANALYSIS: Land Use vs. Costs of Community Services

Background/Methodology

This worksheet compares the total costs and revenues for each type of parcel in New Ashford. The methodology uses the three assumptions listed below to assign both costs and revenues to a particular type of parcel.

Three Assumptions:

- (1) Aside from educational expenses, each residential, commercial, and industrial parcel generates an equal share of Town expenses for infrastructure and government.
- (2) Students in town do not live in seasonal condos, vacant land, commercial, or industrial properties - therefore they do not incur educational costs.
- (3) Vacant land requires no utilities or infrastructure, and therefore poses no cost to the town.

Using these three assumptions, costs and revenues were assigned to each parcel as categorized by land use. For example, State Aid that is allocated by population is assigned as revenue gained by the types of parcels where the year-round population resides, such as single-family, multi-family, and apartment categories. Similarly, these types of parcels are also responsible for costs that are incurred by year-round residents, such as educational expenses. Following assumption 2, we declare that condos do not house year-round residents, and therefore are not assigned responsibility for either State Aid revenues or educational expenses attributed to year-round residential use.

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If more than one type of parcel is responsible for a cost or revenue, the costs and revenues are split among the appropriate categories at a ratio according to the number of parcels of each category. For example, if single family parcels (consisting of 75 total parcels) and multiple family parcels (consisting of 3 total parcels) share a cost, 3 units of that total cost go to multi-family category, while 75 units of that total cost go to the single family category. When the total costs and the total revenues are determined for each parcel category, the net revenue, or net fiscal impact is determined for a single parcel of each category.

The revenue and expense components of the fiscal analysis were gained from the records of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services. Assessed values and parcel numbers used to determine property tax levies for 2002 were retrieved from Town of New Ashford's 2002 la-4 form submitted by the New Ashford Town Assessor to the State Department of Revenue. The 2002 commercial and residential tax rates of 12.98 and 9.19 dollars per \$1,000 of assessed value was used to determine the local tax levy totals for each relevant category. Figures for the town's expenses and the town's state aid receipts used in this analysis were an average of the expenditures and aid receipts for year 2002.

Results of the Analysis

The analysis of costs and revenues by parcel resulted in several interesting findings summarized in Table 1. The report shows that the greatest benefit to the town is the commercial parcels, with annual net revenues of \$59,251. Vacant land parcels generate the next highest net revenue to the town, at \$25,752. The greatest net loss incurred by the town stems from single family parcels, which incurred a net revenue loss of \$105,462, stemming primarily from average educational expenditures that outweigh average annual tax revenues gained from single family homes.

Analyzing the data by parcel, we discover the largest revenue generator for the town is commercial properties, with average net revenues of \$3,292 per parcel. The second largest revenue generator for the town is tax exempt lands, with payments in lieu of taxes that net the town \$1,441 per parcel. The greatest net loss for the town comes in multi family homes, which were attributed similar educational costs yet only 69% of the assessed taxable property value of a single-family home. Single-family parcels also have significant net revenue losses of \$1,406 per parcel.

Table 1: Summary of Cost/Revenue Analysis By Parcel

	Parcels	Total FY2002 Assessed Value	Total Net Revenues	Revenues By Parcel
Single Family	75	\$ 9,547,000	-\$105,462	-\$1,406
Multi Family	3	\$ 262,200	-\$5,318	-\$1,773
Condos	0	\$ -	\$0	\$0
Apt	0	\$ -	\$0	\$0
Misc. Residential	4	\$ 1,345,300	\$2,059	\$515
Vacant Land	99	\$ 2,802,200	\$25,752	\$260
Open Space	14	\$ 448,100	\$4,118	\$294
Commercial	18	\$ 5,160,200	\$59,251	\$3,292
Industrial	0	\$ -	\$0	\$0
Other Usage	8	\$ 716,600	\$3,150	\$394
Tax Exempt	8	\$ 2,486,300	\$11,528	\$1,441

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Implications of the Data

One of the major implications of the Cost/Revenue analysis is that Single-Family homes, one of the most common types of parcel in town, do not pay for themselves at the current tax rate. A second implication is that the town's largest expense, by far, is education, and the fiscal impact of single family homes is primarily due to the necessary costs of educating the children living in them. A third major implication is that one commercial property generates enough positive revenue to cover the losses incurred by two single-family homes, but the town currently only has approximately one business for every four homes, which leaves the difference to be paid by property owners of vacant land. A fourth implication is that currently, open space and vacant lands are not only giving the town positive net revenues, but they are subsidizing the negative fiscal impacts incurred by the town's single family homes.

Single –Family Parcels

At the current tax rate, single-family parcels do not generate enough revenue to balance out the expenses they incur, which are primarily necessary educational expenses. In order for single-family homes to pay for themselves at the current assessed values, the residential tax rate would have to be doubled from the current 9.19% to 20.24%, which would more than double property taxes, increasing them by 120%. Although the majority of the town's assessed property value is residential, unlike neighboring areas, New Ashford has very few seasonal residences that generate property taxes without incurring educational costs.

	Total FY2002 Assessed Value	Tax Rate	Average Tax Bill	Total Net Revenues	Net Revenues By Parcel
Single Family, 2002	\$ 9,547,000	9.19%	\$1,170	-\$105,462	-\$1,406
Single Family, Calculated	\$ 9,547,000	20.24%	\$2,576	\$0	\$0

Education

The town's largest expense, by far, is education. In 2000, educational spending was 70.2% of all town expenditures. The negative fiscal impact of single-family homes is primarily due to the necessary costs of educating the children living in them. Adding to the impact is the fact that New Ashford has a relatively large percentage of students per households, with approximately 2 students for every 5 households in New Ashford in 2000. Although the majority of the town's assessed property value is residential, unlike neighboring areas, New Ashford has very few seasonal residences, which generate property taxes without incurring educational costs.

Open Spaces, Tax Exempt Properties and State Owned Lands

One of the greatest concerns for small towns is conserved open space and preserved lands that are exempt from taxation. Of particular interest to this analysis is the figure showing that tax-exempt properties generate positive net revenue for the town. Revenues for protected lands are currently based upon from the state's PILOT program (which is not guaranteed annual revenue for the town), and reduced valuations. The option for conserving lands at a limited net gain may be a factor in comparison large net losses incurred by certain types of development such as year round single-family housing.

