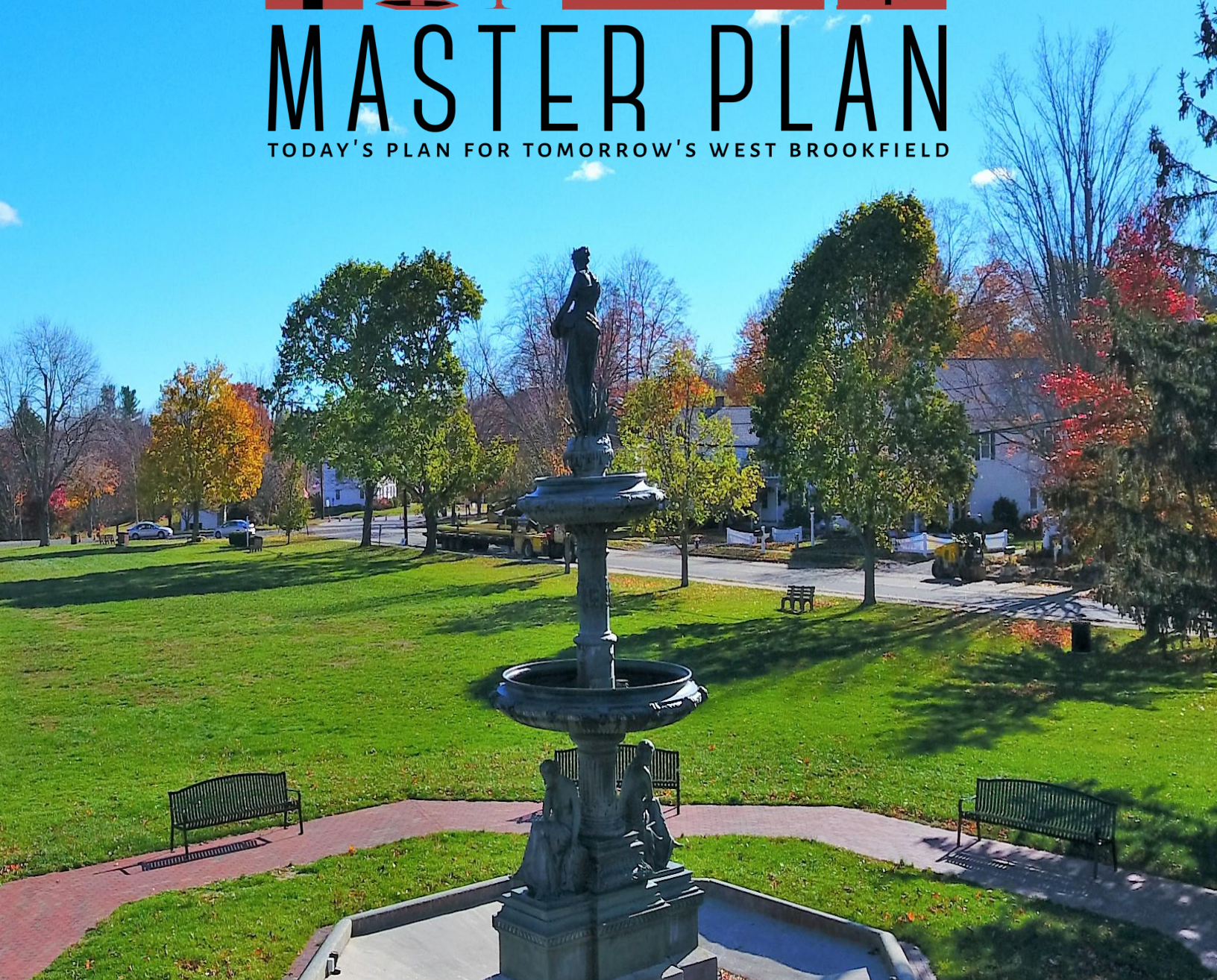


WEST BROOKFIELD  
2017



**MASTER PLAN**

TODAY'S PLAN FOR TOMORROW'S WEST BROOKFIELD



Prepared by:  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning  
Commission (CMRPC)

Adopted by:  
West Brookfield Planning Board  
*January 8, 2018*





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# Acknowledgements

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction and Purpose

The residents of the Town of West Brookfield take great pride in their town. Preserving the rural, small town character is a key component of the vision for the future of West Brookfield. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was selected by the West Brookfield Master Plan Committee (MPC) to develop West Brookfield’s first Master Plan. The project ran from January 2017 through December 2017.

The project employed a number of outreach tools to promote the Master Plan process. These tools, noted below, were designed to inform the community, town staff, and others about the process and encourage participation in community meetings and a survey.

- Project Kick-Off Letter: January 13, 2017
- Visitation Day: February 15, 2017
- Community Event: March 22, 2017
- Community Survey
- Community Event: June 22, 2017
- Community Event: September 19, 2017
- Town-wide post card mailings (x3)
- Public outreach: Website, Facebook, On the ground outreach

The Plan lays out a vision for the community’s future over the next ten years, or more, and creates a roadmap to get there through goals and actions. A number of residents contributed to the ideas and goals contained in this plan. The overall goal of this master plan is to identify key steps and actions that will occur in the short term (1-3, 3-5, and 5-10 years). It should be used as a resource and manual for Town officials in creating projects, or evaluating the importance or priority of initiatives, or assessing funding requests. Many of these items will require future funding, future town meeting approval, and many will affect your life as a resident. A key finding of the master plan process is that the town must take proactively coordinated and planned steps to ensure that each distinct aspect of the community will be preserved or enhanced.

The approach to this Plan is to identify a program of specific changes that, if implemented over time, will allow West Brookfield to retain its character while remaining economically and fiscally competitive. At the same time, the costs of services and thus taxes will likely increase over time. Therefore, strategic steps to increase the tax base can match or alleviate the costs to taxpayers while fulfilling the vision of the town. This is the goal of the Master Plan; to create the framework for this to happen. The Master Plan in and of itself will not create or protect anything. Residents, volunteers, town employees, and other stakeholders or agents need to organize, plan, act, seek funding and remain committed to working to create the future of the town. Without action, the town may change in unanticipated or undesirable ways or be developed in a haphazard way that may not benefit the residents.

Executive Summary



## Chapter Summaries

The following is a high-level summary of each chapter and the overarching goals for each section. It is critical that readers consult with the full text of the Master Plan to understand the existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the full breadth of each goal and the numerous listed “actions” necessary for any goal to be achieved.

### Housing and Population

Housing in West Brookfield is principally rural in character, typified by large lot, low density development in most areas of town. The exceptions to these patterns are the smaller residential lots in and around the village center. After a brief period of growth immediately following the Second World War, the town has added few new housing units and few new residents. Town residents have expressed an appreciation for and desire to preserve the small town, rural character of the community, and are therefore reluctant to aggressively pursue new housing. At the same time, they have also expressed concerns about a range of issues, many of which can be directly or indirectly attributed to the slow pace of housing production and population growth. These challenges include rapid increase in the number of older residents, overall population decline, increased vacancy rates in single-family homes, and increased housing cost burdens. The town will need to strike a careful balance between preserving historic homes, open space, and agricultural assets that contribute so much to the rural character of the community, and carefully attracting the kind of population and housing growth which will allow the town to remain vibrant and sustainable for years to come.

The primary goals for Housing and Population identified in the plan include:

1. Fully understand and plan for current and future housing needs
2. Increase the amount and variety of housing options in certain areas
3. Ensure that any new residential development will enhance and/or preserve the character of West Brookfield
4. Protect and preserve the existing stocking of historical and aging housing
5. Understand and evaluate the potential costs and benefits of new residential development

### Land Use

How land is used and developed is a key factor in what contributes to the character of a community. Farms, roads, businesses, houses, and other features are spread throughout town in a variety of ways and in distinct areas. Taken together, these patterns constitute how land is used throughout the town. Individual changes to properties or uses can happen quickly, and generally occur on a case by case basis. However, viewed collectively over the next ten years, those types of changes could significantly alter the character of certain areas in the town.

In many cases, no one action will alone protect and grow the town. It will require numerous actions across a number of chapters of this Plan to build the framework necessary to provide the type of town desired by most residents over the next 10 years and beyond. In many cases, longer term studies and efforts should be started without delay. To delay action will only shift outward the timeline and increase the likelihood that undesirable change will occur instead. This chapter includes a build-out analysis and a Route 9 and Route 67 corridor analysis.

The primary goals for Land Use identified in the plan include:

1. To preserve and enhance the existing Town Center area and Route 9 and Route 67 corridors
2. To preserve and protect important scenic landscapes and rural character of outlying areas through permanent protection or conservation-oriented zoning provisions
3. Identify options for increasing small scale, light industry
4. Explore options to moderate lake-side growth and protection of water resources
5. Make the permitting process clearer and more predictable for applicants and town officials
6. Conduct a complete build-out analysis to provide more detailed information on outlying residential development as the basis for future land use policy questions
7. Conduct a site assessment and evaluation for 1 East Main Street. Such an evaluation should consider zoning constraints, sanitary sewer capacity, building code requirements for changes in use, and other factors necessary to preserve, restore, and/or revitalize the building
8. Review and amend portions of the Town Common Overlay District to incorporate newer best practices associated with adaptive reuse of existing historic structures and preserve community character
9. Consider adoption of a comprehensive solar bylaw incorporating new best practices for appropriate siting and preservation of community character
10. Review and amend the sign bylaw requirements to ensure that new future signs are compatible with the characteristics of a certain area or the town as a whole. This effort should include consideration of suitably located tourist-oriented wayfinding signs

## Economic Development

For the purpose of this Master Plan, we define economic **development as “efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and/or retaining jobs and supporting or growing incomes and the tax base.”** From its agricultural sector to its low cost of living, West Brookfield possesses many existing economic assets.

Economic development strategies that leverage and support these existing resources have the potential to help the town meet a number of goals identified by residents and outlined in this Master Plan. Given **the strength of West Brookfield’s agricultural, natural, and historical**

assets, these strategies are not only realistic but provide a solid vision to guide economic development policy. Prior to pursuing any interventions, it is important to understand existing conditions in areas that relate to economic development.

This chapter provides a baseline from which to benchmark the success of future economic development strategies, and establish a context for issues and opportunities relating to the preferred development strategies.

The primary goals for Economic Development identified in the plan include:

1. Increase tourism activity in West Brookfield
2. Increase tourism awareness for visitors outside of West Brookfield and/or the region
3. Study opportunities to increase moderate new commercial development in certain areas
4. Consider rezoning of areas of Route 9/67, Town Center and General District to ensure compatibility of new business and commercial uses
5. Increase tax base through encouraging and seeking appropriate and desirable businesses

## Open Space and Recreation

Open Space and Recreation planning is crucial for the preserving of local resources while enhancing recreational opportunities and experiences of all types for the community. Policies and guidelines designed in conjunction with this Master Plan chapter provide a guide for future actions to ensure consistency with the preservation of open space and the enhancement of recreational opportunities. This chapter incorporates and builds off of the **natural resources inventory included in the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan** completed in 2011. It identifies, updates, and incorporates relevant information to the **town's open space and recreation** inventory. The Town of West Brookfield benefits from an extensive network of protected open space and popular active and passive recreational areas. However, key parcels and areas that contribute to the rural character of the town are not currently protected. Further, much of the land surrounding Lake Wickaboag, one the central natural resources for the town, is vulnerable to new development. Such development could threaten the viability of the Lake as a water supply and recreation destination.

The primary goals for Open Space and Recreation identified in the plan include:

1. Create a permanent standing Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee to steer the development of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update
2. Identify priority open space parcels for permanent protection and/or future acquisition in order to establish a wider, more connected open space network
3. **Promote the preservation of West Brookfield's surface and groundwater as an important source for wildlife and recreational use**
4. Actively pursue funding through grants, state matching funds, or other programs for land purchase, resource preservation, and rehabilitation of existing facilities



5. Enhance recreational opportunities and open space resources by encouraging multiple uses and by creating linkages between open space and recreational properties
6. Increase educational awareness and understanding of State-aid programs and local regulations and bylaws amongst community members

## Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources

Natural and cultural resource management is critical to the protection, restoration, and promotion of scenic landscapes and historical treasures. The landscape in West Brookfield is a **reflection of the community's rural status and agrarian history, largely characterized by a** wide array of scenic landscapes including numerous drumlins, farmlands, water resources, and the Quaboag River Valley. The Town also contains sites of cultural and historical importance, and its residents, including volunteers, have actively sought to highlight and protect them. Throughout the years, the picturesque Town Common has more or less retained its place as the cultural heart of the town.

**Located in the Town Center Historic District, West Brookfield's Common serves as the main** location for community activities and leisure enjoyment. The Common hosts many of the most important cultural events in town including the Asparagus Festival, Flower Heritage Festival, and White Christmas. A clear consensus exists that preserving and enhancing these resources will contribute to maintaining the character of West Brookfield and the overall quality of life. However, especially for structures and land uses along the Route 9/67 corridor, the Town Center, and the General Zoning District, adequate regulations to ensure protection and enforcement of these core values do not currently exist. Central to the development of this chapter is preserving the Town's character and rich agricultural history while protecting its natural and cultural resources.

The primary goals for Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources identified in the plan include:

1. Continue to promote communication, outreach, and advocacy for the protection of natural and historic resources in town
2. Establish common protective regulatory tools in key areas of town in order to **preserve the community's rich cultural and historical heritage** (such as Local Historic District and demolition delay)
3. Pursue state-funded programs for land purchase and natural resource conservation (such as the Community Preservation Act)
4. Increase collaboration with neighboring communities and conservation groups to closely monitor and protect water resources as sub-regional assets

## Transportation

West Brookfield is surrounded by the towns of Brookfield, North Brookfield, New Braintree, Hardwick, Ware, and Warren with access to several state-numbered routes. Route 9 provides east-west access and Route 67 provides north-south access through town. Routes within a close proximity of West Brookfield include Route 32, Route 148, Route 49, and Interstate 90. The closest interchange to I-90 is located in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, which is approximately a **12-mile drive from West Brookfield's town center**.

West Brookfield is not currently served by any fixed-route transit but has minimal flexible paratransit and non-fixed route access through the Quaboag Connector. Due to its limited transit service and rural nature, the dominant mode of transportation is the automobile. West Brookfield is located in the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) planning region and is also a member of the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) for transportation planning purposes.

The primary goals for Transportation identified in the plan include:

1. **Maintain and enhance the condition of West Brookfield's transportation network**
2. Increase access to different forms of transportation
3. Pursue available funding through the state or other sources

## Town Facilities and Services

Town facilities and services are the most visible representation of any local government, and arguably the most important. Town facilities overall appear to be adequate for the short term in function, scope, condition, and efficiency for a community of West Brookfield's size and budget. Based on survey results, the library and elementary school are particularly well-liked, and both remain quite functional despite their age. Four facilities are marginally functional and will require replacement or substantial renovation in the short-to-medium term to maintain adequate services: the fire station, the police station, the Highway Department's salt shed, and the highway garage. The fire station, attached to the rear of Town Hall, is in fair condition and is marginally large enough for efficient fire response operations. Parking is shared with the Town Hall, which can be challenging for on-call firefighters. The police station is located within the Town Hall in a space that has been acknowledged as inadequate in both size (only 700 square feet) and configuration.

The primary goals for town Facilities and Services in the plan include:

1. Improve/expand parking in the vicinity of the Town Hall and Library
2. Increase Senior Center capabilities to meet the needs of the aging population
3. Improve structural resilience of unreinforced masonry structures
4. Implement short-term solutions to mitigate inadequate public safety facilities

5. Implement a long-term solution to replace inadequate public safety facilities through relocation of the police and/or fire services
6. Modernize the Fire Department's vehicle fleet
7. Support and encourage WBRS EMTs in becoming certified as paramedics
8. Implement and add to the capital plan
9. Expand upon existing shared services
10. The district should study the impacts of school choice on the district and on WBES in particular
11. Implement short-term solutions to mitigate inadequate Highway Department facilities
12. Implement a long-term solution to replace inadequate Highway Department facilities through relocation or renovation
13. Expand solid waste disposal options for Town residents
14. Supplement existing coordination between the Town and the Housing Authority
15. Evaluate and improve parking near the Common and Town Beach
16. Leverage special events on the Common to enhance economic development
17. Develop an improvement plan (with funding strategy) for the water system
18. Improve the water system's fire suppression capability to support public safety and commercial/retail/industrial development in the town center and Route 9 corridor
19. Leverage surplus water capacity for economic development purposes
20. Explore options pursuant to creation of a local sanitary sewer system or systems
21. Develop a long-term plan for maintenance and replacement of Town facilities
22. Routinely maintain Town facilities to reduce or delay capital maintenance and facility replacement costs
23. Improve compliance with ADA and 521 CMR at applicable Town facilities
24. Improve energy efficiency at Town facilities to lower costs and reduce energy use
25. Maximize the "human infrastructure" capacity of West Brookfield's government through limited restructuring and expanded professionalization
26. Consider addressing "gaps" in Town staffing as reflected in Master Plan survey results
27. Improve the Town's website and online services
28. Expand on regionalization and sharing of services and staffing, where appropriate
29. Explore and potentially implement a Town option for home trash and recycling collection
30. Improve public awareness of and participation in governing and advisory boards, committees and commissions

## Implementation

The development of a Master Plan takes a great deal of time and requires input from a number of local sectors such as town staff, elected and appointed officials and volunteers, citizens, the business community, and a variety of other stakeholders. This input and participation is essential in developing a plan that will **not “sit on a shelf”**. **Because the Master Plan serves as a blue print and contains a “menu” of various options, creating an implementation plan and strategy is essential.**

A key recommendation of this Plan is for the town to form a committee or working group comprised of a diverse set of members in order to facilitate the implementation work. There are a wide range of options and variations for the composition of the implementation committee.

The following is an example that may or may not need to be tailored provided the availability of key staff and/or interested residents to carry forward the entire plan:

- Board of Selectman
- Advisory Board
- Planning Board
- Town Official #1
- Town Official #2
- Resident (at large)
- Resident (Town Center)

The Town of West Brookfield does not employ many of the common regulations enacted by other communities seeking to proactively protect their character. These primarily include:

- Demolition delay
- Local Historic District
- Updated Zoning Districts (For example: Village center areas, light industrial, and conservation/rural protection)

In addition, the Town could significantly benefit from investments into common programs or services that will help advance many of the goals of this Master Plan, such as but not limited to:

- Green Communities designation
- Community Preservation Act
- Complete Streets
- Town Administrator leadership
- Full time/shared inspection services

The 10 year vision for this master plan sets important initial goals and actions for these common municipal tools to be initiated, presented and approved by Town Meeting in order to create the structure and framework to fulfill the vision and goals listed in this plan.

These actions items, combined with other challenging issues , such as finding ways to offset the residential tax burden, the potential need for a new police and fire facilities, and many others could take years to raise public awareness, initiate, and accomplish.