Of additional interest is the fact that vacant lands are shown as the second highest source of positive net revenue for the town next to commercial properties. Taxes from vacant lands are therefore both an important source of revenue for the town to stabilize costs, but are additionally

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important to the town when facing the alternative of imposing additional negative revenues on the town with single-family home developments. The town therefore may have cause to offer landowners incentives to keep lands vacant.

Commercial Properties: Largest Source of Positive Revenue For the Town

The largest source of positive revenues in New Ashford comes from commercial properties. Commercial property generates \$59,251 in total positive net revenues, at an average of \$3,292 per parcel. One average commercial parcel generates enough positive revenue to cover the losses incurred by two single-family homes, but the town currently only has approximately one business for every four homes, which leaves the difference to be paid by property owners of vacant land. The small number of commercial parcels (18 parcels, or 8% of all town parcels) increases the town's fiscal dependency on a very limited number of taxpayers and businesses to generate 29% of the town's annual taxes. Additionally, encouraging new businesses would bring additional tax revenues without adding to the educational costs that comprise over 70% of the town's expenses.

Implications for Future Development

The chart titled *Total New Growth Value 2000 - 2001* shows that development, or new growth in New Ashford is decreasing, and it is almost entirely residential. Forecasts from the BRPC show that the diminishing amount of development is not expected to continue much longer, and will impact upon the town's finances. Using the results of the by-parcel analysis, we may see the fiscal impact of different types of residential development. Three scenarios are presented to compare the development of single family, year round residences with seasonal homes and mixed-use developments.

Scenario 1: Year-Round Single Family Housing: The Subdivision

Scenario 1 is an example of a type of residential subdivision allowed in New Ashford. The example subdivision is on approximately 45 acres and contains 20 single-family houses intended for year-round use. Assuming that these houses are built at an assessed value average for the town, and the number of children living in these homes are consistent with that of existing New Ashford neighborhoods, each new house will cost the town an average of \$1,406 once built. The total annual cost of this development would be \$28,120, and according to 2002 values, the town's residential tax rate would have to be raised 25% from 9.19 to 11.52 to make up for the loss in net revenue.

Scenario 2: Seasonal Single Family Housing: Homes without Students

Scenario 2 is similar in appearance to scenario 1, but assumes that the use of the homes is seasonal and not year round, therefore removing educational costs from the financial picture. Assume that, like scenario 1, the example contains approximately 45 acres and contains approximately 20 single-family houses built at an assessed value average for the town. Removing educational costs and state aid education revenues from single-family houses, each seasonal home will generate positive net tax revenues of \$740 for the town. The total annual net revenue of this development would be \$14,800.

Scenario 3: Mixed Use Business and Residential

Scenario 3 introduces a mix of commercial and residential development. Assume that, like scenarios 1 and 2, the example contains approximately 45 acres and contains approximately 20 parcels, 10 businesses and 10 houses built at assessed values average for the town. Each business will generate positive net tax revenues of \$3,292 for the town for a total net benefit of \$32,920, while each house will cost the town \$1,406 annually once built for a total annual cost of \$14,060. The business tax revenues would offset the residential costs, bringing the total annual net revenue of this development to a positive \$18,860.

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Appendix: Results of the 2002 New Ashford Town Survey

At the Direction of the Select Board of the Town of New Ashford, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) has conducted the following survey as a means of determining community need and interest in developing a Comprehensive Plan in the Town of New Ashford.

The survey consisted of twenty-five questions and two copies were mailed to each of the 112 households and property owners of New Ashford. The number of survey respondents was strong for a survey of this type. Fifty nine (59) surveys, or twenty six (26) percent were completed and returned and input into a database. BRPC staff has tabulated and analyzed the survey data. The results are presented in this report.

This report will be presented to the Town of New Ashford Community Development Advisory Committee and will also be available to the public in the Town Hall Offices and at the Public Library. This information will be used to assist in the development of the Town of New Ashford's Scope of Services for the Community Development Plan.

New Ashford Community Opinion Poll

1. What do you see as the advantages or disadvantages of living in New Ashford?

Advantage	Number	Percent	Disadvantage	Nbr	Pct	No Opinion	Number	Percent
Rural Nature	58	98%	Job Opportunities	28	47%	Avail. of Services	21	36%
Local Tax Rates	49	83%	Avail. of Services	24	41%	Job Opportunities	17	29%
Loc. in the County	43	73%	School System	5	8%	Cost of Living	10	17%
Cost of Living	41	69%	Loc. in the County	4	7%	School System	13	22%
School System	37	63%	Cost of Living	4	7%	Loc. in the County	7	12%
Avail. of Services	4	7%	Local Tax Rates	2	3%	Rural Nature	1	2%
Job Opportunities	2	3%	Rural Nature	0	0%	Local Tax Rates	2	3%

2. New Ashford is a small "country" town, with a rural atmosphere. Which statement best describes your feelings about the town?

	Number	Percent
like things the way they are now, but would not be opposed to some new development.	25	42%
would be opposed to any new development	16	27%
would prefer more development	16	27%
would prefer options for different types of development patterns	16	27%

3. Would you like to see New Ashford develop a "Town Center?" (I.e. a core area of a community, usually identified by its distinct characteristics such as a library, town hall and/or other town buildings, stores/shops, monuments/statues, parks, etc.)

	#	Percent
no	32	54%
yes	17	29%
not sure	7	12%
no opinion	2	3%

Open Space and Natural Resources

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4. Please list any recreational activities that you enjoy doing in New Ashford:

	#	Percent	
hiking, walking, jogging	49	83%	
bird watching	30	51%	Top "Other" activities mentioned
snowshoeing	21	36%	enjoying nature/peace& quiet 5
downhill skiing	18	31%	biking 2
off-road vehicles	12	20%	
XC skiing	14	24%	
other			
	9	15%	
snowmobiling	6	10%	
camping	8	14%	
hunting	6	10%	
horseback riding	6	10%	

5. Are there any recreational amenities you would like to see developed in New Ashford?

	#	Percent	
walking/biking trails	21	36%	Ideas for "Other" amenities
other	14	24%	nothing 10
swimming/picnic area	12	20%	wildlife sanctuary 2
no opinion	7	12%	skate park 1
playground	7	12%	
basketball court	6	10%	
athletic fields	3	5%	
golf course	2	3%	
tennis courts	2	3%	

6. Would you support a town effort to protect farms, forests and other natural/scenic resources?

	#	Percent
yes	45	76%
no	8	14%
not sure	6	10%
no opinion	0	0%

7. Do you think the town should have more areas designated for open space and, if so, please check any of the following you would do to accomplish this:

	Number	Percent
encourage additional state owned land	17	29%
vote for a town-supported land acquisition fund	14	24%
sell or contribute a "conservation restriction" to protect your land from future development	11	19%
no opinion	10	17%
contribute some land to the town	5	8%
The town has too much protected open space already	7	12%
donate money to buy land	6	10%
sell some land to the town at market price	3	5%
none of the above	5	8%
sell land to the town at a bargain price	2	3%

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support community preservation act	0	0%
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Economy

8. Do you think the town should have more areas designated for commercial or non- residential use?

	#	Percent
no	30	51%
yes	16	27%
not sure	8	14%
no opinion	0	0%

If yes, would you like to see any of the following:

	Number	Percent
restaurants	11	19%
town common	11	19%
other, list: _____	7	12%
retail facilities	6	10%
community center	5	8%
cultural facilities (libraries, museums, theatres, musical venues, etc.)	4	7%
industrial facilities (light manufacturing)	1	2%
institutional facilities (schools, day care facilities)	0	0%

9. If you own building lots, do you expect them to be developed:

	#	Percent
not applicable	22	37%
never	15	25%
not sure	9	15%
6 – 10 years	4	7%
no opinion	2	3%
1 – 5 years	1	2%
within one year	0	0%

10. What are your economic priorities for New Ashford?

	#	Percent
keeping taxes reasonable	47	80%
maintaining property values	38	64%
tourism development	20	34%
commercial development	3	5%
other	3	5%
residential development	2	3%
no opinion	4	7%
job/workforce development	0	0%

11. Currently a depth of 500 feet back on both sides of Route 7 is zoned Rural Business. This zone, which extends from the Williamstown to Lanesborough town lines, allows specified uses, in addition to single family or agricultural use, either by right or by Special Permit. Additionally, a Planned Unit Resort Development Overlay District was approved in 2000 that allows, by Special Permit, a resort development according to a Resort Master Plan. This district is located on the west side of Route 7 in the general vicinity of Brodie Mountain Ski Area along the Lanesborough town line. Do you feel the Route 7 corridor, in New Ashford, should be developed and, if so, what type of development should occur?

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	Number	Percent
opposed to any Route 7 development	24	41%
in favor of limited Route 7 development related to the Resort Development Overlay District	16	27%
in favor of limited Route 7 development.	12	20%
in favor of Route 7 development anywhere along the entire length	5	8%
in favor of identifying other areas in town for other development beside single family or agriculture, in addition to the Route 7 corridor	5	8%
no opinion	0	0%
<i>If in favor, what would you like to see developed?</i>		
more development associated with Brodie Mountain Ski Resort (condos, town houses, developed into a four-season resort)	20	34%
more tourists based businesses What?_____	11	19%
hotels/motels	8	14%
shopping center (groceries, retail, restaurants etc.)	8	14%
new home development	5	8%
other	3	5%
museums, cultural center	3	5%

Housing

12. Affordable housing for New Ashford, according to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, refers to housing with a purchase price below \$199,000. Using this definition, is it important to have quality affordable housing available in New Ashford?

	Number	Percent
no	33	56%
yes	15	25%
no opinion	5	8%
not sure	4	7%

13. Have you had any problems with your water supply and/or sewer/septic system and, if so, explain the problem you had and what was done.

	Number	Percent
Total	40	68%

Top comments:	Total
no problems	26
low water pressure - installed new system	4
well polluted	4
hard water filter needed	3
Installed new well - no problem mentioned	2

Transportation

14. Do you feel any improvements or changes need to be made to Route 7, or any other road in New Ashford? Consider safety, condition of road, width of road, paving a dirt road, access, etc. List name of road and comments you have:

Number Percent

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Total

Comments:

38 64%

Top comments:	Total
clean the rock slide on Rt. 7	19
no problems	9
Restore/better maintain of Greylock Road	3
better plowing/sanding	2
old Rt. 7 maintenance	2
(Six other individual comments were received)	

15. Would you be in favor of, or opposed to, the town building new roads or accepting roads from a private developer for residential and/or commercial development?

	Number	Percent
opposed to new town road building	29	49%
opposed to accepting private roads	28	47%
in favor of accepting private roads	13	22%
not sure	5	8%
no opinion	5	8%
in favor of new town road building	3	5%

16. What are your transportation priorities for the Town of New Ashford?

	Number	Percent
improve existing road system	15	25%
other _____	11	19%
improve access to public transportation	8	14%
congestion/event management	5	8%

17. In general, are there any other important areas or issues that the Town should address?

Total Comments: _____ 14 24%

Top comments:	Total
no problems	6
planning for housing affordable to townspeople	2
(6 other individual comments were received)	

Resident (and/or) Property Owner Information

18. Are you:

	Number	Percent
a property owner	56	95%
a renter	3	5%

19. Are you a registered voter?

	Number	Percent
yes	50	85%
no	8	14%

20. Do you reside in New Ashford:

Number Percent

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full time	49	83%
part time	4	7%
don't reside in town	3	5%

Average number of months a year living in New Ashford? _____

21. How long have you resided in New Ashford?

	Number	Percent
26+ yrs.	21	36%
2 – 5 yrs.	17	29%
11 – 25 yrs.	15	25%
6 - 10 yrs.	3	5%
0 – 1 year	0	0%

22. If you own, how long have you owned property in New Ashford.

	Number	Percent
26+ yrs.	21	36%
2 – 5 yrs.	17	29%
11 – 25 yrs.	15	25%
6 - 10 yrs.	3	5%
0 – 1 year	0	0%

23. If you own land in New Ashford, how much?

	Number	Percent
1.5 – 5 acres	20	34%
more than 25 acres	18	31%
6 – 10 acres	9	15%
less than 1.5 acres	4	7%
11 – 25 acres	3	5%

24. If you own property, how is it currently zoned?

	Number	Percent
Agricultural - Residence District	45	76%
Rural Business District	13	22%
Planned Unit Resort Development Overlay District	3	5%

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25. Do you think the Town of New Ashford provides adequate services in the following areas? If not, please indicate if you wish to see improved services.