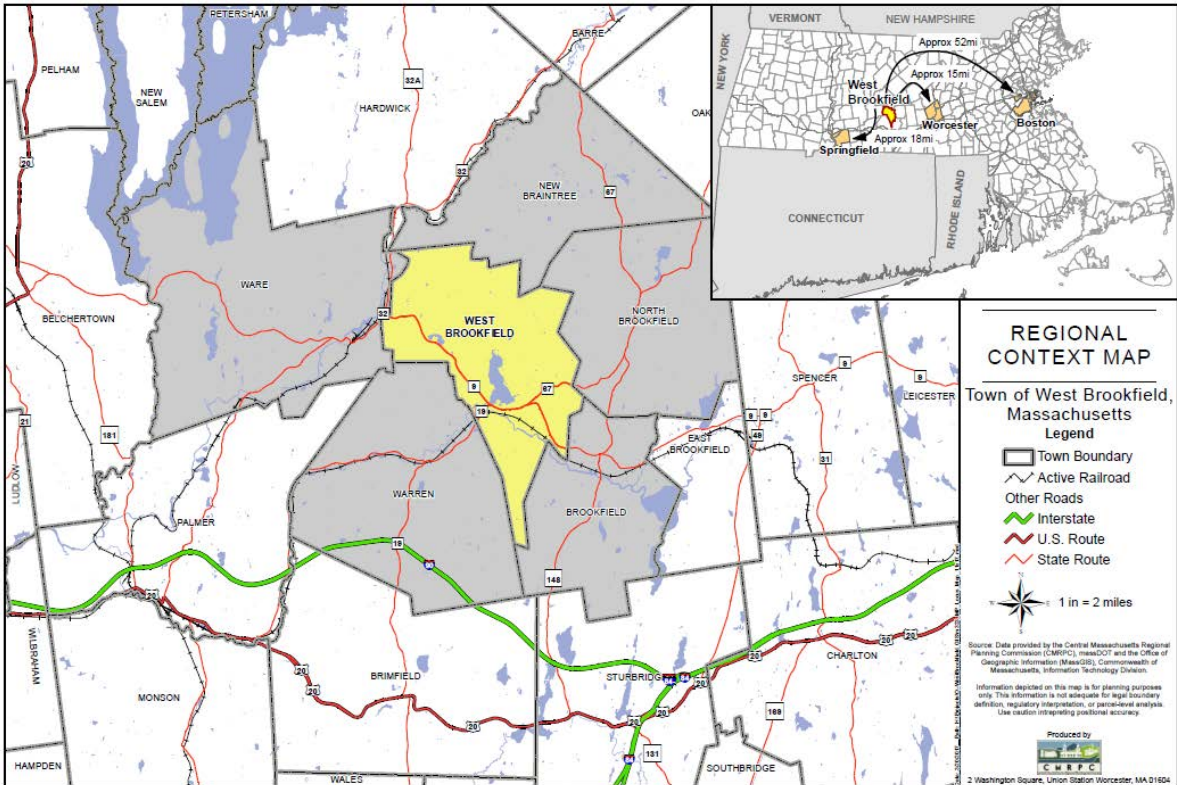
**The Plan’s recommendations are assigned on an immediate, short, medium, and long-term** basis to assist in determining the timeframe in which each item is to be considered. Some recommendations could be categorized into different designations based on community needs. It is important that the town carefully review, adjust, and make changes to the implementation matrix as situations change. This can be done without disturbing the overarching goal of a chapter or the Plan itself. The Implementation Matrix summarizes the **specific “goals” found at the end of each of the Plan’s elements. For purposes of the chart, not every “action” under a goal is listed. However, it is those actions and others which are necessary to achieve the listed goal and that will require the time to implement.** The Matrix is not necessarily listed in a prioritized order. The timing listed in the Matrix should be considered a guide, but may require more careful review, adjustments, and considerations by the Implementation Committee or other town officials or boards.



# COMMUNITY PROFILE

Located on the western edge of Worcester County, the Town of West Brookfield is a rural community that still retains the many charming and picturesque characteristics of a typical small New England town. Incorporated in 1848, the town split off from Brookfield. West Brookfield is located on State Route 9, and lies within the Quaboag River and Ware River basins, within the larger Connecticut River watershed. Bordered by New Braintree on the north, North Brookfield on the east, Brookfield on the south, and Warren and Ware on the west, the town is situated 20 miles west of Worcester and 60 miles west of Boston.

**Regional Context Map (Appendix N1)**



Community Profile

The number of West Brookfield residents has fluctuated slightly from 3,532 according to the 1990 U.S. Census to the most recent 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimate of 3,752. An aging population with a median age of 47.0, West Brookfield is typical of small Massachusetts communities which face challenges in addressing demographic shifts to an older population. West Brookfield is 96.8 percent white with 95.7 percent of the population living in single family homes. The town is largely comprised of homeowners, with 76 percent of housing units in West Brookfield are owner-occupied. Median family income is estimated at \$64,375, which is 94 percent of the State median and at the upper end of median income in the Rural 11 subregion of CMRPC. Median home values are slightly above the regional average at \$229,900, and median monthly housing costs are lower than the metropolitan areas of Boston, Worcester, or Springfield at \$1,687.



West Brookfield is a small town with a rich and dynamic history. There are a number of historic locations and districts, scenic and cultural landscapes, and a wealth of unique assets that **truly help define and distinguish the town's character**. **West Brookfield's Town Common** includes the Rice Memorial Fountain, War Memorial Plaza, the recently renovated playing field, and the Helen Paige Shackley Bandstand. The Town Common is also part of the West Brookfield Center Historic District, which was listed with the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 and features a number of attractive historic homes and institutional buildings. Popular events include the Asparagus & Flower Heritage Festival, the lighting of the town Christmas tree, concerts on the Town Common, summer music series, and the Farmers' Market.

The local economy features employment in manufacturing, retail trade, finance, education, healthcare, and accommodations and food service. Workers in West Brookfield are primarily serving in management, sales, service, and production roles. While many residents travel outside of the Town for employment, the economy is driven by craft and antique shops as well as several restaurants such as the Ye Olde Tavern, inns such as the Salem Cross Inn, and a motel, among other typical service and retail businesses. The largest employer in town is Quaboag Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center. The majority of residents travel outside of West Brookfield for employment. As a foundation of early American history, West Brookfield was the home of Jedediah Foster, one of the composers of the Massachusetts Constitution, the model for the U.S. Constitution, as well as Lucy Stone, a champion of women's rights.

West Brookfield includes many beautiful natural resources that provide recreation to some and constitute valuable character and natural beauty to others. The most notable of these natural resources is Lake Wickaboag, which offers a town beach for residents and offers a wide range of uses such as water recreation, fishing, community events, as well as winter activities. The Rockhouse Reservation is an excellent location for outdoor recreation including hiking and nature trails, Carter Pond, and a butterfly meadow. There are also two newly preserved **sites in West Brookfield including Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve and the West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area** at the site of McRevey Farm, Camp Wickaboag and Mill Brook.

## Introduction

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was selected by the West Brookfield Master Plan Committee (MPC) to develop West Brookfield's first Master Plan. The project ran from January 2017 through December 2017. The plan lays out a vision for the **community's future over the next ten years, or more**, and creates a roadmap to get there through goals and actions. The main topics of a Master Plan include:

1. Land Use
2. Population and Housing
3. Economic Development
4. Natural and Cultural Resources
5. Open Space and Recreation
6. Transportation and Circulation
7. Town Services and Facilities

### What is a Master Plan?

A plan is a statement of intent and is intended to serve a whole community, guiding its overall character, physical form, and evolution. It describes where, how, and at what pace a community wants to develop physically, economically, and socially. A Master Plan serves a guide for local officials and town meeting members when they make decisions about zoning, **budgets, and capital improvements. This "living document" acts a guiding force for any planning that is to occur within the town in the future.** However, the plan and its recommendations do not automatically advance any specific item. Many of the topics and actions can, and should, be coordinated and implemented together.

### Why does West Brookfield Need a Master Plan?

The reality of the world we live in is that it is always changing. Understanding past trends at the local and state level, and creating plans for the future will help build resilient communities. Looking towards the future, a Master Plan establishes new visions and directions **for a community, sets goals, and describes the steps needed to "get there."**

Planning Boards in the state of Massachusetts are required to prepare a master plan for their communities. Under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, Section 81D:

*A planning board established in any city or town under section eighty-one shall make a master plan of such city or town or such part or parts thereof as said board may deem advisable and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan. Such plan shall be a statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality. The comprehensive plan shall be internally consistent in its policies, forecasts and standards.*

In the early 2000's, the State providing funding for many communities to prepare Community Development Plans (CDP). West Brookfield completed a plan in June of 2004. While technically not a Master Plan, the CDP reviewed issues related to Open Space and Resource Protection, Housing, Economic Development, and Transportation. This 2004 plan provided a key resource and data to inform the planning process in 2017.

## Prior Planning Efforts in West Brookfield

- Town Manager Study Committee Report, 2016
- West Brookfield Annual Report, 2015
- Rural 11 Prioritization Project Report, 2013
- Working Landscapes Base Map: West Brookfield, 2013
- Town of West Brookfield Fire and Police Department Needs Assessment, 2012
- Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2011
- West Brookfield Reconnaissance Report, 2008
- West Brookfield Community Development Plan, 2004
- Blue Trail Guide, Upper Quaboag River
- Town of West Brookfield: Town Center Study, 1985
- Regional Sewerage Study, Phase One, 1969

## Public Participation

The project employed a number of outreach tools to promote the Master Plan process. These tools were designed to inform the community, town staff, and others about the process and encourage participation in community meetings and a survey.

## Project Promotion

CMRPC worked with the Master Plan Committee to develop a project logo at the beginning of the process. This branding was useful in creating a consistent and recognizable theme that has been used in all promotional materials. In addition, local media covered the community events and allowed a broader awareness of the project through print and online news articles. The project coordinated with West Brookfield Community Access television to record all community meetings. The project website hosted all of this information in a modern and easy to use format.

## Visitation Day: February 15, 2017

On February 15, CMRPC staff traveled to West Brookfield Town Hall for a kick-off meeting with town officials, Master Plan Committee members, and other community liaisons invested in the future of their town. The visitation consisted of CMRPC staff breaking out into small-group discussions with each of the West Brookfield community representatives. These discussions helped give CMRPC staff an understanding of the **town's status on elements of planning, while** also providing an opportunity to discuss the direction of the Master Plan process in the coming months.



The following town officials were interviewed:

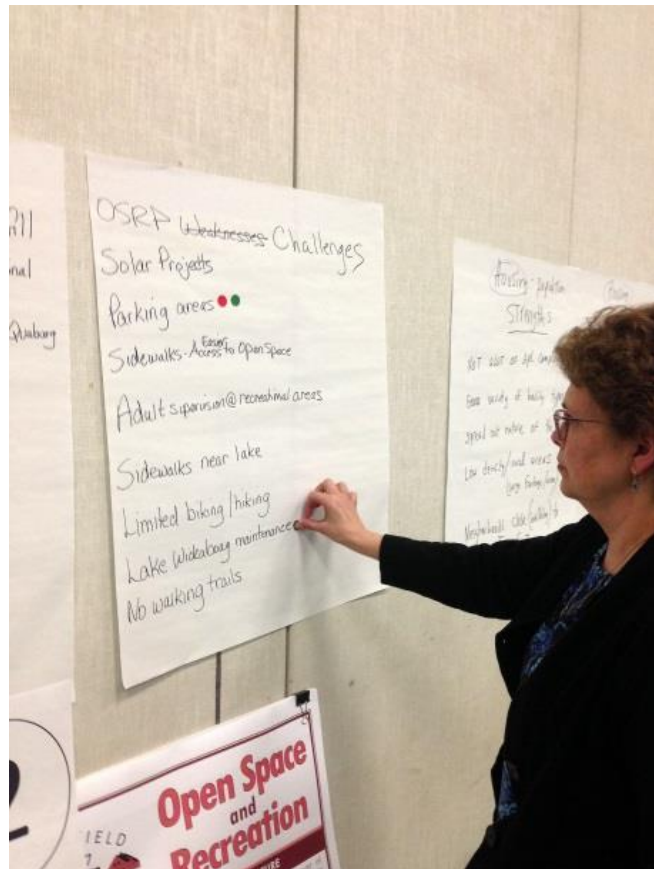
- Zoning Enforcement Officer, Gary Simeone
- Water Department Clerk, Collector, Jean Wrobel
- Highway Superintendent, James Daley
- Conservation Commission Chair, Gordon DeWolf
- Town Clerk, Sarah Allen
- Assessors, Elizabeth DiMaio & Renee Adams White
- Library Director, Katie Marsh
- Executive Secretary, Johanna Swain
- Planning Board Chair, Tim Morrell



## Community Event No. 1: March 22, 2017

The first community event was held at the West Brookfield Elementary School on March 22, 2017 (see Appendix D). This event provided an introduction to West Brookfield residents and business-owners on the process and elements of a Master Plan, and what to expect in the following months. Following the introductory presentations, each audience member moved to one of seven topic tables based on the number written on the nametag given to them upon arrival to the event. The seven topics were Land Use, Economic Development, Open Space and Recreation, Natural and Cultural Resources, Town Facilities and Services, and Housing and Population. Each table consisted of a CMRPC staff person and a member of the Master Plan Committee. The participants were asked to discuss their basic assessment of “strengths” and “challenges” for each of the subject areas. Minimal information or back ground was provided in order to create an organic and baseline understanding from participants of the strengths and weaknesses.

The discussions ensued for approximately 25 minutes, after which the members of the Master Plan Committee took turns reporting out a summary of the discussions and a review of key conclusions to the larger group. Subsequently, all participants were given 12 colored dots and asked to move about the room to the scribed notes and assign their dots to those items they believed were most important or where there was agreement. The results were tallied by CMRPC staff after the event.



See Appendix D

## Community Survey

A critical part of the Master Plan process is to collect the opinions, thoughts, and input on a range of different subjects from as many West Brookfield stakeholders as possible. The community survey was designed to understand how West Brookfield community members perceive their **town's strength's and challenges, and to identify issues** within the town which will help create goals and strategies for the Master Plan (see Appendix B and C).

A postcard was sent to every home and business address in town, announcing the launch of the survey with the online link and list of pick-up/drop-off locations for hard copies. Reminders to complete the survey were posted on the West Brookfield Master Plan Facebook page and website. Additionally, CMRPC had a booth at the West Brookfield Asparagus Festival on May 20, 2017. Residents could take the survey online or pick it up and drop it off at one of these five locations in West Brookfield:

- Town Hall
- Merriam-Gilbert Public Library
- Senior Center
- U.S. Post Office
- Country Corner Store

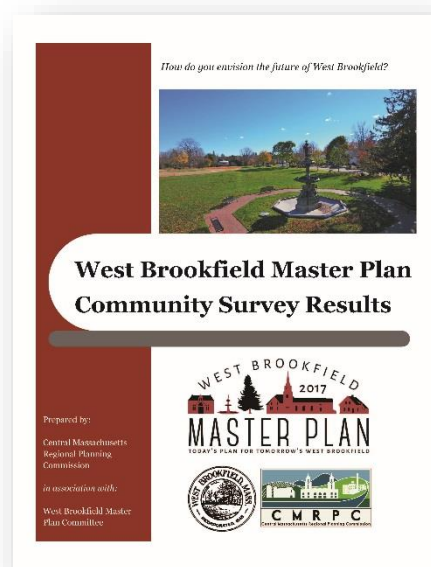


In total, 322 responses were submitted by town residents, indicating just under ten percent of West Brookfield residents completed the survey. The results were compiled into a booklet which was given out to residents that attended the second and third community events.

### Q2 What is West Brookfield's greatest strength?

Answered: 204 Skipped: 59

Friendly<sup>Low</sup> Quiet<sup>Small Size</sup> New England Town  
 Pride History West Brookfield Open Space  
 Residents Historic Natural Resources  
 Small Town Family Community  
 Business Rural Natural Beauty School<sup>Look</sup>  
 Town Common<sup>Salem Cross</sup> Location  
 New England Charm Center Lake Wickaboag



## Community Event No. 2: June 22, 2017

On June 22, 2017, CMRPC hosted the second Master Plan Community Event at the historic Salem Cross Inn in West Brookfield (see *Appendix E*). In order to accommodate the most number of people, an afternoon session from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. as well as an evening session from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. was held. The two sessions were held in order to distribute the results of the community survey and begin to create goals and strategies for the Master Plan. Both sessions had identical agendas.

A short presentation was given to update residents on the status of the Master Plan process, as well as provide an **introduction to what a “vision” means for the town and how to start considering goals and strategies for West Brookfield.** During the presentation, everyone was handed a copy of a booklet containing the formatted survey results and given an opportunity to browse it. Following the presentation, attendees of the meeting were broken out into small groups to create their own goals and strategies, assisted by CMRPC staff acting as facilitators. Each group was assigned one or two Master Plan chapters and asked to come up with a goal and a strategy for each of those chapters. Discussions on strengths, challenges, and priorities for the Town ensued as groups decided on their goals. Subsequently, representatives from each small group took turns reporting out to the room what they discussed and the goals and strategies they created.

WEST BROOKFIELD 2017 MASTER PLAN TODAY'S PLAN FOR TOMORROW'S WEST BROOKFIELD	
Community Event # 2 June 22, 2017 (Salem Cross Inn) 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (Identical presentations)	
Agenda:	
• Welcome	(5 minutes)
• Where are we in the process	(20 minutes)
• Introduction to a “vision”	
• What is a goal and strategy	
• Survey 101	
Facilitated Breakout Sessions: Survey, Goal, Strategy	(40 minutes)
• Table 1 – Land Use & Housing	
• Table 2 – Transportation & Economic Development	
• Table 3 – Open Space & Natural/Cultural Resources	
• Table 4 – Town Facilities & Services	
Reporting out	(40 minutes)
Next steps, and, see you in August!	(5 minutes)

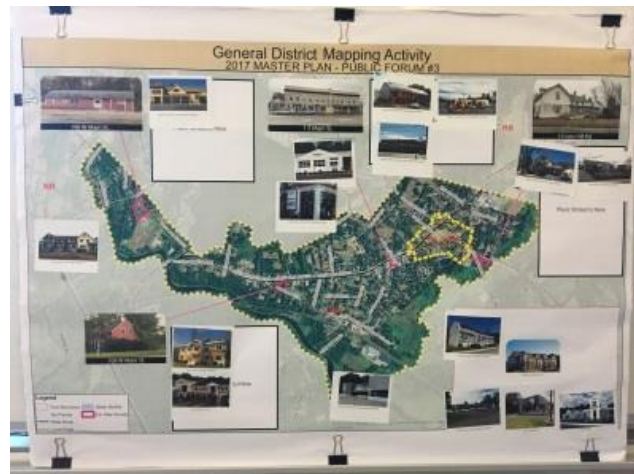




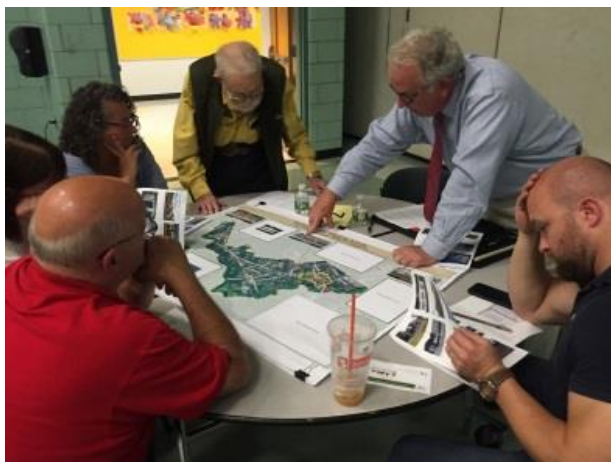
### Community Event No. 3: September 19, 2017

The final community event hosted by CMRPC was held on September 19, 2017 at the West Brookfield Elementary School from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. (see Appendix F). The intent of the event was to encourage residents to envision what they want West Brookfield to look like in the next decade, and to consider what goals and strategies will help them achieve that vision for the town.

When town residents arrived at the event they were provided with a one-page questionnaire/ ranking sheet regarding a town vision statement to fill out and submit to CMRPC staff. The first activity was a facilitated land use mapping activity, in which each group was provided with one large print map and one set of stickers with different types of land uses. A group facilitator, who was either a Master Plan Committee member or CMRPC staff, was assigned to each of the six groups to lead the activity. By general consensus, the group was required to decide where each sticker should be placed on the map. After 20 minutes, the facilitators reported out the room, summarizing their discussion and choices for sticker placement.