Adequate	Number	Percent
Fire	50	85%
Road Maintenance	49	83%
Education	45	76%
Ambulance	43	73%
Police	38	64%
Cemetery	33	56%
Recreation	31	53%
Emergency Preparedness	30	51%
Zoning or Code	26	44%
Enforcement of Env. Laws	25	42%
Trash Disposal	22	37%
Transportation	19	32%
Health Services	19	32%
Handicapped Services	18	31%
Elder Services	11	19%
Other	7	12%

Inadequate	Number	Percent
Trash Disposal	15	25%
Environmental Laws	13	22%
Zoning or Code	12	20%
Elder Services	9	15%
Transportation	9	15%
Health Services	8	14%
Recreation	8	14%
Other	7	12%
Handicapped Services	7	12%
Emergency Preparedness	5	8%
Police	4	7%
Cemetery	4	7%
Education	3	5%
Fire	1	2%
Ambulance	1	2%
Road Maintenance	1	2%

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Appendix: Minutes from the Town Forum and CDP Advisory Committee Meetings

Notes from the New Ashford Community Development Plan Town Forum on Tuesday March 12, 2002

Vision Statement

Forum Attendees seemed to agree with the statement as posted.
Said to reflect feedback received by town selectmen

Community Enhancement and Economic Development Values

Safety

- Conserving the SECURITY found in Town is an important issue
- Safety of public resources, clean air and water.
- State police seem far removed from town with slow response time
- Town has 7 safety officials, 6 constables and 1 chief of police.

Governance

- Governance vs. Government
- Difference between politics and the actions of running the town.
- Town has good public participation at meetings, but has trouble getting volunteers for public offices.
- Small town's burden – lots to do but few to do it.

Informing the Public

- Information and sharing of knowledge is difficult in Town. Newspapers don't cover town and no local sources for finding out information. "Stovepipe mentality"
- Possible methods of knowledge sharing
- Town Newsletter
- Mailing out Meeting Notes and Board Meeting Schedules
- Scheduling Inter-board meetings
- Web site for town, or posting town information on a website.
- Email list or Town discussions on Internet.
- Gaining money for mailings through line item in budget

Education

- Plan for future establishment of a town school in New Ashford to keep children in the community and act as a community center of activity.
- Be aware of recreational needs activity fields for future town children.

Economic Development

Commercial Development & Acceptable areas for development

- Current commercial zoning as single strip along route 7 invites strip development all along the road, and limits development in all areas away from route 7 where it may be wanted.
- Development is not wanted, nor allowed along many parts of Rt. 7. There is a need to identify parts of this district where some corner-store type development may be more welcome based on zoning, environmental and personal property issues in town. (i.e. a site-specific analysis based on current use and environmental factors of this commercial zone)

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- Expressed need to develop a better map for future development, and a need to communicate to the public, and involve the public in determining reasons behind the choices made in developing this map.

Residential Development

- Expressed need to explore flexibility of town zoning in building new, cluster-type residential developments. New options for residential housing developments, hampered by current zoning regulations, may be better for the environment and the community character.

Transportation

Condition of Town Roads

- Temporary reopening traffic to old Rt. 7 brings traffic, speed, volume, and noise problems to town roads that have not been seen in recent times.

Safety

- Expressed that State police liaison should have more visibility in town.

Public Transportation

- Public Transportation is currently not an option for townspeople – Options for taking the Bonanza bus and local shuttle services need to be better publicized to the town.

Housing

Fiscal Responsibility

- Taxes are a touchy subject, and have recently been raised, some say unreasonably so.
- New developments in town have been almost entirely residential
- The town budget has doubled in the last 10 years.
- Development That Brings Minimal Costs to the Town
- Housing is potentially very costly to town if it leads to lots of educational costs and new infrastructure costs for the town.
- Expressed that one \$200,000 house gives the town \$1800 a year in taxes, but each new child costs the town \$6000 per year to school.
- Expressed that Town needs to explore ways to encourage new development – elderly housing, second homes, or resort developments – that brings in additional town revenue with minimal new town expenses.
- Ideas for new types of development, areas for development, and methods for development need to be put into a more useful map for town to use.

Environment & Open Space Preservation

Environmental Responsibility

- Groundwater Status may need to be looked into more closely, some say plenty of water, and some say not enough.
- Town Aquifers may need to be identified and mapped more closely as they did not appear on the buildout analysis.
- Erosion standards need to be looked into on the Local level
- Local Controls on Logging and How Logging occurs may be helpful to the town
- Expressed that roads to new developments, cell towers, houses lead to erosion problems, aesthetic problems, and safety issues.
- Cell Tower Builders are calling landowners with proposals, town needs to look into ways to reduce harmful impact of such potential developments.
- There is still a lot of open space in Town that is not protected – feasibility of preserving this space should be explored.

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- Community preservation act, conservation funds, or other measures should be looked into as options for increasing protection of town open spaces.

Notes are as recorded by Dan McCue, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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Notes for the CDP Advisory Committee Meeting of 7-16-02, New Ashford Town Hall

Attendees:

Norbert Dengler	Mark Raimer
Lynn Steinhoff	Flavia Mastellone
Matt Kelly	Hap Phelps
Jim VanDyke	

Also attending were Tom Matuszko and Dan McCue of the BRPC

Approval Of Notes from 4/2/02

- The Notes for 4/2/02 were approved with the correction adding Chuck Morrone and Lynn Steinhoff as attendees.

Administrative Update

Mr. Matuszko explained the reason for the delay in getting the CDP Scopes of Services approved by the State.

The current status is that the approved version of the scope has been sent to the New Ashford Board of Selectmen for the signature of the Chair. Once the State-approved version is signed by the Chair of the Selectboard, the administrative actions behind the Scope of Services will be complete.

Review of Economic Profile

The Economic Profile was reviewed by the Committee.

It was explained that the profile will be used in conducting a more in-depth assessment of New Ashford's economic current state, and opportunities for future development. The data includes much of what is required by the state, but the committee should add its ideas for other data that may be helpful in defining a need they have experienced within the town. The data will also be used towards outlining economic trends, and projecting these trends into the future within a short and long-term fiscal costs analysis of select development scenarios.

Concern was placed upon the appropriateness of comparing some Town data to State Data using percentages, for New Ashford's size is limited.

Concern was placed upon the potential implications of Brodie's discontinuance of skiing.

Immediate Impacts:

Room Tax Revenues decrease

Loss of jobs - 300 total employees, usually 10-20 are local.

Discussion of Mapping Process

Mr. Matuszko explained the maps involved in a comprehensive effort, and the committee reviewed the initial Community Development Maps that were assigned as required by the state.

The Scenic Landscapes map garnered interest as recently houses have been developed with steep driveways that develop the land depicted on the map as too steep to develop. The town's zoning by-laws place a limit on steepness of driveways in town, but as many roads in town are steeper than the by-law's limit, the effectiveness of the by-law needs to be checked on.

The water-sources map depicts flood zones within the 100 year plain. Recent history places the worst flood in New Ashford was that of 1945.

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The Protected Species Map was noted as containing a great deal of land with identified protected species, therefore making it harder, but not impossible to develop.

Review of Parcel Map / RT 7 Zoning

The committee agreed that at the visioning meeting, as well as at previous other town and committee meetings, determining land for commercial development was a priority issue. Mr. Kelly explained that the current commercial zone along rt 7 has no controls inhibiting fast-food and gas-marts that are not in line with the town's character. Development there would occur for the rt 7 market, and not for the residents of new ashford. The area is currently limited by certain natural and physical constraints, but with enough money, a development could occur in most areas.

Previous attempts to limit the zone have been fought due to a potential loss in property value for the owners of these parcels that would be limited. Mr. Matuszko explained that re-zoning would not be considered a taking of private land if it was a result of a comprehensive planning process, if it didn't single out one dissenting landowner, and if it was supported by 2/3rds of the population in an election.

Mr. Phelps and Ms. Mastellone expressed that finding alternative areas for a commercial area was a realistic concern for the town because

- 1) The town's need to diversify its tax base, which is currently highly dependant on a single business.
- 2) The deterrent for businesses because of a large amount of land currently zoned commercial which is along the river and would be very expensive to develop.

Other Business

It was noted that the Town Conservation Commission has made a determination that a perennial river, and a couple of beaver ponds exist along the commercially zoned land on the west side of route 7 north of the Springs restaurant and east of Mallery Road. The ConsCom has been defended on its determination 2 times by the DEP, and is currently working to have this river placed on the USGS maps.

The PURD was brought up as an example of recent attempts at re-zoning. Mr. Matuszko asked the group if they remembered the major issues residents voiced at the time of this process:

Diversification of the town's commercial entities

Why can't the whole town benefit from re-zoning and not just one area.

Many landowners didn't want to be excluded from the possible opportunities given to the PURD.

PURD was limited as it was intended to be a trial and error process for the planning board.

The majority of the town wants to keep the town the way it is, but new development is needed to support the town.

TO DO: The next items are the following:

- 1) Focus a map on the commercial zone along route 7.
- 2) Refine locations for potential future commercial areas.
- 3) Make contact with the Planning Board in order to coordinate future efforts.

Next Meeting

The next meeting has been set for Tuesday, September 10th, at 6:30-8:30pm at the Town Hall

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Notes for the CDP Advisory Committee Meeting of 9-10 -02 New Ashford Town Hall

Attendees:

Mark Raimer Matt Kelly
Hap Phelps Brian Ganey
Maureen Jennings

Also attending were Tom Matuszko and Dan McCue of the BRPC

Approval Of Notes from 7/16/02

The notes from the advisory committee meeting of July 16, 2002 were approved unanimously with one correction from Hap Phelps – The DEP, not DEM approves perennial stream designations.

Re-Visit Vision Statement / Shared Values

The Goals/Shared Values resulting from the town vision meeting and the advisory committee meetings to date were discussed. Discussion was focused on the additional economic development goals that resulted from discussion during the previous committee meeting on 7/16/02. The additional economic development goals were discussed and approved. The following possible challenges were raised in discussion:

GOAL: "Locate and refine acceptable alternative locations for future commercial areas"

The committee foresaw challenges in either enlarging or reducing the commercial zone.

Challenge #1) How does a goal of additional commercial areas correspond with a more basic goal of maintaining the character of the town?

Challenge #2) It will be difficult to undo the present commercial strip due to landowners' objections to losing market value on their commercial property.

GOAL: "Encourage options to diversify the town's tax base, which is currently highly dependent on a single business."

This was seen by the committee, as it was in the last meeting, as a priority, given the current unknown status of the ski area, and the high dependency of the town on residential tax monies.

GOAL: "Inhibit unsightly fast-food and gas-marts that are not in line with the town's character."

This was noted as an important character issue for the town, as its current commercial zone may be conducive to such businesses that may be undesirable to many residents.

GOAL: "With the involvement of the Planning Board, examine alternatives for commercial zoning that may better address the Town's economic goals while preserving the Town's character."

The committee is looking for additions options to diversify the town's tax base. The committee saw opportunity in this goal. One example raised was the following: options to diversify the tax base may result from more flexible rules for businesses in the residential zone that are in-line with the character of the community such as Bed and Breakfasts and room rentals.

Review of Housing Profile

The Housing Profile Data was reviewed by the committee. There is a discrepancy between some data sources that will be addressed in the final draft. It was discussed that the data shows New Ashford to be growing more affluent, and the housing market is in line to serve that demand. Less-affluent households are not being served as the market serves the higher income households.

(over)

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RT 7 Zoning Update

The revised map of the commercial zone was presented to the committee. The study is now at the level of detail where a site visit will be needed in order to come to any real conclusions as to the "actual buildable" land in the commercial zone. This study will be continued and presented at a future meeting.