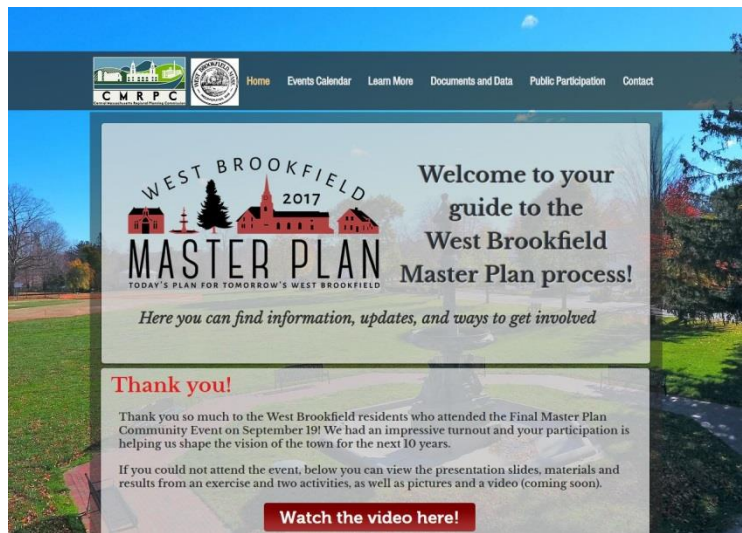
The activity was followed by a PowerPoint presentation on key goals and strategies, as well as an update on the Master Plan process. After the presentation, the final item on the agenda was an activity in which **participants were given \$100 in West Brookfield “bucks” and had 15 minutes to traverse around the room to distribute their money, choosing between Planning and Studies; Natural, Historic, Cultural, and Open Space; Town Facilities; Town Services; Schools; and Other.** The dollars were intended to loosely represent an allocation of tax dollars that generally relate to policy or expenses that may go through town meeting (although not exclusively). The results of where the “bucks” were allocated were compiled into a chart.



## Social Media

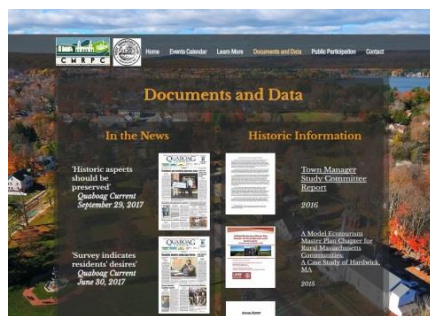
### Website

As a way to keep the public informed and involved in the Master Plan process, a website was created by CMRPC staff to be the focal point of public engagement throughout the year. The website was designed to encourage West Brookfield residents to participate in the Master Plan process by attending community events, completing the community survey, spreading the word about the Master Plan, or contacting CMRPC with any questions or comments. Upcoming events were posted on the *Home*, *Events Calendar*, and *Public Participation* pages. Additionally, general information on master plans plus introductions to the CMRPC team and the Master Plan Committee were posted in the *Learn More* section. Historic information on West Brookfield, including past studies, reports, and plans were easily accessible on the *Documents and Data* section, as well as news articles from local sources written about the Master Plan and the community events. A *Contact* section was included for anyone with questions or comments to email or call CMRPC staff. The website has had over 1,100 visits since its creation. The final adopted plan and all associated information can be found at [www.westbrookfieldmasterplan.com](http://www.westbrookfieldmasterplan.com).



### Facebook

In addition to the website, a Facebook page was set up to increase the scope of outreach to the public. This page was utilized to post reminders for upcoming events, information on how and where to take the community survey, as well as pictures, videos, and news articles on Master Plan events. Facebook provided the ability to consistently share key events and this social media tool was a way to increase the reachability and increase the number of residents invested in the future of West Brookfield but who might not be aware of the Master Plan in process.





## Mailings

An effective method of outreach for public events proved to be sending out postcards to every household and business in West Brookfield. Postcards were sent three separate times and each contained event details and were mailed out a few weeks before the events. The postcards were used for the first and third events, both of which had a greater turnout than the second event in which postcards were not mailed out. Additionally, postcards were mailed out in April to inform residents about the community survey, including a link to the online survey and the five pick-up and drop-off locations for hard copy surveys. Mailing addresses were acquired from the Town Clerk.

**West Brookfield  
Master Plan  
COMMUNITY EVENT**

**Wednesday  
March 22, 2017  
7:00 pm**

West Brookfield  
Elementary School  
89 North Main Street

Coming Soon:  
**Town-wide Survey!**

Learn more here:  
[www.westbrookfieldmasterplan.com](http://www.westbrookfieldmasterplan.com)

**WEST BROOKFIELD 2017  
MASTER PLAN SURVEY**

**Available Now!**

Hard copies also available for pick-up & drop-off at these locations:

- Town Hall
- Merriam-Gilbert Public Library  
*(24-hour drop-off available here)*
- Senior Center
- U.S. Post Office
- Country Corner Store

Take the survey online:  
[www.surveymonkey.com/r/WBMP2017](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WBMP2017)

**Please complete and submit the survey by Wednesday, May 31**

*Do you have children in the school district?*

*Do you feel like Town Meeting doesn't represent you?*

*Do you worry about increased taxes?*

**WEST BROOKFIELD 2017  
MASTER PLAN  
TODAY'S PLAN FOR TOMORROW'S WEST BROOKFIELD**

**If you answered yes, come to the final  
Master Plan Community Event  
to help guide future decisions of the town!**

**Child watch will be available!**

**West Brookfield  
Master Plan  
FINAL  
COMMUNITY EVENT**

**Tuesday  
September 19, 2017  
7:00 p.m.**

West Brookfield  
Elementary School  
89 North Main Street

## “On the ground” Outreach

As part of the Master Plan process, CMRPC maintained a consistent presence within the town using various on the ground outreach methods. In coordination with town officials, oversized banners relating to the Master Plan were posted in the kiosk outside of Town Hall. To help increase access to the survey, hard copy “stations” were placed at five locations throughout town for pick up and drop off of completed surveys. Poster boards were placed in Town Hall, the library, and the post office to announce upcoming events.

CMRPC staff attended various community events over the course of the year to promote the project, including the Asparagus Festival, Lake Wickabaog Association Annual Meeting, and the Community Flea Market. We believe that this type of outreach, combined with all the other methods and project branding increased residents awareness of the Master Plan process.



In addition, the project was assisted by local media coverage which served to provide information to those who may not utilize social media or the website (see Appendix G).







# Vision



# VISION

*This Plan envisions West Brookfield as a town where...*



Our small-town, rural character is the heart and soul of our community



The Town Common and town center continue to serve as the focal point of community activities



Lake Wickaboag, the Quaboag River, and our open spaces and farmlands will enhance recreational and farming and sustain local business through tourism and nature-based activities



Our historic town center will set the tone for future patterns of small scale, architecturally pleasing development



Housing opportunities will support a diverse population, drawing from a wide range of backgrounds, and supporting the young and the old alike



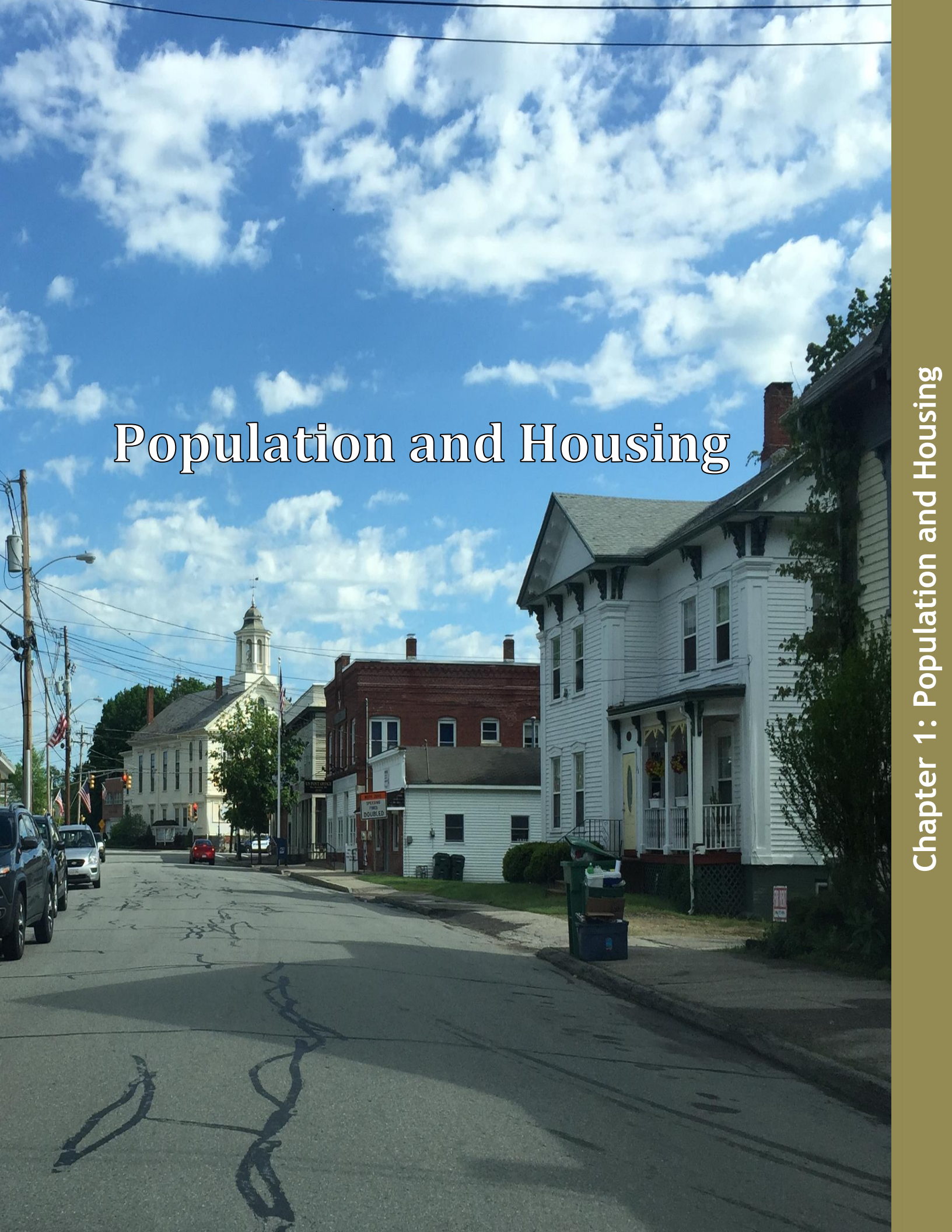
The Route 9 corridor is home to a vibrant array of small scale commercial and retail businesses, and, housing options. Strengthening our tax base and employees by providing business opportunities in small areas of diverse light industrial land



Local government is professional but accessible to residents and is well coordinated with regional government to provide the most efficient services to the existing and the future residents of West Brookfield



# Population and Housing



# INTRODUCTION

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Housing in West Brookfield is principally rural in character, typified by large lot, low density development in most areas of town, with the exception of the most compact lots around the village center. After a brief period of growth immediately following the Second World War, the town has added few new housing units and few new residents. Town residents have expressed an appreciation for and desire to preserve the small town, rural character of the community, and are therefore reluctant to aggressively pursue new housing. At the same time, they have also expressed concerns about a range of issues, many of which can be directly or indirectly attributed to the slow pace of housing production. These challenges include rapid growth in the number of older residents, overall population decline, increased vacancy rates in single-family homes and increased housing cost burdens.

The town will need to strike a careful balance between preserving historic homes, open space, and agricultural assets that contribute so much to the rural character of the community, and attracting the kind of population and housing growth which will allow the town to remain vibrant and sustainable for years to come. This chapter identifies a number of issue areas, opportunities, and strategies for helping the town achieve this balance.

This chapter focuses on the towns in the “Rural-11” region for the purposes of comparison. In 2013, CMPRC completed a regional prioritization planning process, called the Rural-11 Prioritization Project. This project grouped communities in the CMRPC region into sub-categories based on similar characteristics, such as economic, housing, and culture. West Brookfield was included in the sub-region identified as the Rural-11. This sub-grouping includes the following communities:

- Barre
- Brookfield
- East Brookfield
- Hardwick
- New Braintree
- North Brookfield
- Oakham
- Princeton
- Rutland
- Warren
- West Brookfield



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## Population

West Brookfield is a small community in a neighborhood of small communities. In 2015 West Brookfield’s population was estimated at 3,752, 9% above the regional median population.

In terms of growth, these population figures have not changed substantially since the 1970’s. As Table 1-2 shows, West Brookfield saw a period of rapid population expansion immediately following the Second World War, followed by a period of stability and eventual decline. From 1940-1970, the town experienced an average population growth rate of 24%. Following 1970, the growth rate slowed considerably, to an average of just 9% between 1970 and 2010. From 2000-2010 the town population actually contracted by 3% (see Table 1-2). Population projections do not anticipate continued population declines. However, the growth projected is close enough to the margin of error that further contraction is possible.

When this growth pattern is compared against other communities in the Rural 11 region, the growth patterns in West Brookfield stand out as rather exceptional. Table 1-1 shows that West Brookfield grew at a rate far above the regional average, then leveled off much sooner and experienced steeper population declines in the latter part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are many possible causes for this pattern. Most of the communities in the regional saw a sharp increase in the number of non-farm single-family homes developed in the aftermath of World War II. Those communities farthest from centers of employment tend to be the most vulnerable to economic shifts. Since the two largest periods of contraction in the town, 1970-80 and 2000-2010, coincided with periods of national recessions, it is reasonable to see this as a likely contributing factor.

**Table 1-1**  
**2015 Population of Rural-11 Communities**

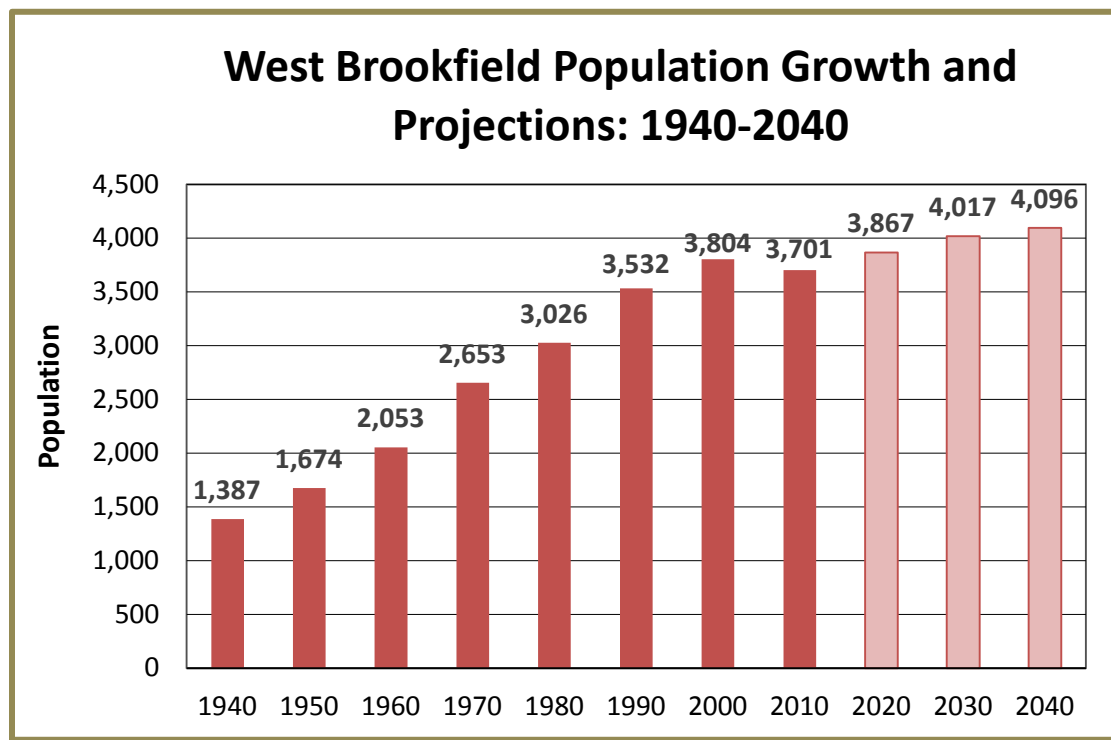
2015 Population Comparison among the Rural-11 Communities	
<b>West Brookfield</b>	<b>3,752</b>
Barre	5,448
Brookfield	3,405
East Brookfield	2,198
Hardwick	3,001
New Braintree	1,133
North Brookfield	4,734
Oakham	1,803
Princeton	3,456
Rutland	8,316
Warren	5,136
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census 1990, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2011-2015</i>	

**Table 1-2**  
**Historic Population Growth**

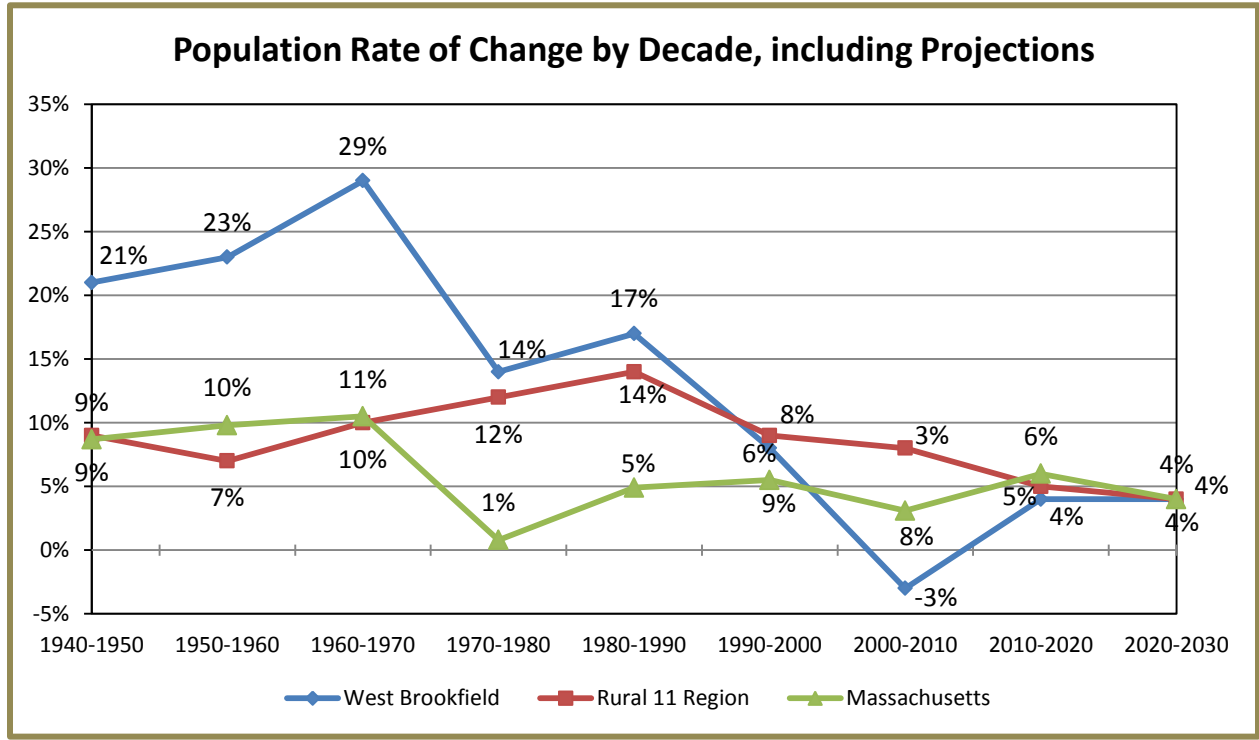
Historic Population Growth in West Brookfield	
1940-1950	21%
1950-1960	23%
1960-1970	29%
1970-1980	14%
1980-1990	17%
1990-2000	8%
2000-2010	-3%
Projections	
2010-2020	4%
2020-2030	4%
2030-2040	2%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau; CMRPC Population Projections</i>	