Transportation Map /

The Massachusetts Highway Department Road Map was presented to the committee for revision and to point out the roads in town that did not exist on this map. The final map will present the complete inventory of town roads with the legal status of these roads. Several roads were pointed out including:

Kelly Lane – private road – off Ingraham road.

Rest Area Road Near the Williamstown Border.

Private Road Through Mill on the Floss motel, restaurant, and building in rear.

Status of Greylock Road as mapped was not clear what was town vs. state responsibility

Brodie Mt. Road/Firetower Road to peak of Brodie Mt. As state right of way.

Winn Frye will be contacted for the New Ashford Official Road Inventory.

Other transportation components

The committee will be looking into options to improve some sort of public transportation for residents of New Ashford that is better than the single bus that runs down Rt7.

Dianne Glick of the Planning Board will be contacted about recent actions related to transportation and driveways in town.

Other Business/ Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for November 12th at 6:30 at the town hall.

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Notes of the New Ashford Advisory Committee Meeting on Tuesday, November 12, 2002

Summary of Results From the Meeting

- The Committee has agreed to recommend re-zoning of the commercial strip north of the Mill on the Floss to agricultural/residential in order to preserve the residential value of the area.
- The Committee will continue to analyze the possibility of re-distributing the developable commercial acreage to other appropriate areas of town beyond the current 500' from route 7.
- The committee will work towards determining appropriate allowable uses for the new commercial area.
- The buildable land analysis results show very little developable land within the 500' commercial zone. Most land, especially North of the Mill on the Floss, has sizeable environmental and geological constraints

Approval Of Notes from 9/10/02

The notes for the September meeting were approved. Mr. Fairbank, who was not present at the 9/10/02 meeting, commented on the concerns over Brodie Mt's stability that were expressed in the Notes and stated that he is dedicated to the area as a resort and increasing the value of Brodie Mt. for the town.

Re-Visit Vision Statement / Shared Values

Mr. Fairbank expressed concern over the use of the word "must" in the town vision statement. The vision statement has remained unchanged since the town vision meeting, but could be altered in future Advisory Committee Meetings.

Fiscal Analysis

The fiscal analysis of the town was delivered, showing that residential parcels, largely due to educational expenses, were bringing negative revenues of approximately negative \$1,500. The analysis showed commercial parcels as the largest source of revenue for the town, bringing in approximately \$3,000 of positive net revenues. Looking only at commercial property and single family property, for every two single-family houses built, one commercial business would be needed to balance the town expenses.

Commercial Zone Buildable Land Analysis

The buildable land analysis was discussed.

The result was that there is very little land within the 500' commercial zone that is without some type of sizeable constraint.

The Committee consulted the buildable land analysis results, added other potential areas, and ultimately listed four areas shown to be most conducive to new development. The areas were the following:

(1) Town Center Area: North Mallery Road/Route 7 Intersection West.

This area was discussed as a potential mixed use cluster. The area is already developed with residential uses. Commercial only zoning would not fit this area, but it would be conducive to mixed use and light commercial.

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(2) Mill on the Floss/ Old Greylock Road area.

This was seen as a potential area that many may not know about. Greylock Road used to run through the Mill property, the area is level and access to Mt. Greylock State Forest would be desirable for tourists.

(3) South Mallory Road/ Beech Road Area

This area already has a auto station and has a large amount of developable land. This is largely residential and would need to allow residences and low-impact businesses.

(4) Rt 7 Opposite the PURD on Smith Road.

This was an area shown by the land analysis as conducive to development and close to the PURD. However, it is also currently important to the town for agriculture.

Transportation Map / other

The Committee identified the driveway sightlines and regulations about sightlines as a safety issue that is crucial to the whole town. The potential danger from poorly sighted curb cuts and driveways is real, and the committee would like to address this. The analysis identified several areas of concern, and will be looking into recommendations for future regulation. The current common driveway bylaw was identified as a document that could be altered to include better regulation on driveway placement.

Review Changes to Housing Profile

The housing profile edits were discussed and presented as v2. The changes were corrections pointed out in the last meeting.

Other Business/ Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 14 at 6:30pm at the New Ashford Town Hall.

Handouts Presented at the meeting: CDPlan Workbooks; Housing Profile v2; Draft Fiscal Analysis; Summary of Driveway Analysis

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Notes From the New Ashford CDP Advisory Committee Meeting Tuesday, January 14, 2003

Attendees:

Hap Phelps, Lynn Steinhoff, Brian Ganey, Flavia Mastellone, Chuck Morrone, Mark Raimer
Tom Matuszko & Dan McCue (BRPC)

Main Results of the Meeting

- o The committee has come to consensus on three goals related to economic development.
- o The three consensus goals for economic development are summarized by the following:
 - o Keep Taxes Low
 - o Maintain High-Quality Education and Town Services
 - o Maintain the Rural Character of the Town
- o Consensus on recommending rezoning as the primary strategy to reach these goals has not been reached.
- o The committee would like to be more clear on reasons why rezoning is needed and how it leads the town toward its 3 economic development goals.
- o The Committee wishes to learn more about the types of development allowed in New Ashford's Commercial zone, and to learn more about zoning in general.
- o The committee wishes to list the pros and cons of several options that may support these three development goals.
- o If rezoning is decided upon as a strategy, the committee leans towards the Mill on the Floss Area as an area in which additional commercial development may be acceptable and encouraged.
- o The Committee would like to look into future acceptable uses/procedures for ensuring future uses are in line with the town's economic goals.

For the next meeting:

- o How to show the need for rezoning
- o Crash course overview of zoning: What uses are allowed. What can be restricted. Regulations and restrictions in place. Environmental restrictions and developmental processes.
- o List of uses desired in a future extended "commercial" zone.
- o List of rezoning options with pros/cons.