**Figure 1-3 Population Growth and Projections: 1940-2040**



**Figure 1-4 Population Rate of Change by Decade**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1940-2010; CMRPC Projections 2020-2040

**Table 1-5 Population Rate of Change by Decade**

Percent Change by Decade			
	West Brookfield	Rural 11 Region	Massachusetts
1940-1950	21%	9%	9%
1950-1960	23%	7%	10%
1960-1970	29%	10%	11%
1970-1980	14%	12%	1%
1980-1990	17%	14%	5%
1990-2000	8%	9%	6%
2000-2010	-3%	8%	3%
2010-2020 est.	4%	5%	6%
2020-2030 est.	4%	4%	4%
2030-2040 est.	2%	2%	(X)

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau; CMRPC Population Projections*

**Age profile**

**Table 1-6 Age Profile**

	1990		2000		2010		2015		2020 estimates		2030 estimates	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
<b>Total Population</b>	3,532	100%	3,804	100%	3,701	100%	3,752	100%	3,569	100%	3,303	100%
<b>Under 5 years</b>	258	7%	193	5%	155	4%	197	5%	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
<b>5 to 19 years</b>	705	20%	766	20%	650	18%	462	12%	604	17%	484	15%
<b>20 to 34 years</b>	686	19%	462	12%	495	13%	758	20%	394	11%	406	12%
<b>35 to 64 years</b>	1,290	37%	1,588	42%	1,661	45%	1,572	42%	1,584	44%	1,287	39%
<b>65 years and over</b>	593	17%	795	21%	740	20%	763	21%	849	24%	1,025	31%
<b>Median age (years)</b>	40.2		42.6		47		46.8		(X)		(X)	

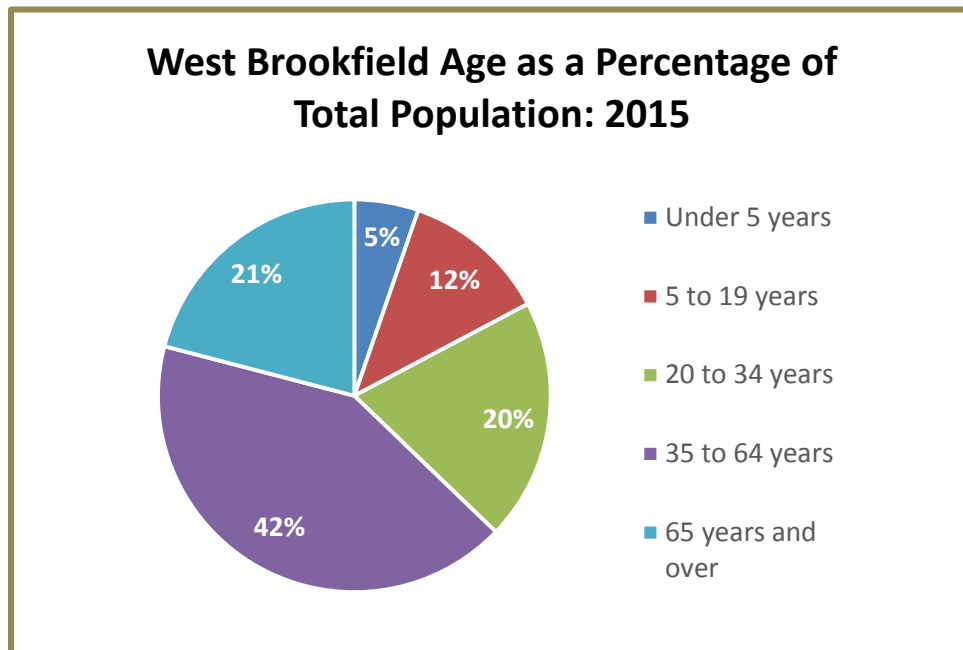
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census 1990, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey 2011-2015; 2020 and 2030 population projections are gathered from Housing MA (www.housing.ma). There are no projections available for the Under 5 age category and median age category.*



In addition to overall population decline, town residents have also been aging steadily. From 1990 to 2015 the percentage of the overall population over the age of 65 has grown from 17% to 21% (Table 1-6). This trend is projected to continue to rise through 2030. Estimates expect the percentage of the population of retirement age will reach 31% by 2030. Conversely, the percentage of working age residents (ages 20-64) is currently estimated to be around 65% of the population. Should current population trends remain consistent, the percentage of working age residents is expected to drop to 55% in 20 years.

This trend presents a number of possible issues the town will need to address in the coming years. Aging populations will need more services, may contribute to a lessened tax base and may be less able to cope effectively with rural residential development patterns which place heavy reliance on car travel and make walking to necessary services difficult. A spread out, low density development pattern is far more difficult for the elderly to navigate, making it harder for residents to age-in-place. More abundant and more diverse housing located in central, walkable areas such as the Village Center and surrounding neighborhoods can better accommodate this growing population cohort.

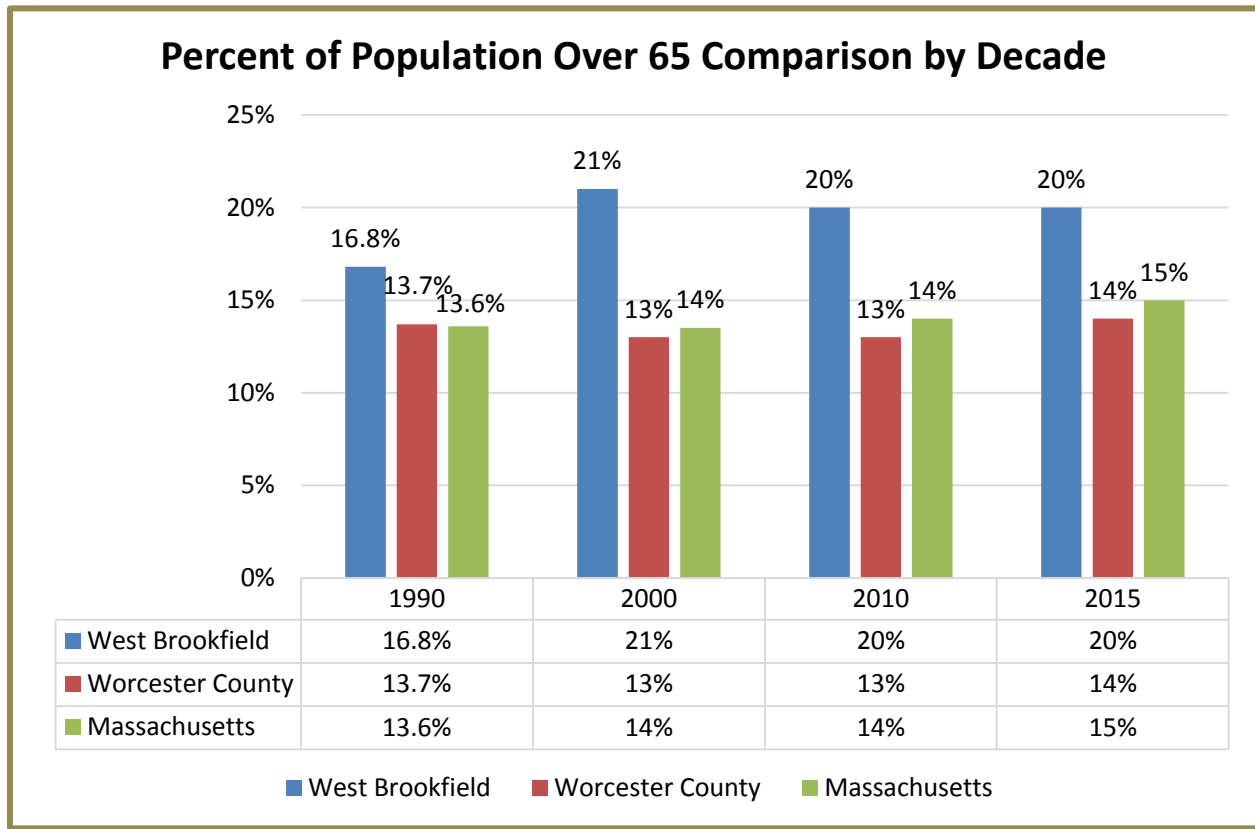
**Figure 1-7 West Brookfield Age as a Percentage of Total Population: 2015**



*Source: American Community Survey, 2011-2015*

When compared to the Rural-11 region and the state, the percentage of retirement age residents has consistently been higher in West Brookfield. Figure 1-7 looks at the population of residents over the age of 65 as a share of the overall population for three census periods. The median percentage for this period was around 20% for West Brookfield, while only 13% for the County and 14% for the State.

**Figure 1-8 Percent of Population Over 65 Comparison by Decade**



### Educational Attainment

Table 1-9 shows that the residents of West Brookfield tend to be about as well-educated as the state average (~33% in 2017). The percentage of highly educated residents (Bachelor’s Degree or Higher) in West Brookfield is slightly below state averages, though it is still comparable to the region. Residents with Bachelor’s degrees made up just 33% of the population compared to 41% of the population statewide. Countywide, the percentage was around 35% which is more in line with the town. Only 10% of residents had less than a high school diploma, which is on par with County and State averages.

**Table 1-9 Educational Attainment**

	Percent high school graduate or higher	Percent Bachelor's degree or higher	Less than 9th grade	9th to 12th grade	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	Some college, no degree	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate or professional degree
West Brookfield	90%	33%	2%	8%	38%	14%	6%	22%	11%
Worcester County	90%	35%	4%	6%	29%	18%	9%	21%	13%
Massachusetts	90%	41%	5%	5%	25%	16%	8%	23%	18%

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey

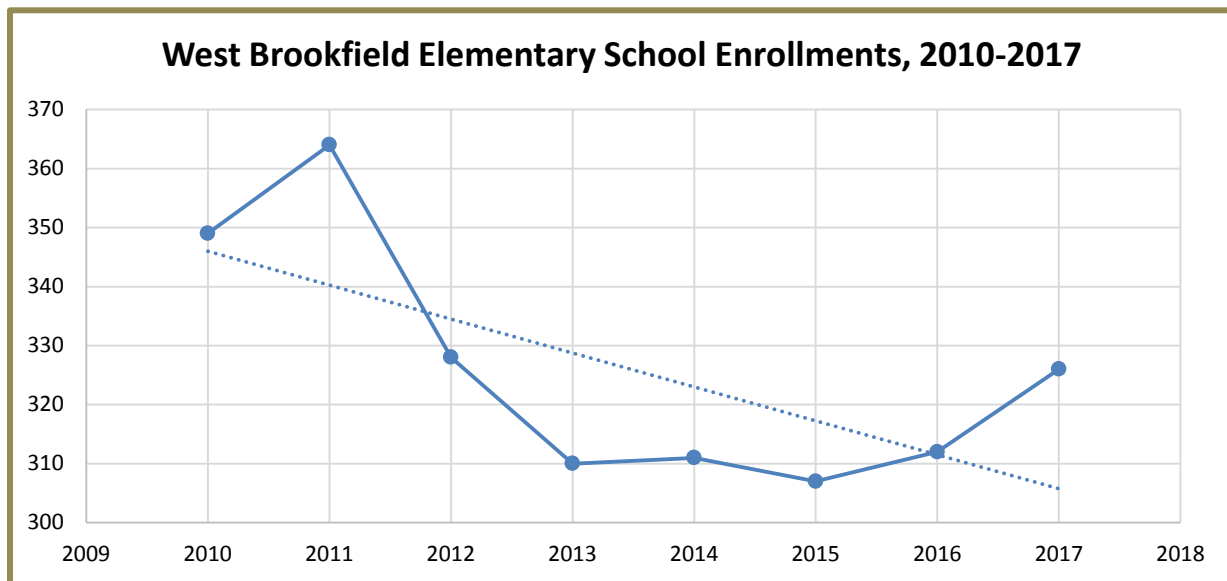


The school district that services West Brookfield, Quaboag Regional School District (QRSD), is generally considered high quality, producing few drop-outs (Table 1-9). The elementary school population is shrinking slowly in town, which could eventually have an impact on the town’s economy (Figure 1-10). However, there are, at this time, no indications that education is having a negative effect on housing or population growth. Rather, our findings suggest education should be a contributing factor to growth.

### School Enrollment

Since 2009, enrollment in West Brookfield Elementary has been trending down from a high of 364 students in 2010-11 to a low point of 307 in 2017 (Figure 1-10). This is consistent with findings indicating a general decline in population, and household size. This is a trend the town should be concerned with. While bringing in new students carries additional costs to the community, declining enrollments can also have negative impacts on a town’s financial health. Enrollments dropping to too low a level will lead to school closures, which in turn, leaves the town straddled with properties that are often difficult to dispose of and costly to maintain (which is often necessary for successful disposal or adaptive reuse). School properties tend to have low resale value as they are typically purpose-built structures that are expensive to retrofit or demolish and can thus become a burden on town finances.

**Figure 1-10 West Brookfield Elementary School Enrollments, 2010-2017**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2010-2017

## Housing

### Income

Table 1-10 shows that West Brookfield's median income as recorded for 2015 was \$64,375 which is around 6% below the median for the Rural-11 comparison group. It is also approximately 7% below the state median household income of \$68,563. This places West Brookfield in the bottom third of median household incomes for the Rural-11. The 2015 American Community Survey estimates the poverty rate in the town to be only around 0.2% of the town population, compared to 4% reported in the Rural-11 region and 8.2% statewide. However, this apparent discrepancy could be attributed to under-reporting or underestimation. Poverty in rural communities is difficult to measure and often goes unreported. The table also shows that per capita income appears to be higher than the average for the Rural-11 region, which at first glance could appear anomalous. However, this difference can be accounted for by the different methods from which the calculation is derived. Per capita income is a measurement of all reported incomes in an area, divided by population. It does not capture the variations in family income.

**Table 1-11 Income**

	Median Household Income	Families	Median nonfamily Income	Per capita income	Percent of families below poverty line in the last 12 months
<b>West Brookfield</b>	\$64,375	\$78,080	\$34,119	\$34,417	0.2%
<b>Rural 11 Region</b>	\$68,232	\$84,844	\$35,393	\$33,638	4.0%
<b>Worcester County</b>	\$65,313	\$82,733	\$34,323	\$32,284	8.4%
<b>Massachusetts</b>	\$68,563	\$87,085	\$39,687	\$36,895	8.2%

*Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey*

### Households and Household Characteristics

The average size of households in West Brookfield has shrunk over the past 15 years while the number of householders living alone has increased (Table 1-12). Households with persons 65 years and older have also increased, rising from 21% in 2000 to 41% of all households in 2015. At the same time, households with children have dropped from around 34% to around 22%. This combination of shrinking household size and increased single-person households suggests that West Brookfield is not attracting new families. Residents who settled in West Brookfield have likely stayed in place while their grown children have moved elsewhere. While such a pattern will have only a limited impact on the town in the short term, in the long term, it could threaten the viability of the town.

Regionally, West Brookfield has among the smallest average household size (AHS). Table 1-13 shows the AHS for the Rural-11 comparison region sorted from largest to smallest. In West Brookfield the AHS is significantly smaller, falling at the bottom of the Rural-11 communities. The town's AHS of 2.29 is 12% lower than the regional average of 2.61 and around 9% lower than the state average of 2.51.

**Table 1-12 Household Characteristics**

	2000 Number	2000 Percent	2010 Number	2010 Percent	2015 Number	2015 Percent	Percent Change 2000-2015
Population	3,804	100%	3,701	100%	3,752	100%	-1%
Households	1,362	100%	1,479	100%	1,560	100%	15%
Family households with children	458	33.6%	384	26%	337	21.6%	-26%
Householder living alone	321	23.6%	387	26.2%	477	30.6%	49%
Households with individuals under 18 years	489	35.9%	415	28.1%	343	22.0%	-30%
Households with individuals 65+ years	336	24.7%	441	29.8%	650	41.7%	93%
Median Age	42.6	(X)	47	(X)	46.8	(X)	10%
Average household size	2.53	(X)	2.4	(X)	2.29	(X)	-9%
Average family size	3.01	(X)	2.89	(X)	2.81	(X)	-7%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 Census and 2011-2015 American Community Survey*

**Table 1-13 Regional Comparison of Households**

	Number of households	Average household size	Percent of households with individuals under 18 years
New Braintree	392	2.89	35.5%
Rutland	2,898	2.86	38.0%
Barre	1,895	2.78	31.9%
Princeton	1,252	2.73	32.4%
Oakham	668	2.69	30.5%
East Brookfield	827	2.66	26.2%
North Brookfield	1,820	2.59	32.1%
Warren	2,060	2.5	28.8%
Brookfield	1,390	2.45	30.4%
Hardwick	1,231	2.30	21.8%
<b>West Brookfield</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>21.6%</b>

*Source: American Community Survey, 2011-2015*

## Housing

### General Housing Characteristics

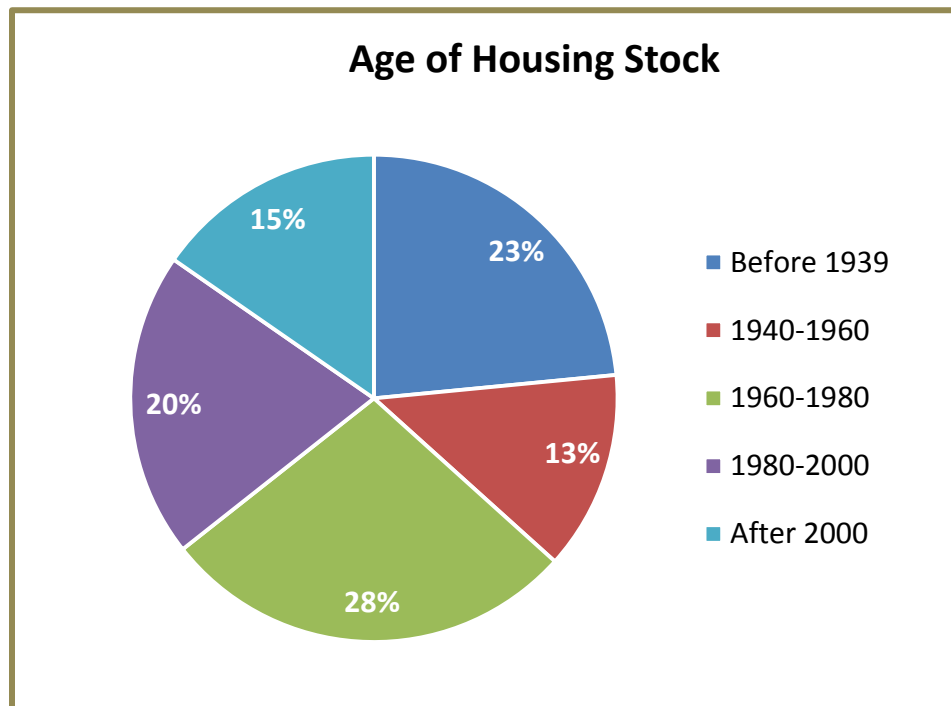
As of 2015, West Brookfield had 1,726 housing units. Of these, nearly 80% were single-family homes. The Land Use Change map shows the majority of housing units are clustered near the Town Common and around the two major water bodies, Lake Wickaboag and Brookhaven Pond. The remainder of the town is characterized by rural-residential housing. These tend to be larger homes on lots of 1 acre or more.

### Age of Housing Stock

Figure 1-14 illustrates the age of West Brookfield’s housing stock. More than 60% of homes in West Brookfield were built before 1980, with 26% built before 1960. Around 35% of homes were built after 1980 with 15% being less than 20 years old. This is a comparatively robust rate of the building in the last 20 years compared to the region. This being stated, with more than 60% of homes older than 30 years, there will likely be significant issues with these older structures. Older housing units can be far less energy efficient, costing more to heat and cool. This, coupled with added expense of replacing and repairing gutters, boilers and other essentials, can lead to problems with deferred maintenance. These additional costs can cause older homes to generate less value for residents, and subsequently, less tax revenue for the town.

Deferred maintenance costs can also have the potential to create a disproportionate burden on aging residents. Retirement aged residents living on a fixed income will be less able to afford the kind of maintenance required to keep up a 30+ year old home. This will become an increasing problem as the population of retirement age residents continues to rise in town.

**Figure 1-14 Age of Housing Stock**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

### Housing Types and Tenure

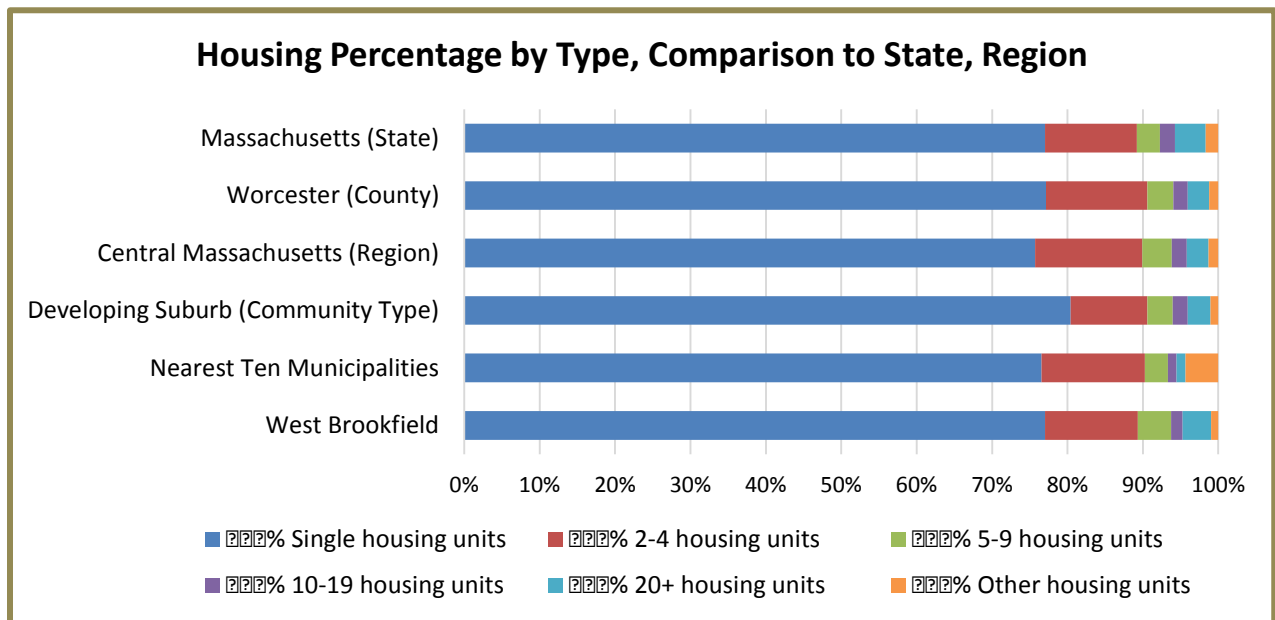
The overwhelming majority of housing units in West Brookfield are single-family, owner-occupied homes. Table 1-15 breaks down the housing units in town by type. Multi-family units make up only slightly more than 20% of the total housing stock. Single-family housing meanwhile makes up nearly 80%. This does not differ significantly to the region, or to the state as a whole, though it is quite a bit below the regional averages.

**Table 1-15 Housing Units by Type**

Units in Structure	Housing Units	Percent of total
Total housing units	1,726	100%
1-unit, detached	1,350	78.2%
1-unit, attached	10	0.6%
2 units	69	4%
3 or 4 units	48	2.8%
5 to 9 units	69	4%
10 to 19 units	34	2%
20 or more units	132	7.6%

*Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015*

**Figure 1-16 Housing Percentage by Type, Comparison to State, Region**



*Source: Housing MA, Data Services Department of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council*



Table 1-17 shows the growth in housing units since 1990. The number of housing units has increased around 18% between 1990 and 2010. From 2000 to 2010 they increased by 165 units or 11%. In that time, homeowner vacancy rates have increased from 1.4% to 2.1%, an increase greater than 30%. At the same time rental vacancy rates have dropped from 9.5% to 6.6%. This tells us that demand for home-ownership has decreased slightly, while at the same time, demand for rental units has increased. This shift can be attributed to a number of possible trends. First, these numbers could be reflective of the lingering effects of the two recessions, the first of which took place between 1990 and 2000 and the second, more recent one, between 2000 and 2010. During such recessions it is not uncommon for residents to switch from owning to renting in response to severe market down-turns. On the other hand, the two numbers may not necessarily be related. For instance, the increase in homeowner vacancy rates could be reflecting an increase in the number of vacation homes built during this period. Additional research will need to be performed to fully understand if this is reflective of a long-term trend.

**Table 1-17 Housing Units and Vacancy Rates 1990-2010**

	1990	2000	2010	Percent change 1990-2010
Total housing units	1,389	1,534	1,699	18%
Occupied housing units	1,228	1,362	1,479	17%
Homeowner vacancy rate	1.4%	1.4%	2.1%	33%
Rental vacancy rate	9.5%	6.1%	6.6%	-44%
Owner-occupied units	970	1,053	1,124	14%
Renter-occupied units	(X)	309	355	13%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census 1990, 2000, 2010.</i>				
<i>Note: Renter-occupied units category unavailable for 1990 Census.</i>				

### Housing Market

Figure 1-16 tracks the median sales prices and total sales volume of single-family homes in West Brookfield from 2006 to 2016. Like most towns in Massachusetts, home values in West Brookfield were negatively impacted by the housing crisis of 2008. Prices for single-family homes dropped precipitously from 2006 - 2007, reaching their nadir in 2012. However, since that time, home values have mostly recovered to levels approaching their 2006 highs. This indicates that demand in the region has recovered to close to pre-recession levels.

Figure 1-19 compares the median sales price for single-family homes in West Brookfield to those of the comparison group. By this measure, prices in West Brookfield compare favorably. Only three towns in the Rural-11 sub-region had higher median sales prices. In terms of the volume of units sold, again West Brookfield compares favorably. Figure 1-19 shows that, of the 11 communities selected for the comparison group, again, only three (Princeton, Rutland, and Oakham) posted a greater volume of sales in 2016. Foreclosures, meanwhile, factored little into the market. The town was around 4% below regional averages in foreclosure volume in 2016. However, the numbers regionally were small enough that the comparisons are not terribly meaningful.

Figure 1-18 Single-Family Home Median Sales Price and Total Sales Volume 2006-2016

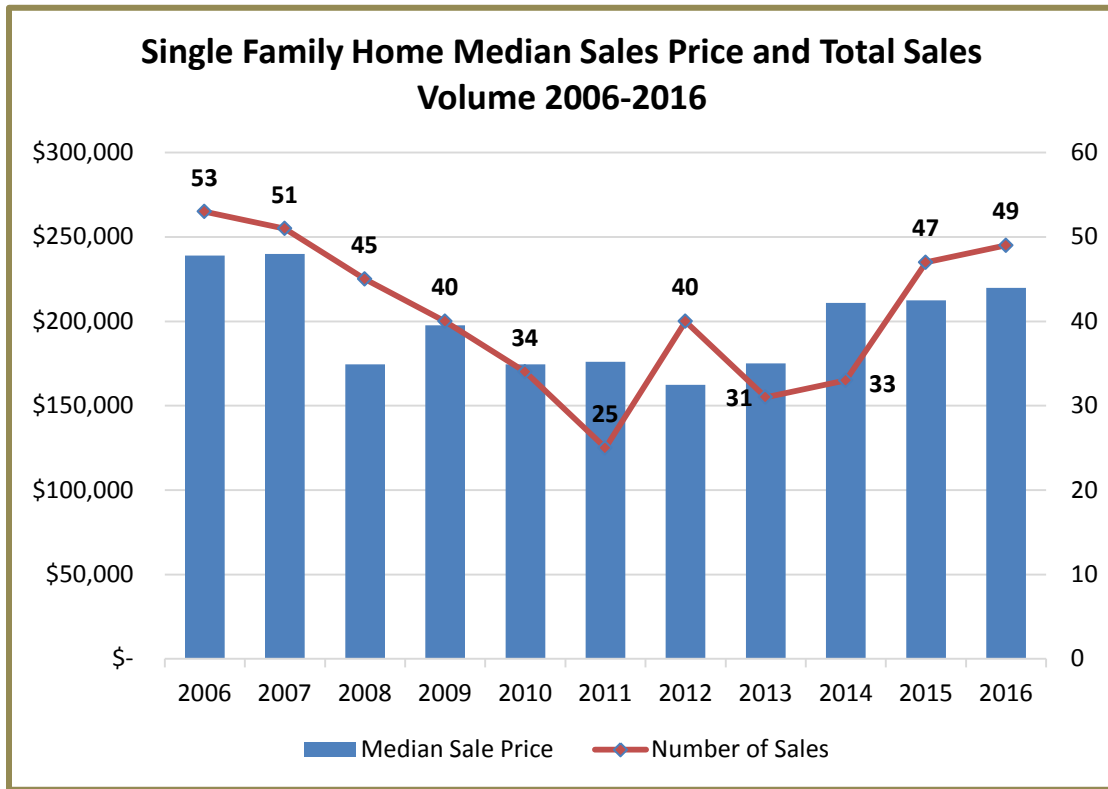
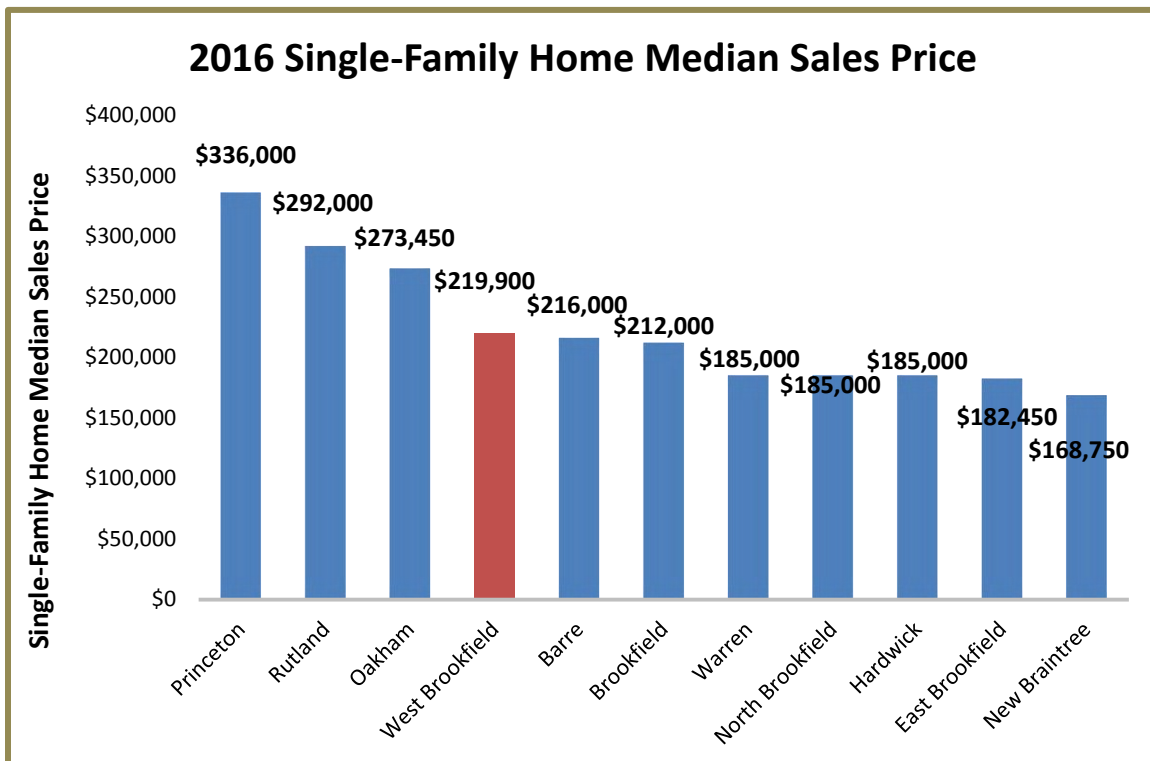


Figure 1-19 2016 Single-Family Home Median Sales Price

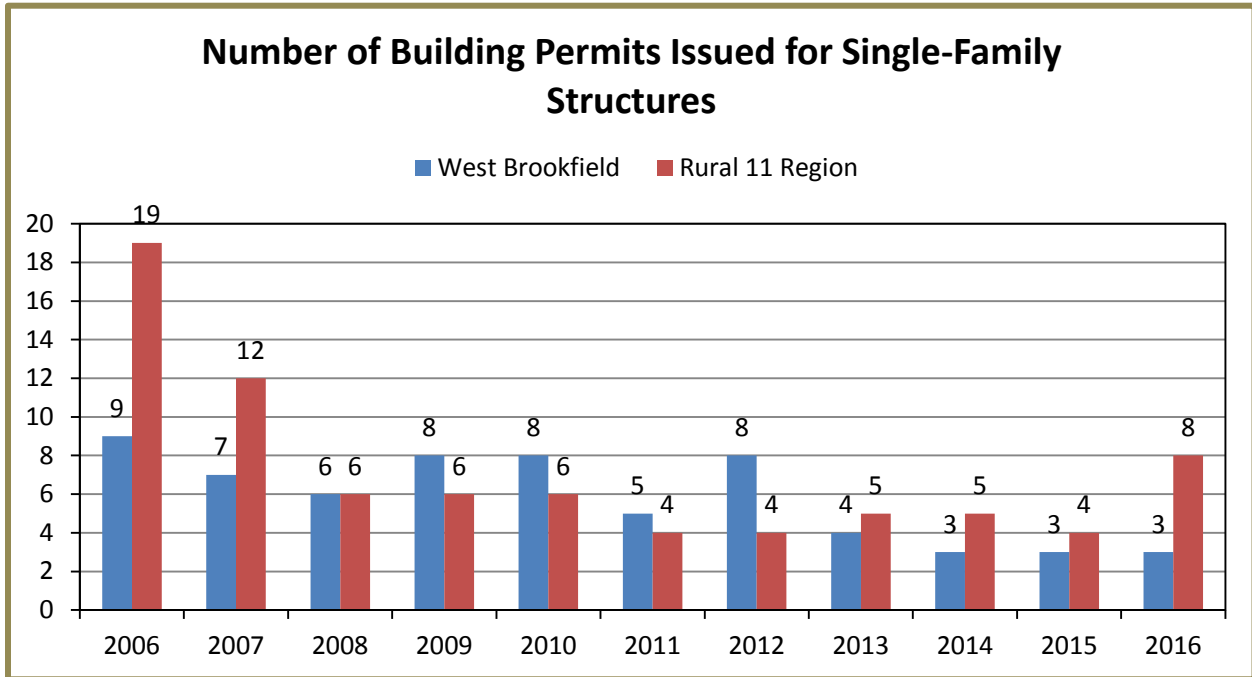


Source: Warren Group 2006-2016

## New Construction

Development of new housing units in West Brookfield has been consistently slow in the period analyzed. Figure 1-20 shows the town has issued fewer permits for new houses than the regional average in most years, other than 2009-2012. This occurs despite indications that demand has recovered significantly from its mid-decade low point during the recession. Our findings indicate there is a significant amount of unmet demand that could be flowing to other towns in the region, though quantifying this amount is difficult within the parameters of this plan.

**Figure 1-20 Number of Building Permits Issued for Single-Family Structures**



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, State of the Cities Data System 2006-2016

## Affordable Housing

Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 40B stipulates that all towns must maintain or make good faith efforts toward maintaining an affordable housing stock equal to at least 10% of the community’s total housing stock. For the purposes of MGL Chapter 40B, “affordable” rented means a housing unit that could be purchased or rented by a household making no more than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). In 2017, the AMI for Central Massachusetts was set at \$44,800 for an individual or \$88,000 for a family of four (MHP data).

Table 1-21 shows that West Brookfield has few qualified housing units. West Brookfield has 57 units of affordable housing on its subsidized housing inventory (SHI), or just 3.6% of total housing stock. While this number is not substantially lower than the other towns in the region, having a substandard SHI percentage carries with it certain risks. First, failure to maintain 10% affordable housing on the town’s SHI allows developers to seek a comprehensive permit from the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

This process allows a developer to build housing types that would otherwise be prohibited by local bylaws provided a certain percentage of proposed units are earmarked for the SHI.

Second, with a rapidly aging population, West Brookfield is likely to be facing a shortage of affordable housing suitable for seniors. Residents in both the survey and the community activities mentioned a strong desire for older town residents to age-in-place. Large lot, single-family development patterns pose numerous challenges to this goal. The physical placement of housing can be an issue with residents suffering from mobility limitations. Also, the maintenance required for large houses on large lots can easily become both a cost burden for residents on a fixed income and a safety issue for the mobility impaired. To help better manage these potential issues, many residents prefer to down-scale as they reach retirement age. With a paucity of affordable, smaller options, most residents will either need to leave town or stay in place, likely leading to safety hazards and deferred maintenance of their current properties.

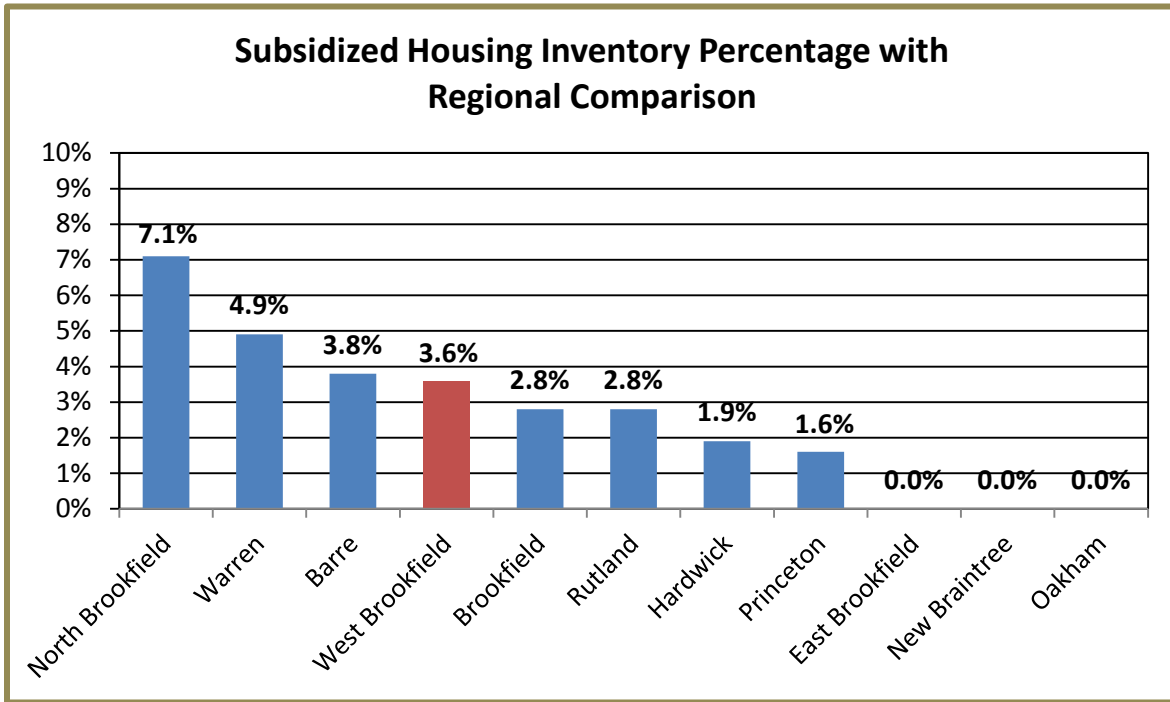
**Table 1-21 Affordable Housing**

Community	2010 Census Year-Round Housing Units	Total Development Units	SHI Units	Percent	Above or Below Average	Percent of Target
North Brookfield	2,014	142	142	7.1%	4.5%	-2.9%
Warren	2,202	108	108	4.9%	2.3%	-5.1%
Barre	2,164	83	83	3.8%	1.2%	-6.2%
West Brookfield	1,578	57	57	3.6%	1%	-6.4%
Brookfield	1,452	47	41	2.8%	0.2%	-7.2%
Rutland	2,913	81	81	2.8%	0.2%	-7.2%
Hardwick	1,185	22	22	1.9%	-0.7%	-8.1%
Princeton	1,324	21	21	1.6%	1.0%	-8.4%
East Brookfield	888	0	0	0.0%	-2.6%	-10%
New Braintree	386	0	0	0.0%	-2.6%	-10%
Oakham	702	0	0	0.0%	-2.6%	-10%

*Source: U.S. Census 2010; Massachusetts DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory*



Figure 1-22 Subsidized Housing Inventory Percentages with Regional Comparison



Source: Massachusetts DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory

### Cost Burden

Cost burden is a measure developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to quantify the effect housing prices can have on the quality of life and economic opportunities afforded to residents in a given area. This measurement assumes that a household can spend no more than 30% of its monthly income on housing before it begins to have a negative impact on other areas of household finance. According to HUD’s estimates, nearly 16% of households in West Brookfield are considered cost burdened. It should be noted that this estimate does not take into consideration the cost of transportation, which, in car dependent areas like West Brookfield, can be a substantial cost to residents. Were transportation costs factored in, the percentage of cost burden residents would undoubtedly be much higher

# ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Public Outreach and Community Events

The project team sought to engage the residents of West Brookfield in a number of ways. Town residents were invited to join CMRPC and the Master Planning Committee (MPC) at three separate community events. These events allowed residents to weigh-in on all chapter topics, raise their most pressing concerns and provide input on the subsequent development of goals and strategies in this chapter. These events were supported by a comprehensive survey conducted over the summer of 2017. The survey had a response rate of nearly 8.5%. From these public events, some key themes have emerged.