Next meeting:

Tuesday, March 4th, 6:30pm

Attachments Mailed out Before the Meeting:

[November 12 Meeting Notes](#)

[Draft Fiscal Impact Analysis Narrative](#)

[Economic Development Strategy](#)

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Notes From the Advisory Committee Meeting Tuesday, March 4, 2003, New Ashford Town Hall

Results From the Meeting

The Committee reviewed several options for encouraging the three goals of maintaining community character, maintaining a low tax rate, and maintaining quality town services and education. The following actions were recommended:

1. To better promote community character and help encourage small businesses to maintain a low tax rate, the committee voted to recommend removing business zoning from the area north of the Mill on the Floss and reallocating the acreage of land that was determined to be developable to one of the three areas of Town shown by the BRPC Land Analysis Map to be most conducive to development based on Topology and Environmental factors.
2. The committee recommends changes to current uses allowed in the Business Zone to allow some business uses by-right with site plan review, to maintain some uses as allowed with a special permit, and to prohibit uses no longer desired.

Site Plan Review

In order to maintain and enhance community character and encourage the types of small businesses desired in the community, the committee recommended that certain uses compatible with the community character be allowed by-right, as long as they first submit a site plan for review according to certain design standards. It would release these uses from the more intensive and more subjective measures of a full special permit process, to which all business uses are currently subject.

By Right Business Uses

In order to update the business district zoning regulations to keep them in line with the community character, the committee wished to give recommendations to specify the list of acceptable and unacceptable uses currently in the Business District. All business uses are currently allowed by special permit in the business zone; none are allowed by right. Special permitting is subject to various conditions placed upon the projects by the permitting board. The recommended changes will codify a standard list of design guidelines to be used as guidance for uses subject to site plan review, and to be used as requirements for uses subject to special permitting.

(over)

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The prescribed changes to uses allowed by special permit were as follows:

General Business District: No Building in this district shall be higher than two stories.

USE	CURRENT PROCESS	NEW PROCESS
Grocery Store (Footprint under 3000 sqft) Review	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan
Grocery Store (Footprint over 3000 sqft)	Special Permit	Special Permit
Barber Shop/Beauty Parlor (under 3000 sqft) Review	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan
Antique Shop (under 3,000 sqft) Review	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan
Antique Shop (over 3,000 sqft)	Special Permit	Special Permit
Fast Food Eating Establishment	Special Permit	Special Permit
Sit Down Restaurant (under 6,000 sqft) Review	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan
Sit Down Restaurant (over 6,000 sqft)	Special Permit	Special Permit
Bank (under 3,000 sqft) Review	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan
Bank (over 3,000 sqft)	Special Permit	Special Permit
Motel	Special Permit	Special Permit
Bed & Breakfasts (under 8 bedrooms) Review	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan
Bed & Breakfasts (over 8 bedrooms)	Special Permit	Special Permit
Professional Office Building (under 3,000 sqft) Review	Not Allowed	By Right w/Site Plan
Professional Office Building (over 3,000 sqft)	Not Allowed	Special Permit
Gas Station	Special Permit	Prohibited
Auto Service/Repair (no gas sales)	Special Permit	Special Permit
Auto Sales Room/ Storage Garage	Not Allowed	Not Allowed
Other Retail (under 3,000 sqft) Review	Special Permit	By Right w/Site Plan
Other Retail (over 3,000) sqft)	Special Permit	Special Permit
Manufacturing/Light Industrial	Special Permit	Special Permit
Trailer Park	Prohibited	Prohibited

Preliminary Design Concerns:

2-story limit to buildings, lighting, signage, smells/emissions, traffic, noise, look in line with community (i.e. peaked roof, etc.)

Actions for Next Meeting:

BRPC will arrange examples of design guidelines and site plan review regulations.
BRPC will bring developable land analysis.

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Notes from the CDP Advisory Committee Meeting, Tuesday, April 1, 2003

Approval Of Notes from 3/4/03

The notes were given approval.

Finalize Economic Development Element

The report was reviewed with the following comments:

Fast food restaurants should be specified as prohibited:

- They induce traffic

- They increase litter along town roads

Auto Sales should be specified as prohibited

Additional Recommendation that signs bylaw be considered for revision in the future.

Design Guidelines:

- Additional requirement for site plan review that utilities are underground.

Two Rural Business District Areas identified – Town center and Across Rte 7 from PURD.

- These areas were recommended as:

- Conducive to development

- Near existing development

- Proximate to and accessible from Rte 7

Future Plan of Action for Community Development Committee

Plan should be brought before the planning board, Board of Health, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission and Selectboard for discussion, before the plan is brought before the public.

The committee felt the CDP Plan should be discussed at a planning board meeting. The next meeting is on April 29th, where common driveways hearing is heard, and then after that is May 20th. Planning Board agenda for May 20th was full, but we will ask for inclusion on the next meeting.

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Appendix: References and Informational Resources

Housing

U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Buildout Analysis, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2000

Taking the Initiative: A Guidebook on Creating Affordable Housing Strategies, Citizen's Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), 2002

Economic Development

Technology Enterprise in Berkshire County: Economic Analysis, University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, February 2002.

Workforce Development Blueprint, Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, Inc., July 2002.

America's Labor Market Information System Employer Database, 2nd edition. InfoUSAGov., 2001.

Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training. <http://www.detma.org>