First, many residents who participated in public events indicated they liked West Brookfield precisely because of its small town, bucolic feel. There was little indication that new housing was needed or desired among resident participants. Participants in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> community event highlighted low density, rural housing types and limited apartment options as key strengths. They also indicated a strong desire to maintain the tight-knit community that has developed in town over the years. This does not mean however, that West Brookfield residents are completely resistant to change. Survey participants overwhelmingly supported the development of more *“small single-family market-rate homes geared towards first time buyers,”* as well as single-family housing geared toward elderly residents. What emerged most clearly from the community activities was a desire that the development of new housing benefits residents, compliments the character of the town, and is actively and carefully managed.

## Decreasing and Aging Population

From 2000-2010 West Brookfield’s population contracted by 3% while the Rural-11 and the state grew by 3% and 8% respectively. This shows that despite the impacts of the housing crisis in the mid-portion of this decade, demand for new houses remained high in Massachusetts. At the same time, new unit development has been consistently slower in West Brookfield than the comparison group area. This suggests that there is significant regional demand West Brookfield is failing to capture.

At the same time, the residents that do remain are growing older. West Brookfield will be faced in the very near future with managing the needs of an aging population while seeing a simultaneous decrease in the working age population. The rate of new population inflow has been too low to prevent rapid increases in median age and overall population decline. This trend will eventually lead to a substantial elderly population, likely resulting in increased service costs and reducing residents’ ability to absorb the necessary tax increases.

## Limited Housing Variety for Existing Demand

As residents have been moving out or getting older, new construction of single-family homes has slowed dramatically. Compared to the regional average, West Brookfield has added fewer new units than nearly any of the towns in the Rural-11. The vast majority (nearly 80%) of the homes the town does have are single-family units, with comparatively few multifamily properties. This leaves little room for new residents to move in and few options for older residents to scale down their households.

**Opportunity:** *Meeting the housing needs of elderly residents could open new housing opportunities for young families.* Creating more affordable housing for retirement age residents can also open up housing opportunities for young professionals and young families, both of whom will be needed to prevent the population from declining to unsustainable levels. Focusing new development in the most historically dense parts of town targeted to seniors and young professionals can unlock other parts of the market.

## Few Protections for Historical Housing Stock

Our findings also show that the housing stock in West Brookfield is aging. While that can carry with it a number of issues, particularly around environmental hazards and the costs associated with deferred maintenance, it is also potential benefits. Among the aging houses in town, there are a number of historic properties (see Chapter XX, Natural and Cultural Resources). Some of these properties, particularly those clustered around the village center, contribute to the overall character of the town. Many residents cited this area in particular as a key asset to be protected. However, many of these homes currently lack protection from commercial and other development; nor does zoning allow for the conversion of larger homes into smaller units, which limits their secondary uses.

**Opportunity:** *protect historic homes around the Town Common and develop design standards to allow complementary new housing developments in the historically densest part of town.* Strategies like the Village Center bylaw will allow for the exterior of existing large, historic homes to be preserved while allowing property owners the option to adapt the interiors to new uses, such as smaller rental units. This can create new opportunities for development of senior and small family housing. Such a bylaw could be tailored toward the development of small lot residential units in areas deemed appropriate, in a style that complements the existing historic housing.

## Understanding Fiscal Impact

Meeting the needs of an aging population and prioritizing housing for new residents will both require a careful analysis of the tradeoffs. Even when acknowledging the need for growth, the Town must consider the amount, type and placement of any new development. Additionally, estimates should be made of the potential impacts of new housing units, not just on the environment or the aesthetic character of the town, but on finances as well. All new units and new population growth carry both added revenues and added costs that must be carefully weighed.

A fiscal impact analysis is a tool designed to help towns estimate the potential costs and benefits of new housing. It assumes that every development scenario carries with it the potential for new revenue, but also new costs to the town. There are numerous methods for estimating this with varying levels of sophistication. However, one of the most commonly used methods, Average Costing, is one that can be employed with relative ease. In its simplest form the Average Costing Method aggregates the costs of all public services - roads, sewers, water, etc. - as well as the revenues raised by existing development. This provides a snap shot of current inflows and outflows to the town. These are each then averaged out per capita based on the existing population.

By doing this, a town can model the potential revenues and costs that are to be expected with any growth in population. It should be noted that there are some limitations to this type of analysis. First, estimates need to be taken over time, so as to average out natural fluctuations in housing markets, tax bases, etc. The larger the time series, the more accurate the averages will be. Basing the per capita multiplier on census data means that later an estimate is made in the decennial cycle, the less accurate that estimate will be. Using American Community Survey data will not be a benefit, as this will return an average cost over an estimate of the current population, within a margin for error, rather than an accurate count for the town.



# GOALS AND ACTIONS – POPULATION & HOUSING

## 1. Fully understand and plan for current and future housing needs

- a. Create a community-guided, comprehensive housing plan that addresses the needs of all residents, accounting for changing demographic and market factors
  - i. Form a housing steering committee to explore process, potential funding options, acquire technical assistance, etc. A committee typically includes representatives from the town, public and land use regulatory bodies (e.g. Planning Board, Housing Authority). It may also be beneficial to include representation from organizations that work with important communities, e.g. Council on Aging.
  - ii. Explore funding options for strategic housing planning (e.g. state Planning Assistance Toward Housing (PATH) grants)
  - iii. Seek additional technical assistance resources by amending Community Compact Best Practice areas to include housing plan. *Example from Auburn:* included in their CCC is the following language: “Housing: There is a documented community-supported housing plan that accounts for changing demographics, including young families, workforce dynamics, and an aging population.” Auburn’s plan (completed end of September, 2017) was designed to include the elements of a Housing Production Plan as determined by the Department of Housing and Community Development, but is expansive enough to include market rate housing needs.
- b. Raise awareness and understanding of housing types and affordability
  - i. Include extensive community outreach as a key part of the housing plan to inform the community of what *increasing housing affordability* means and the types of developments it can encourage
  - ii. Conduct a visual preference survey to gauge which building types and densities residents will and will not tolerate

## 2. Increase the amount and variety of housing options in certain areas

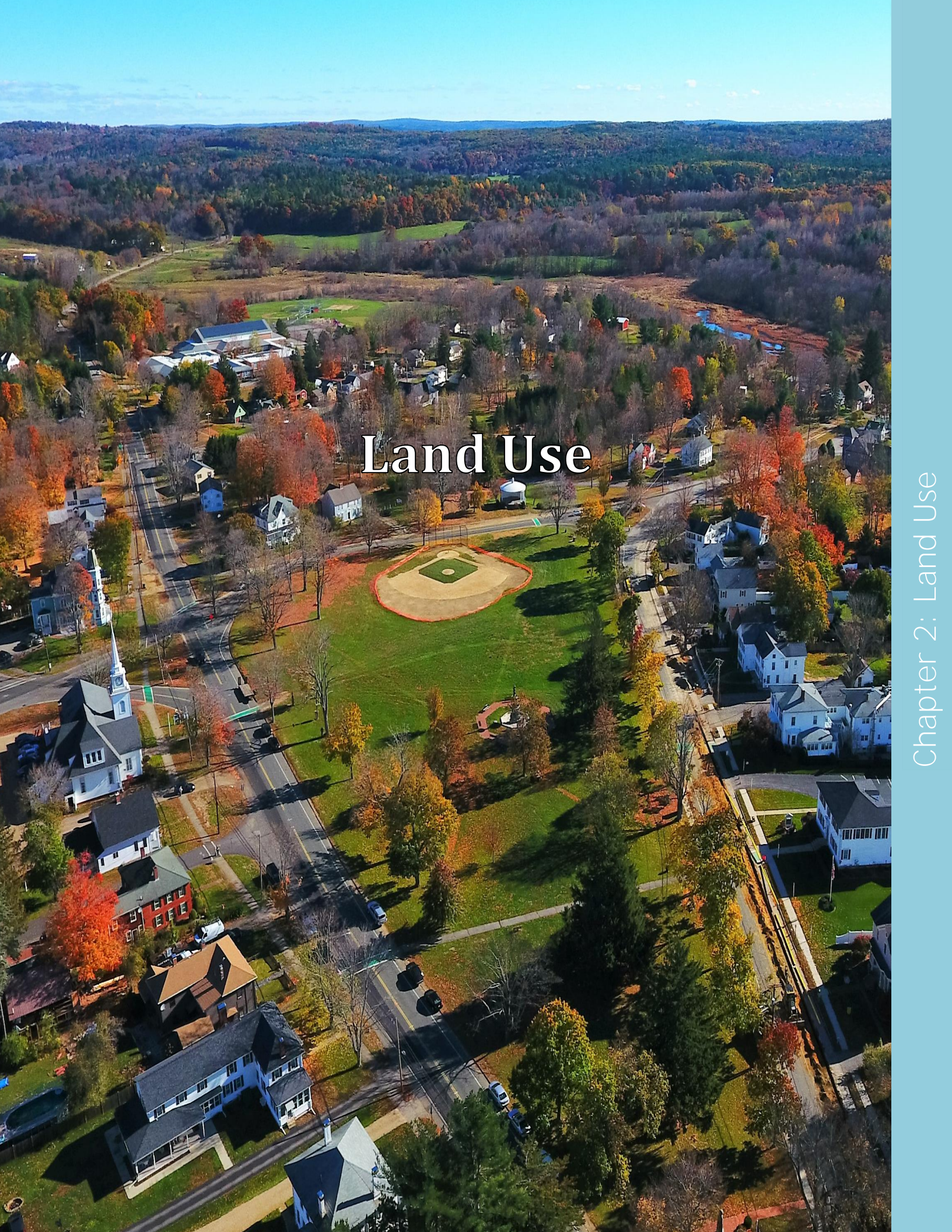
- a. Identify steps to encourage small incremental increases in new housing opportunities located closer to goods, services, and infrastructure
  - i. Conduct public outreach to define acceptable mixed-use housing types and options in key areas
  - ii. Explore development opportunities and constraints in key areas of the Route 9 corridor and the General District

- iii. Review existing zoning bylaw requirements related to housing and ensure that some options exist to create new housing units in certain areas. Look at bylaws regulating such areas as accessory dwelling units and reducing lot size requirements in suitable districts.
    - iv. Consider zoning and/or other incentives to allow for moderate new senior or specialized housing types, such as an “aging in place” zoning overlay district
  - b. Identify suitable areas for development of housing targeted at independent seniors, empty-nesters, and young professionals
    - i. Review bylaws to confirm they allow for placement of multi-household buildings and to further ensure that these can be built close to businesses and town amenities and encourage walkability
- 3. *Ensure that any new residential development will enhance and/or preserve the character of West Brookfield*
  - a. Identify and outline protective zoning measures to be applied to rural areas
    - i. Identify key areas of land that are not protected and may be developable
    - ii. Create a priority list of parcels that should be protected to maintain rural character
    - iii. Conduct public process identifying protective zoning options, such as Natural Resource Protection Zoning.
  - b. Create design guidelines for new housing types
    - i. Conduct a housing visual preference survey to clarify common housing types
    - ii. Create residential design criteria for various housing types to ensure new development is compatible with its surroundings
- 4. *Protect and preserve the existing stocking of historical and aging housing*
  - a. Identify and inventory key historic housing assets
    - i. Conduct housing asset inventory to identify historic structures to prioritize
  - b. Develop locally generated and controlled sources of capital for acquisition and rehabilitation of housing assets
    - i. Establish Community Preservation Act in town
    - ii. Create a Housing Trust Fund
- 5. *Understand and evaluate the potential costs and benefits of new residential development*
  - a. Conduct a build-out analysis to help the town better understand what lands are available for new development
  - b. Conduct a fiscal impact analysis to assess the costs and benefits of future development:
  - c. Analyze the impact of new development on town services including schools, and school capacity

- d. Analyze the impact on power, water and sewer systems
- e. Analyze impact on road maintenance, snow removal and other costs associated with new road adoption
- f. Estimate the different impacts from different development scenarios. For instance, greenfield single-family subdivisions can carry higher costs to the town (e.g. in new roads, water and sewer) than adding housing in the village center







# Land Use



# INTRODUCTION

How land is used and developed is a key factor in what contributes to the character of a community. Farms, roads, businesses, houses, and other features are spread throughout town in a variety of ways and in distinct areas. Taken together, these patterns constitute how land is used throughout the town. Individual changes to properties or uses can happen quickly, and generally occur on a case by case basis. However, viewed collectively over the next ten years, those types of changes could significantly affect the character of certain areas in Town. A goal of the Land Use chapter is to catalog existing conditions and begin to identify the various steps necessary to preserve the desirable features, encouraging desired new growth, and ensure that the property framework is in place to protect the rural, small town characteristics which exist today. In many cases, no single action will protect and grow the town. It will require numerous actions across several chapters of this plan to build the framework necessary to provide the type of town desired by most over the next 10 years and beyond. In many cases, longer term studies and efforts should be started today. To delay action will only shift outward the timeline and increase the likelihood that undesirable change will occur instead.

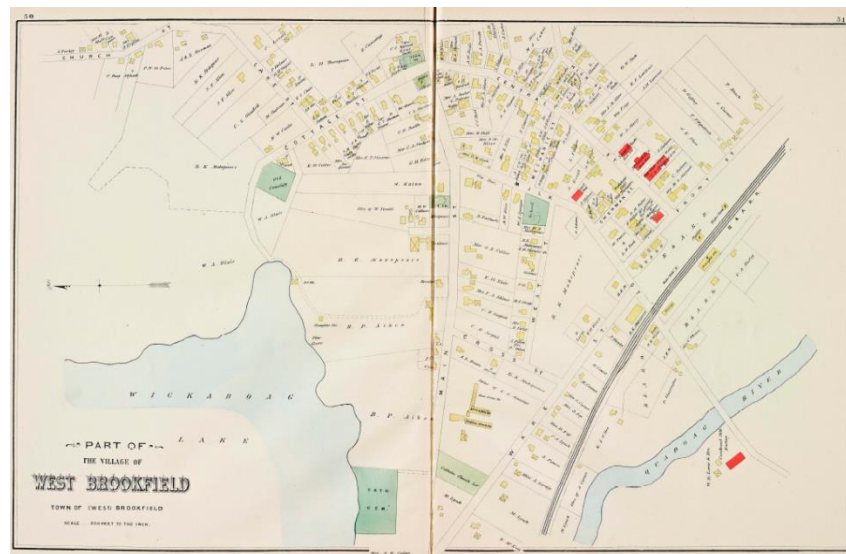


How land is used and developed is a key factor in what contributes to the character of a community. Farms, roads, businesses, houses, and other features are spread throughout town in a variety of ways and in distinct areas. Taken together, these patterns constitute how land is used throughout the town. Individual changes to properties or uses can happen quickly, and generally occur on a case by case basis. However, viewed collectively over the next ten years, those types of changes could significantly affect the character of certain areas in Town. A goal of the Land Use chapter is to catalog existing conditions and begin to identify the various steps necessary to preserve the desirable features, encouraging desired new growth, and ensure that the property framework is in place to protect the rural, small town characteristics which exist today. In many cases, no single action will protect and grow the town. It will require numerous actions across several chapters of this plan to build the framework necessary to provide the type of town desired by most over the next 10 years and beyond. In many cases, longer term studies and efforts should be started today. To delay action will only shift outward the timeline and increase the likelihood that undesirable change will occur instead.

## Development Pattern History

The Town has developed in phases over a long period of time, which is a common pattern in **New England**. **Starting in the mid 1800's** and continuing **through the early 1900's**, the pattern of development was concentrated in the town center area, around key farmland in outlying areas, and in the depot area.

**Figure 2-1 1885 Atlas Map (Appendix H)**



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Control

The first Zoning Bylaw in West Brookfield was enacted on June 1, 1971 and the town adopted the subdivision control rules and regulations on August 22, 1966. As noted above, a substantial amount of the development patterns in West Brookfield were established long before the advent of zoning or subdivision control.

Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision regulations are the most common tools to direct where certain land uses occur. The Town of West Brookfield, like nearly all towns in Massachusetts, is **broken down into several “zoning districts”**. Each zoning district has different requirements for the size of a lot, where buildings can be located on a lot (generally called **“dimensional requirements”**). Most zoning bylaws identify a minimum lot size required to build a new house, or new commercial building, for example, and how far from property lines a new building must be located. Each zoning district also allows and/or restricts what types of uses can occur on the property.

Subdivision is the next most common tool related to how residential land is developed. In most towns, a set of conventional subdivision regulations were created in the **early 1960’s and** created a process where large tracts of lands would be divided into building lots and serviced by a road that once constructed, would become accepted by the town and thereafter maintained as a town road. As most communities experienced new growth, a consistent trend across the state was to increase the minimum size as one method to mitigate and/or reduce the number of new houses. However, the result has been the construction of more roads and the creation of houses and neighborhoods farther from the traditional town center, goods, services, and in some cases schools.

## Prior Land Use and Zoning Efforts

The Planning Board and Town Meeting have been active in certain respects with respect to zoning bylaw changes. However, more work must be done to ensure the town will evolve in a manner agreeable to most residents: moderately and appropriately. The following is a general list of the significant zoning amendments in West Brookfield:

- 1971 - First Town Zoning Bylaw
- 1987 - Town Common District Created
- 1999 - Right to Farm Bylaw
- 2004 - Community Development Plan
- 2007 - Open Space Residential Development
- 2016 - Expanded Well-Head Protection

In 1987, the Town worked with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) on a Town Center Zoning proposal. Ultimately, this work informed the creation and adoption of the Town Common overlay district in May of 1987.

In 2004, the Town completed a Community Development Plan funded by the State. These plans, also known as 418 plans, were commonly occurring across Central Massachusetts between 2003 and 2004. The purpose of the plan was to **help guide the Town’s future growth**. Many of the key findings of this effort are validated even 14 years later.

### Zoning Bylaw overview

The current Zoning Bylaw in West Brookfield establishes three primary zoning districts (Rural Residential, Residential Neighborhood, and General each with specific dimensional requirements, as follows:

**Table 2-2 Zoning Bylaw**

	Rural Residence	Neighborhood Residence	General District
Minimum Lot Size (square feet)	90,000	45,000	25,000
Minimum Lot Frontage (feet)	225	175	125
Minimum Front Yard Setback (feet)	70	40	30
Minimum Side Yard Setback (feet)	50	30	20
Minimum Rear Yard Setback (feet)	50	30	20
Maximum Height (stories)	2.5	2.5	3
Maximum Height (feet)	35	35	40

The Zoning Bylaw includes a Schedule of Uses which establishes the types of uses allowed in the three primary zoning district and the permitting requirements for each. The permitting requirements are as follows:

**Table 2-3 Zoning Bylaw Schedule of Uses**

Y	Use permitted
SP	Use allowed as an exception under Special Permit by the Board of Appeals as provided in Section 6.44
N	Use prohibited

In addition to the three primary zoning districts, the Zoning Bylaw employs several specific overlay districts and development methods, is summarized in the following sections.

### Town Common Overlay District

Established in 1987, the Town Common Overlay District overlays the dimensional requirements of the General District in the area immediately surrounding the Town Common.

**The purposes of the district are to “protect the historic center of the Town and to retain the residential character of the Town Common area and to enhance the quality of life for the residents therein.”** A separate schedule of uses and permitting requirements are established for the Town Common Overlay District. Generally, uses are confined to uses protected under Chapter 40A, Section 3, one and two-family (and similar uses such as bed and breakfasts), and owner-occupied retail shops.

The following table is a summary of the land uses and permitting requirements for the Town Common Overlay District:

**Table 2-4 Schedule of Uses in the Town Common Overlay District**

Use	Specific standards	
Single-family dwelling (SFD), including garage for not more than three motor vehicles	One commercial vehicle up to 11,000 pounds allowed. Larger or more vehicles by SP	Y
Conversion to two family	Must have minimum of six rooms and exterior must maintain character of SFD	SP
Two family		SP
Rental of one or two rooms, by a resident family to not more than three people	Sufficient parking is required	Y
Professional office or studio of resident physician, dentist, architect, etc, or other recognized profession	Not more than two other employees	SP
Home occupation	No more than one other employee: no exterior storage	SP
Bed and Breakfast		SP
Antique store	Subject to the provisions of Section 8.5	SP
Art gallery	Subject to the provisions of Section 8.5	SP
Crafts shop	Subject to the provisions of Section 8.5	SP
Coin or stamp shop	Subject to the provisions of Section 8.5	SP
Custom frame shop	Subject to the provisions of Section 8.5	SP
Jewelry shop	Subject to the provisions of Section 8.5	SP
Church or other place of worship		Y
Schools or playgrounds		Y
Schools - private	Including dormitories accessory thereto	SP
Nursery school or other use for the day care of children, or, a privately organized camp	Any outdoor play area is screened from adjacent lot to avoid nuisance	SP
Public buildings and premises for government use including public libraries		Y
County - golf, swimming, skating, yacht, tennis club, or other social, civic, or recreational lodge or club	Not conducted as a business	SP
<b>Section 8.5</b>		
Maximum retail floor area is 1,200 square feet, excluding storage, restrooms, or stairwells		
Off-street parking shall be provided behind the front yard setback in the ration of one space per 200 square feet of net floor area devoted to the nonresidential use or portion thereof		
The business shall be owned by the resident occupant of the dwelling		
The property shall be owned by the resident occupant		
Hours of operation shall be no earlier than 9 A.M. nor later than 8 P.M.		
The business use may occupy a portion of the dwelling, an outbuilding, or both		
If the business use is intended to occupy a portion of the dwelling, section 5.5 conversions shall apply		
No outside storage of goods or materials shall be permitted		
No outdoor sales shall be allowed, excluding sales licensed by the Board of Selectmen for the benefit of religious, educational or charitable organizations not to exceed three consecutive days per event. Tag sales and yard sales not more than twice annually and not more than three consecutive days by the resident are exempt		
Adequate methods for storage and disposal of refuse shall be provided		
No more than two full-time nonresidents may be employed		
There shall be no more than one driveway entrance per 125 feet of frontage		
One sign announcing profession or occupation and/or affiliation of the occupants, not exceeding eight square feet in area, and on additional secondary sign, not to exceed six square feet in area that is mounted on the face of a building		

The Town Common regulations incorporate the dimensional requirements of the General district and include specific provisions related to uses, including but not limited to:

1. Maximum retail floor area of 1,200 square feet (excluding non-habitable space)
2. The allowed business uses must be owned by the resident occupant of the dwelling
3. The hours of operation shall not be earlier than 9:00 a.m. and not later than 8:00 p.m.
4. No more than two full-time, non-residents may be employed



5. Free standing sign not to exceed eight square feet and one building sign not to exceed six square feet

The District has not been modified since its inception.

### Open Space Residential Development Bylaw

Adopted in May of 2007, the purpose of this Zoning Bylaw is to encourage a less sprawling and more efficient form of residential development than a standard subdivision. This land use development method is available to properties in each zoning district. The creation of three or more residential lots as a subdivision shall either be a conventional subdivision or filed as an OSRD with a Special Permit from the Planning Board.

### Flood Plain Overlay District

The Boundaries correspond with the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). The regulations require **a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals for any “encroachments, including fill, new construction, substantial improvements to existing structures, and other development”** and that each project certify through **a registered professional engineer that the project “shall not result in any increase in floor levels during the occurrence of the 100 year flood”** and compliance with all other regulations such as Chapter 131, Section 40, state building code, DEP, and Title 5.

### Groundwater Water Protection District

The purpose of this district is to ensure adequate quality and quantity of drinking water and to preserve and protect existing and potential sources of drinking water supplies, conserve the natural resources of the of the town and prevent temporary and permanent contamination of the environment. The regulations restrict certain uses known to conflict with protecting groundwater (hazardous waste, mining, and storage of noxious materials), and allows some new development by Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals for the following:

1. Any use allowed in the underlying district that results in more than 15% or 2,500 square feet of any lot impervious and which must include a system for groundwater recharge
2. Any enlargement, intensification, alteration, or change of use of an existing commercial or industrial use

### Back Lot Zoning

The purpose of back lot zoning is to allow for the limited development of lots with deep back land by special permit. The provision limits the use to single-family dwellings and requires double the minimum lot area required in the district in order to preserve open space, minimize density in given areas, and maintain the rural character of the town. Based on the bylaw, the minimum size of a lot (excluding access) in the Rural Residence is 180,000 square feet and in the Neighborhood Residence is 90,000 square feet.

### Multifamily Dwellings

Except as part of an OSRD, multifamily dwellings are only allowed in the General District, by Special Permit. Section 4.34 of the Zoning Bylaw requires 10,000 square feet of additional lot area for any unit greater than two.

## Home Occupation

The ability for property owners to conduct an in home business is widely regulated through zoning across the State. Home Occupations referenced in the current zoning bylaw include: reserving or home cooking, repair of portable equipment or appliance, real estate agent, craft manufacture, private instruction in music or dancing, resident carpenter, contractor, electrician, painter, plumber, beautician, barber, or other artisan but not including convalescent or nursing home, tourist home or similar establishment offering services to the general public. Additional criteria include that the use must be conducted by a resident, no more than one employee, and, no exterior storage of material or equipment.

## Stormwater Bylaw

Adopted in May of 2006, the purpose of this General Bylaw is to protect the public health, safety, environment and general welfare by establishing requirements and procedures to manage stormwater runoff, promote groundwater recharge and to prevent water pollution from new development and redevelopment. Under this bylaw, a permit is required from a seven member Stormwater Authority for all new development and redevelopment, including site plan applications, subdivisions, commercial uses, multi-family dwellings and houses built by a single developer, including family members, on contiguous lots under single ownership on an accepted Town street.

## Right-to-Farm Bylaw

Adopted in May of 2007, the purpose of this General Bylaw is to encourage the pursuit of agriculture, promote agriculture-based economic opportunities, and protect farmlands within the Town of West Brookfield by allowing agricultural uses and related activities to function with minimal conflict with abutters and Town agencies.

## Current Land Use Patterns

As part of the Master Plan process, the current land use patterns in various sections of town were identified. In addition, a more detailed analysis was conducted for the entire Route 9 and Route 67 Corridor from Brookfield to Snow Road was conducted (see later section for description, findings, and maps). The general land use patterns have been identified for the following areas:

### Route 9 (Brookfield to Town Common)

Beginning on the eastern border of town, Route 9 contains several parcels with light industrial uses, many of which were established in the **late 1960's and early 1970's**. Two of the more significant land use changes on Route 9 heading west toward the center was the construction of a 2.2 MW ground mounted solar facility in 2013 and the establishment of Red River Farm. As Route 9 enters into what is known as the Town Common area, an abandoned and dilapidated parcel exists and has been the subject of concern expressed amongst residents throughout the Master Plan process; the goal of which is for the town to demolish the remaining portions of the existing house. This entire stretch of Route 9 is zoned Rural Residence.

## The Town Common Area

The Town Common area generally at Maple Street and extends east to begins at the western edge of the Town Common and extends approximately the entrance of Olde Village Place. While the area has undergone some land use changes over the last 20 years, the architectural integrity of many of the buildings remain intact and are either residential or occupied by small, appropriately scaled businesses such as a bed and breakfast, antique shop, funeral home, and realtor office. The area contains an existing 147 bed assisted living facility and an approximately 46 unit affordable housing development called Olde Village. This area is regulated by a separate Town Common Overlay District.

## General Zoning District Area

This area is large and consists of a variety of different land use types, from Town Hall to multifamily housing, and from small businesses to historic single-family homes. The combination of pedestrian oriented buildings, on-street parking, plus a mix of uses including a restaurant, Town Hall, library, post office, and local bank create a centralized area of activity for residents.

Within the area, there are several general areas of distinction:

### The “Town Center” Area

This area exists between the Town Common and approximately Milk Street. The area is signified by a concentration of civic uses (Town Hall, Library, and Post Office) and business uses such as convenience store, pizza shop, restaurant, hardware store, daycare, bank, and dentist. During 2016 and 2017, a new retail fish market, art gallery, and small day care facility were established in this core area.

The walkable nature of the town center is highly desirable for both residents and visitors. The combination of the art gallery, Tavern, and niche fish market are creating a synergy of visitor-based businesses in the town center.

Also within walking distance to this hub of activity is the Town Common and its mix of residences and small businesses around the perimeter. This diversity of uses and walkable configuration allows people to park once and enter more than one business; which is highly desirable.

### The “Depot” Area

This area is south of Route 9 and general comprised of the intersections of Central Street, Front Street, Long Hill Road, and Ware Street. This area contains four significant manufacturing companies, the Senior Center, and the DPW facility. The proximity to the CSX railroad contributes to this pattern of historic industrial uses.

### Residential Areas North and South of Route 9

The composition of these neighborhoods requires additional research and inventory. However, both north and south of Route 9 constitute compact residential neighborhoods consisting mostly of historically significant homes, many of which are within close walking distance to the town center. The area north of Route 9 along and around Cottage Street represent village center-style neighborhood with interconnected sidewalks and access to both the town center and recreation areas (Town Beach and the Landers & Callahan field).

The area south of Route 9 in the vicinity of Central Street, Milk Street, West Street, and Ware Street constitute a mix of historic housing types which once served as housing to the industrial uses in the Depot area.

#### Route 9 (from Milk Street west to Birch Street)

This stretch of Route 9 consists of several typical automobile oriented businesses developed in **the 1960's and 1970's including two fueling stations** (although one no longer sells fuel), a small strip mall development, larger apartment building, a Dunkin Donuts, bank, veterinary office, and restaurant. Several of the properties currently contain or could be configured to contain frontage on both Route 9 and Ware Street. While various constraints exist (lack of sewer and restrictions related to Wellhead Protection), portions of this area may contain the most land most suitable for additional commercial and residential development. The remaining portion of Route 9 contains a mix of uses including the Copper Lantern Inn, small manufacturing facility, vacant farm stand building, and a sit down and takeout restaurant.

### Lake Wickaboag Area

Residential development around Lake Wickaboag has existed since at least 1800. The patterns and growth related to the Industrial Revolution generally sent more wealthy business owners to seek out rustic and quaint areas as get-away locations. The creation of lakeside communities is common in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, the advent of the West Brookfield Zoning Bylaw in 1966 along with significant amendments made in 1973 (along with the zoning bylaws of many other communities in Massachusetts), included changes to lot sizes that may have intended to limit or stop new housing development on smaller lots. However, the **technical nature of property owner's rights and the inherent protections afforded to them** from certain types of zoning changes has created a significant problem in interpretation and application of the zoning of lots surrounding Lake Wickaboag. The development of new or significantly enlarged existing homes has and may continue to alter the character of the lake if left unresolved.

Another significant threat created by residential development around the lake is the potential impact on improper, undersized, or, new septic systems on water quality. As noted in the Economic Development chapter (Chapter 3), the consideration of a municipal sewer system includes environmental benefits if new and existing lake-side homes were to be connected. While some may argue that development should be halted, the court decisions and technical provisions of state law will allow new housing development to occur in many cases; therefore, anticipating and addressing it through specific design standards and ensuring the uses are environmentally sound should be priorities.

### Brookhaven Pond Area

Brookhaven Pond is an approximately 34 acre pond located on the north side of Route 9 in the western portion of the town. The area is comprised largely of small single-family homes and cottages. A significant portion of the area around Brookhaven Pond was divided into lots and a **series of roads prior to the town's adoption of subdivision regulations in 1966.**

In 1977, a group of property owners filed suit against the Town based on an inability to obtain building permits. The primary questions related to whether the lots needed to conform to the then current zoning bylaw. Other questions in the Land Court decision were related to the **town's attempt to prohibit "campers"**.

The case involves a few specific properties and questions about the ability to develop vacant lots or alter existing structures on many lots still remain. The Land Court decision can be found in Appendix I.

Under the current Zoning Bylaw, many if not all the lots in the vicinity of Brookhaven Pond do not meet the minimum dimensional requirements. Since 2004, the ZBA has heard many applications and requests pertaining to these lots. In addition, Town staff and Board members are often unable to answer inquiries about the parcels due to the complex history and statutory protections given to lots created prior to subdivision regulations or new zoning requirements.

**Finding the correct way to balance environmental protection and property owner's rights** requires a significant amount of time, research, public outreach, mapping, and planning to create and implement effective zoning for lakeside areas. The purpose of the master plan is to identify this as an important area to focus future study and funds to explore and resolve. Generally, a future change could involve creating a lake-side overlay district that would provide for new and specific standards for changes to these lots. Some similar zoning bylaws allow a minimum type or size of change to be allowed either by the planning board by-right but with site plan approval, administratively by a building official (with some performance criteria), or with a permit but no review for compatibility with the area.

### **Outlying Residential Areas**

West Brookfield is blessed with many picturesque landscapes and an array of permanently protected open space. In 2007, the town adopted an Open Space Residential Development Bylaw intended to allow for greater flexibility and creativity in the design of residential developments while preserving and enhancing the community character and providing a diversified housing stock.

Although there have been no significant subdivisions since 2004, farmland, woodland, and other areas are susceptible to new housing development.



# Issues and Opportunities

## Summary of Public Outreach and Community Events

### March 22, 2017 Community Event

The primary purpose of this event was to provide an orientation of the Master Plan process and to gather preliminary feedback and ranking from participants on key strengths and challenges from each topic area, including land use. Based on the Land Use focus group exercise on March 22, 2017, priority strength was placed on zoning intended to preserve the rural character. Some of the priority challenges identified during the session were the need for additional tax revenue and targeted growth, protection of Lake Wickaboag, and additional access to open space or preserved areas.

### Town-wide Survey Responses

The survey included a series of questions related to land use options and preferences. As a key component of gauging the community's general interests, needs, and desires, these questions focused on existing conditions and potential future scenarios. Common themes emerged related to the importance of the rural character and open space. Additionally, the responses support the consideration of additional small-scale commercial growth. In all cases related to new development, design guidelines were deemed important to help maintain and enhance the character of the Town Center and Route 9.

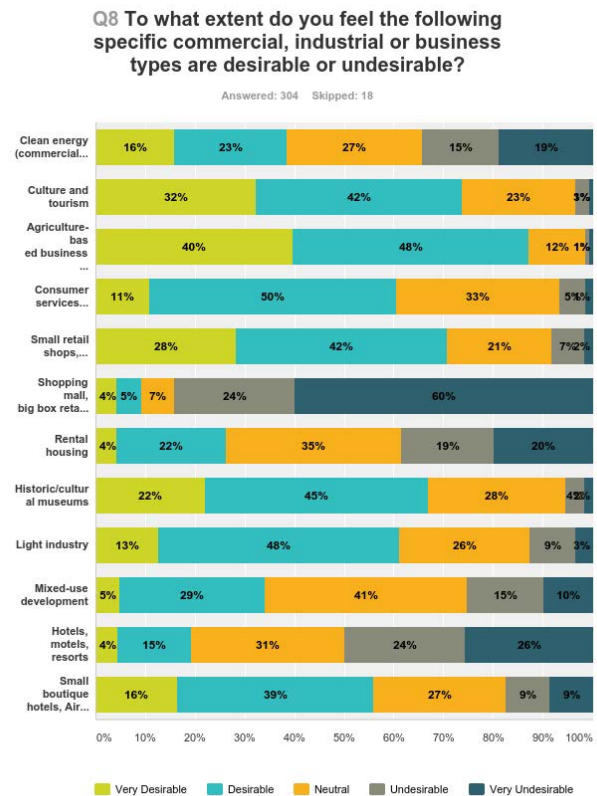
### June 22, 2017 Community Event

The primary purpose of this community event was to review, discuss, and elaborate on key findings of the survey responses. A variety of land use issues were identified, including but not limited to, concerns with demolition, lack of public sewer, and the need to balance the needs of residents and tourists.

### September 19, 2017 Community Event

The land use related exercises during the final event were intended to validate several of the key findings of the survey responses, including but not limited to, preferences for future land uses in the town center and Route 9 corridor, the clear support for design standards to be established, and development scenarios on parcels currently for sale in certain areas.