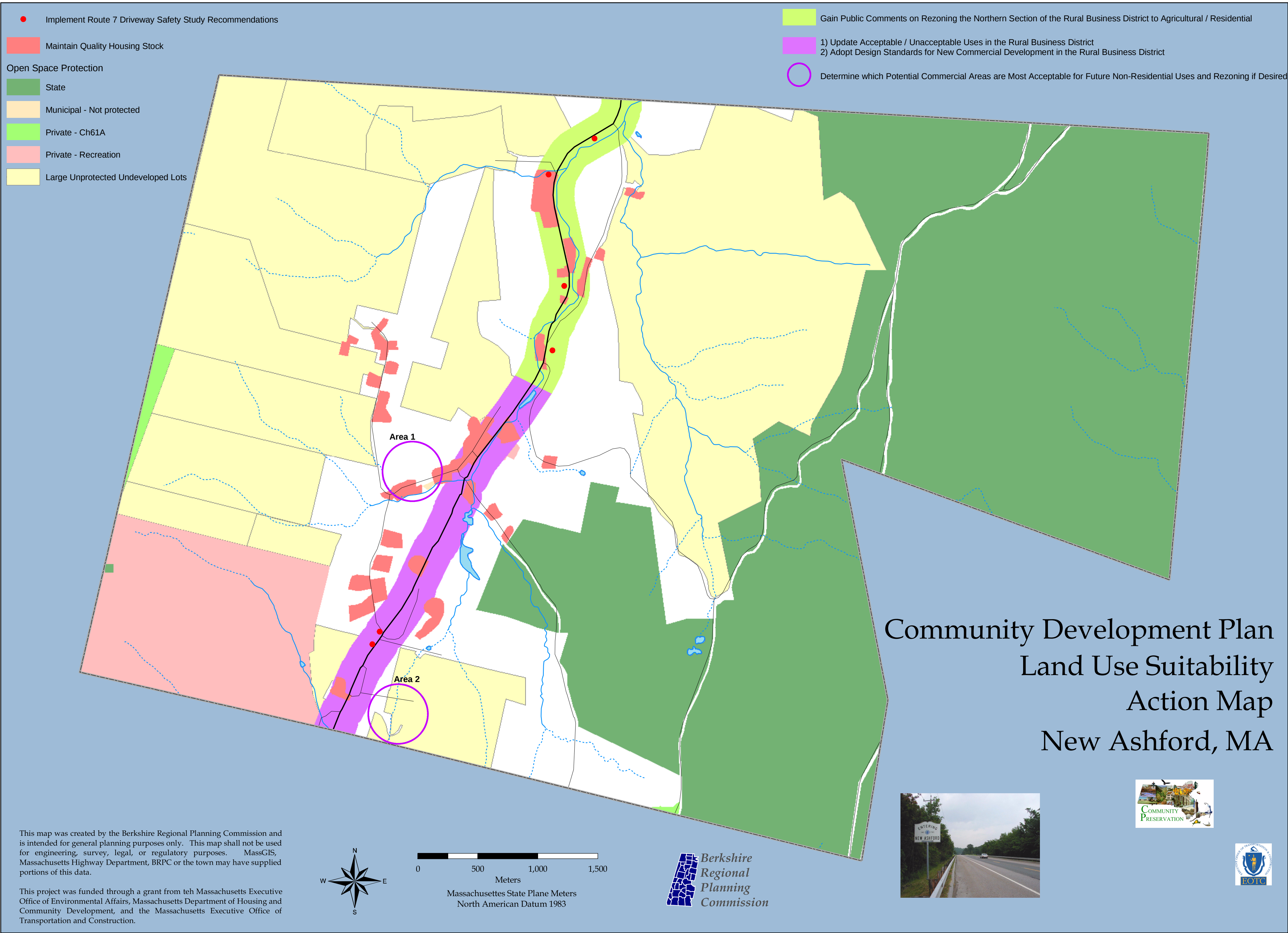
Data Book, 2001, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Berkshire County, 2000, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Community Design Manual: Route 16 Corridor Protection Study, North County Council, Inc., 107 Glessner Road, Bethlehem, NH 03574, May 1998

Transportation

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission 2002 Pavement Conditions Index, BRPC, August 2002.



New Ashford, Massachusetts



Open Space

Areas of Concern:

Protection and maintenance of the Town's vast supply of natural resources and outdoor recreational areas while maintaining a sustainable local tax base.

Vision for Future Open Space and Resource Protection:

Thoughtfully guide and manage growth to ensure New Ashford preserves its present combination of exceptional natural assets and rural character that make the Town desirable.

Recommended Actions:

- Form an open space committee to advance town preservation efforts.
- Utilize information within the CDP to develop an Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act, as was done in Williamstown, to assist in open space protection efforts.
- Conduct additional review of zoning by-laws and subdivision regulations to determine compatibility with land preservation goals and opportunities to introduce more flexible development options such as conservation subdivision designs or conservation zoning.



Economic Development

Areas of Concern:

- Maintaining the town's current character while encouraging a stable tax base for maintaining quality town services.
- Addressing the potential for increased development pressures in the town related to Resort area developments.
- Zoning that encourages commercial development whose type, location and appearance maintains the community character.
- Addressing the "Strip" zoning along the entirety of Route 7 invites "strip"-type development in undeveloped locations.
- Keeping local decision-making processes open and town residents informed.

Vision for Future Economic Development:

Work together as a community to guide new developments that preserve and maintain the Town's rural character, quality town services and education, and a low tax rate.

Recommended Actions:

- Determine which of the economic development alternatives presented in the Community Development Plan are preferable to the town.
- Gain public comment on updates to acceptable and unacceptable commercial uses within the zoning districts, as presented in the Community Development Plan.
- Gain public comment on rezoning the northern section of the Rural Business District to agricultural/residential.
- Determine which potential commercial areas outlined in the Community Development Plan are most acceptable to future non-residential uses and future rezoning, if desired.
- Adopt detailed standards for new commercial development (such as the design standards included in the Community Development Plan) to help ensure that new developments maintains the town's existing character.

Transportation



Areas of Concern:

- Maintaining a safe and reliable transportation network in town.
- Continued quality maintenance of town roads.
- Documented current official status of all town public and private roads.

Vision for Future Transportation:

Maintain and improve the safety and utility of New Ashford's transportation infrastructure to the benefit of the town's residents and businesses through carefully planned development and investment.

Recommended Actions:

- Present Route 7 driveway safety and visibility analysis.
- Conduct formal review of the Community Development Plan Status of Roads map.
- Hold a public forum, or a series of working meetings in Town to address potential action on roads where the official status is at question.
- Present the agreed-upon map of all accepted town roads at Town Meeting for adoption as the Official Map for the Town.

Housing



Areas of Concern:

- Limited number of new, year-round single family housing being constructed in town.
- Increasing sales prices and homeownership costs.
- Homeowners may not be physically or financially able to make necessary repairs.
- Rugged geographic terrain and large amounts of state-owned land limiting developable land area.
- No public water or sewer system.

Vision for Future Housing:

Providing seniors, persons with disabilities and citizens of a wide range of incomes with quality affordable housing opportunities and access to quality education for their children.

Recommended Actions:

- Organize or appoint a person or group dedicated to keep issues of affordable housing on the local agenda, and work with regional affordable housing organizations to the benefit of the Town.
- Participate in housing rehabilitation programs offered by local Housing Development Corporations.
- Educate residents on housing assistance funding programs for home and septic repairs.