Figure 2-5 Example Land Use Survey Question



# General District

## Allowed Uses

The types of uses allowed in the General District are diverse. Other than the Town Common District (which covers a small geographic areas), the General District allows all other uses in the zoning bylaw. The following is a summary of uses allowed in the General District:

**Table 2-6 Schedule of Uses in the General District**

Use	Specific standards	Rural	Neighborhood	General
Single-family dwelling (SFD)		Y	Y	Y
Conversion to two family	Exterior must maintain character of SFD	SP	SP	SP
Two family		SP	SP	SP
Multifamily or apartment		N	N	SP
Rental of up to two rooms, not more than three people	Not more than three people	Y	Y	Y
Rental of up to three rooms, not more than six people	Not more than six people	SP	N	N
Professional office or resident	Not more than two other employees	Y	Y	Y
Home occupation	No more than one other employee; no exterior storage	Y	Y	Y
Retail	Distributing merchandise to the general public	N	N	Y
Craft, Consumer, Commercial service establishment	Directly with the general public	SP	SP	Y
Funeral home		N	N	Y
Veterinarian	Section 3.3	SP	SP	SP
Commercial breeding or boarding of animals	Section 3.3	SP	SP	SP
Restaurant or cafe	Serving food and beverages to be consumed within the building	N	SP	Y
Business or professional office		N	SP	Y
Bank or other financial institution		N	N	Y
Insurance or real estate office		N	SP	Y
Commercial indoor amusement or public assembly		N	N	SP
Commercial outdoor amusement	Excluding an outdoor movie	SP	SP	SP
Hotel or motel		N	N	Y
Beauty and barber shops		N	SP	SP
Commercial use of automatic amusement devices	Where the use is primary commercial use of premise	N	N	N
Filling or service station	Section 3.3, Special Condition 2	N	N	SP
Repair or storage garage	May include body repair, etc. provided noise, flashing, fumes, gases, etc. are confined to premises	N	N	SP
Salesroom or sales of new motor vehicles	Second hand sales, indoor storage and service facilities shall be incidental; no secondhand motor vehicle sales visible from street	N	N	SP
Contracting business and equipment storage yard		SP	SP	SP
Wholesale warehouse and storage	Section 3.3, Special Condition 1	N	N	SP
Any manufacturing or industrial use including processing, fabrication, and assembly	No use shall tend to reduce property values by reasons of dirt, odor, fumes, smoke, gas, sewage, refuse, noise, excessive vibration, etc.	N	N	SP
Newspaper printing		N	N	SP
Church or other place of worship		Y	Y	Y
Schools or playgrounds		Y	Y	Y
Schools - private	Including dormitories accessory thereto	SP	SP	SP
Nursery school or other use for the day care of children, or, a privately organized camp	Any outdoor play area is screened from adjacent lot to avoid nuisance	SP	SP	SP
Public buildings and premises for government use including public libraries		Y	Y	Y
County - golf, swimming, skating, yacht, tennis club, or other social, civic, or recreational lodge or club	Not conducted as a business	SP	SP	SP
Family campground	Section 3.3, Special Condition 3	SP	SP	SP
Cable TV facilities	Use under Section 3.26 (8) is exempt from the dimensional requirements of Section 4.2	SP	SP	SP

The existing mixed-use building at the corner of Route 9 and Central Street is a critical resource providing and enhancing the character of the town center. Based on the survey results and community events, one of the most desirable uses for that space would be a higher end coffee shop and/or gourmet deli with apartments above. This type of use is needed and would support desires by both residents and visitors. Based on the community input and survey responses, many of the allowed uses would not be suitable in the majority of the area currently zoned General District. A primary recommendation of the Master Plan is for the town to carefully consider the types of uses that may be desired in certain areas and based factors such as the historic development pattern and architecture, and to rezone areas to better protect and enhance those desirable features.

In many cases, the actual requirements in the zoning bylaw will never yield the types of modest and compatible development that is expected in West Brookfield. Large lot size requirements in the town center area bear no resemblance to the actual lot sizes in certain areas (which are typically smaller). A property with two, three, or more apartment units could not be replicated or created in most areas of the General District due to the existing zoning requirements. The Master Plan is not intended to identify a comprehensive inventory or zoning amendment. However, the following key issues have been identified and begin to form the foundation for a series of strategies and actions that may allow the town to initiate certain changes:

1. As outlined herein, to effectively preserve and enhance the town center area and the Route 9 corridor, additional zoning districts should be considered and pursued. It is not uncommon for communities to identify assets, community priorities, areas to preserve, and areas to allow guided growth.
2. Adjust the requirements for creating new residential units in certain areas. There does not need to be drastic changes nor changes that allow uncontrolled or excessive new residential units. However, many of the compatible small apartments built within existing historic homes or above existing stores simply cannot be created a new because of the existing dimensional requirements are too restrictive.
3. Some of the necessary environmental protections (well head protection, floodplain areas, and river resources areas) limit the land available for development or redevelopment. The town must identify and consider areas that may be suitable for certain types of development and create guidelines and requirements that will allow desired growth. Several areas of focus are identified on Route 9/67 Corridor Recommendations map.

### General District Rezoning

Unfortunately, the blanket application of a single business zoning district over such a large and diverse area could have a negative impact on the desirable characteristics of this area. In addition, the lack of other common land use tools, such as demolition delay or local historic districts, leaves all areas within the General District vulnerable to unwanted changes. Table 2-7 is a basic land use inventory of the existing General District which outlines the acreage by parcel type.

**Table 2-7 General District Land Use Inventory**

Parcel Type	Acres
Multiple-Use	23
Residential	414
Commercial	39
Industrial	7
Chapter 61A	4
Chapter 61B	1
Exempt Property	36
Total	524

Based on this inventory, 79% of the parcels in the General District are residential and 13% (69 parcels) are mixed use, commercial, or industrial. Based on the preliminary survey responses, general community input, and review of the existing zoning regulations, a recommendation of the Master Plan is that re-zoning should be considered to preserve a significant portion of this area as primarily residential.

During the community processes, the “Plantation Building” was identified as being for sale, the second floor was largely vacant and restricted in the types of uses allowed to septic system requirements, and, had been a discussed location for a new full-service gas station. The preservation of this building through activation of uses should be considered essential. As there is no demolition delay, no local historic district protection, and, combined with the permissive nature of uses allowed in the General District zoning district, there would be no mechanism available to prevent such a use. The application of the General District to the historic residential areas north and south of Route 9 leaves those areas vulnerable to significantly incompatible new uses. Under the current zoning, any residential area within the General district **could be developed as an “office”, “bank”, “retail store” or “commercial service establishment”**. Because the Zoning Bylaw has no other “performance standards”, size limits, or design guidelines, those uses could be constructed at the whim of a developer and most likely would alter the character of these residential neighborhoods.

The direst issue facing the town center is the incompatibility of the General District with the existing desirable buildings and land use patterns in the Town Center and along Route 9 which was overwhelmingly identified as contributing to the character of the town.

## General Zoning Provisions

### Demolition Delay

As further described in the Natural, Cultural, and Historic chapter, the Town lacks a demolition delay bylaw. This tool is common in many towns throughout Massachusetts and is a key action item identified in the plan. **Generally, a demolition delay bylaw enables the town’s** Historical Commission to review and consider plans for the demolition of historic structures. Emergency demolition is allowed in cases of where there is an imminent danger to public health and safety.

Otherwise, it is one of the only mechanisms to involve the Town in a **landowner's** decision to remove an identified historic structure. While Demolition Delay alone will not preserve the character of the Town, it is a fairly simple and common tool in most Massachusetts Towns. For more information about the various options and methods for adoption, please see the Natural, Cultural, and Historic chapter.

### Local Historic District

The creation of a Local Historic District is significantly different than a National Historic District and a Demolition Delay Bylaw. A Local Historic District provides the Town with significant review and regulatory authority over external changes to properties that have been inventoried and identified as contributing to the character and historical importance of certain areas in Town. The process to create a Local Historic District is discussed in the Natural, Cultural, and Historic chapter. It requires significant outreach and support of property owners within a specific geographic area. In some cases, the process can be challenging and require multiple attempts at passage by Town Meeting. However, in other cases, the process can be successful with concerted public outreach, education, and based on a clear understanding of the goal; to allow careful changes to existing historic structures in **areas that contribute to the Town's overall character.**

### Signs

While the subject of regulating signs can be challenging, the Town is well positioned to preemptively review its sign bylaw to ensure that future signs remain compatible with the character of town. The Town Center Overlay District contains more tailored sign requirements, the result of which can be observed around the town common and results in smaller, pedestrian oriented and visually pleasing signs. It is observed that Route 9 in West Brookfield has not been significantly impacted by large and out of character signs that can be observed in other portions of Route 9 outside of town. Except in the relatively small area regulated by the Town Common Overlay District, the Master Plan finds that the sign bylaw should be updated to ensure that new signs remain small in scale, pedestrian oriented, and carefully regulated. While the ability to erect new signs should not be overly burdensome for business owners, the size, location, and design of signs is an important factor in creating the character of an area or a Town.

Another key aspect of signs is wayfinding and orientation. Visitors require and respond to signs while seeking certain destinations. As outlined in the Economic Development chapter, wayfinding and branding can begin as simply as allowing for certain locations to be designated for small sign clusters, or visitor-oriented wayfinding. The existing sign regulations should be amended to ensure that these types of signs can be installed in designated areas.

### Route 9 (Outside of Town Common)

It is critical to align zoning and design requirements to protect the existing features and ensure that new uses or buildings enhance the existing character of the Town Center. Outside of the Town Common Zoning District, the current General District will not preserve or enhance the town center area and leaves the town extremely vulnerable to incompatible new development.



In the western edge of Route 9, the type and concentration of uses changes. The Copper Lantern Inn, a small manufacturing building, vacant farm stand property, and pizza restaurant create the last section suitable for business/commercial uses on Route 9. On the southern stretch of Route 67, the existing quarry represents the only commercial use in the vicinity. While the area is constrained by lack of water, lack of sewer, and steeper topography, the area should remain a consideration for future light industrial activity given its proximity to the railroad and access to Ware to the south.

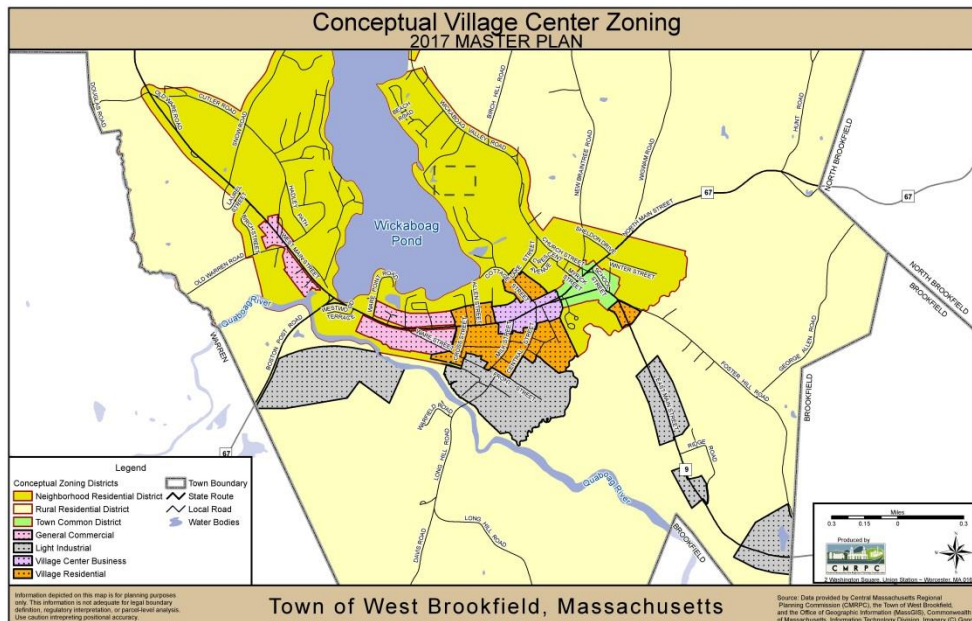
## Design Guidelines and Village Center Zoning

There are general two distinct areas and objectives when considering design guidelines. Those include a) areas that seek to preserve and enhance existing desirable building types and patterns, and b) those areas where new uses and buildings may change over time. The latter is especially critical in the area for Route 9 from Milk Street west to Cutler Road where new development should be anticipated but that would not, without guidelines or new zoning, follow any desirable pattern or building style. In either case, additional research and public outreach would be required to determine the nature and extend of design guidelines. However, the primary objects will be to retain the character, scale, and style of desirable types where existing and to create design guidelines that will mimic or result in the construction of new buildings that fit the character of the area.

As shown in Map 2-8 (Appendix N11), a conceptual rezoning map provides for the creation of three new zoning districts. These areas have been identified based on public input, the master plan survey, and, the Route 9 and Route 67 Corridor analysis. The conceptual zoning map includes the following new districts:

- Village Residential
- Village Commercial
- Light Industrial

**Map 2-8 Conceptual Village Center Zoning (Appendix N11)**



The following existing Zoning Districts could remain:

- Neighborhood Residential
- Rural Residential
- Town Common District
- General (although the extent and uses within this district should be reduced)

To create these new zoning districts additional research, study, outreach, and planning would be required. However, any such exercise should include a review of existing dimensional requirements to lot arrangements on the ground, review, consider, add or eliminate allowed uses, create specific district boundaries, and would establish corresponding design guidelines.

### Lack of Municipal Sewer

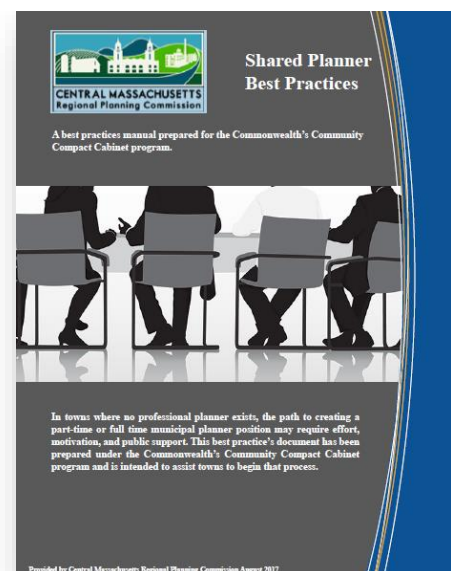
The lack of any municipal sewer infrastructure may be the most significant constraint to new business and residential growth along the Route 9 corridor and within the General District. As referenced in the housing section, a Fiscal Impact Analysis is necessary to further identify the exact needs and constraints for new economic and business growth. In order for the Town budget to become more balanced and to begin to offset continued increase in taxes on residents, new business growth and development must occur. The new growth need not be large, significant or sudden. However, without some growth to correspond with increased costs of services, the residents will continue to bear the majority of the tax burden. Carefully guided and directed growth along the Route 9 corridor is one of the primary options (other than the potential for modest new light industrial growth around the Railroad/Depot Street area) to provide opportunities for new commercial tax revenue and growth.

### Local Permitting Process and Administration

The local process for a West Brookfield resident, property owner, or developer to obtain necessary permits for a project is typical for a small town in Massachusetts. However, a variety of issues arise in many small towns as a result of minimized administrative functions related to land use activities. Unfortunately, the lack of investment in town staff related to planning and community development can have negative effects for the whole community and reduces the ability for the town to advance desired goals across multiple chapters.

While the population of West Brookfield is relatively small, in order to protect and enhance the town as envisioned by its residents, a series of significant changes in policy and procedures will be required. The current staffing levels in Town Hall related to planning, zoning, and permitting is minimal. The Building Inspector and Zoning Enforcement officer are part-time and hold office hours on Tuesday evenings from 6-8 p.m. to meet with potential applicants. The only other paid staff directly related to land use activities is a part time Planning Board Clerk, who is responsible for required administrative functions of the board such as posting meetings, recording minutes, and drafting decisions.

**Figure 2-9**  
**2016 CMRPC Shared Planner Report**



Applicants who are unfamiliar with the town regulations or process generally enter the permitting process one of two ways:

1. During the building inspector office hours, applicants can obtain forms and ask questions regarding the process. However, subsequent to these consultations there is minimal interaction between the building inspector and the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals; which can lead to confusion and delays once an applicant begins the public hearing process.
2. Seek out a town employee, such as the Town Clerk, for assistance during normal working hours. In many cases, the Town Clerk encourages applicants to consult with the building inspector during the evening office hours.

In these cases, applicants submitting to the Planning Board or ZBA, while having been advised by other town employees, are often not well prepared for the actual ZBA or Planning Board process. This is due, in large part, to the fact that both the Town Clerk and Building Inspector provide other core functions and advising applicants about the land use permitting process is above and beyond normal duties; often resulting in an unprepared applicant.

For broader planning related activities, such as creating zoning amendments, or seeking grant funding, accomplishing these tasks at the volunteer level with the Planning Board can be challenging. In some cases, broader town-related projects are managed by the Executive Secretary to the Board of Selectman and the Board of Selectman. However, without a town staff person devoting their full attention to planning related activities, the projects are limited to the time and effort of volunteers or other staff members for whom this is above and beyond their normal responsibilities.

## Parking

Based on responses to the survey, and discussions with Town officials, several areas may benefit from exploration of parking strategies to alleviate high demand. In particular, parking during special events at the Town Common could benefit from a more strategic and systematic event management system. Such a system would include coordination with event organizers, police, DPW and day of volunteers to direct visitors to other available parking areas or shuttles. Parking at the Elementary School during pick up and drop should be studied to find any viable alternatives. The area around the Post Office, Town Hall, and Library were all identified as potentially insufficient for demand. A small-scale parking inventory and utilization study could help the town identify available parking and/or options to increase parking supply or efficiency.

## Outlying Residential Areas

The current zoning in the Rural Residence district is essentially large lot zoning which seeks to reduce residential density. Between 2004 and 2016 approximately 84 single-family homes have been built. The rate of development as a result of subdivisions is minimal during this time period. Additional study of a variety of factors is needed to determine what caused the slower rate of growth in subdivisions. Some of the factors would include, but not be limited to: Study of the market conditions in and around this period, interviews to determine if other plans were considered but never materialized, or, if the zoning requirements were direct factors in the slower rate of growth in subdivisions.

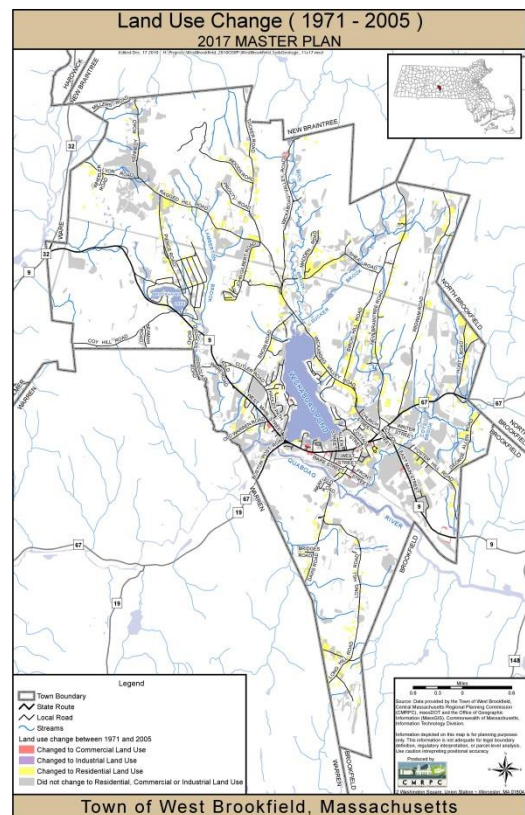
In any case, the existing Zoning Bylaw requirements do not easily prevent, curtail, or regulate the creation of what are known as Approval Not Required lots (ANR); which significantly contributes to the diminished rural characteristics identified as important to residents.

Based on the 2004 Community Development Plan, 2011 Open Space Plan, master plan community events and the survey, many of the areas that remain suitable for residential development are in the outlying areas. These areas also contribute significantly to the rural character of the town, some of which is desired to be protected and remain open.

As outlined in the implementation section, multiple actions across multiple chapters must be taken together, overtime to accomplish the protection of important rural areas:

- Identify specific areas and/or the most important outlying areas in need of protection from residential development (updated Open Space and Recreation Plan and establishment of Natural Resource Protection Zoning or similar measures)
- Identify specific areas closer to or in the town center that may be closer to goods and services and more suitable for additional housing and mixed uses (Village Center Zoning)
- Educate land owners about the potential to receive fair market value for farmland in exchange for permanent protection of farmland (Agricultural Preservation Restriction/Conservation Restrictions)
- Enhance and support agricultural based business and tourism as an economic development tool which can in turn support and grow the desire to use the APR program (which allows the continued use of the land for a wide array of farm activities)
- Seek to pass the Community Preservation Act which can provide local funding (with a state match) specifically intended to allow the purchase and protect open space.

**Map 2-10**  
**Land Use Change (1971-2005)**  
**(Appendix N9)**





The following options are recommended to help maintain the rural character while ensuring that new housing can be provided:

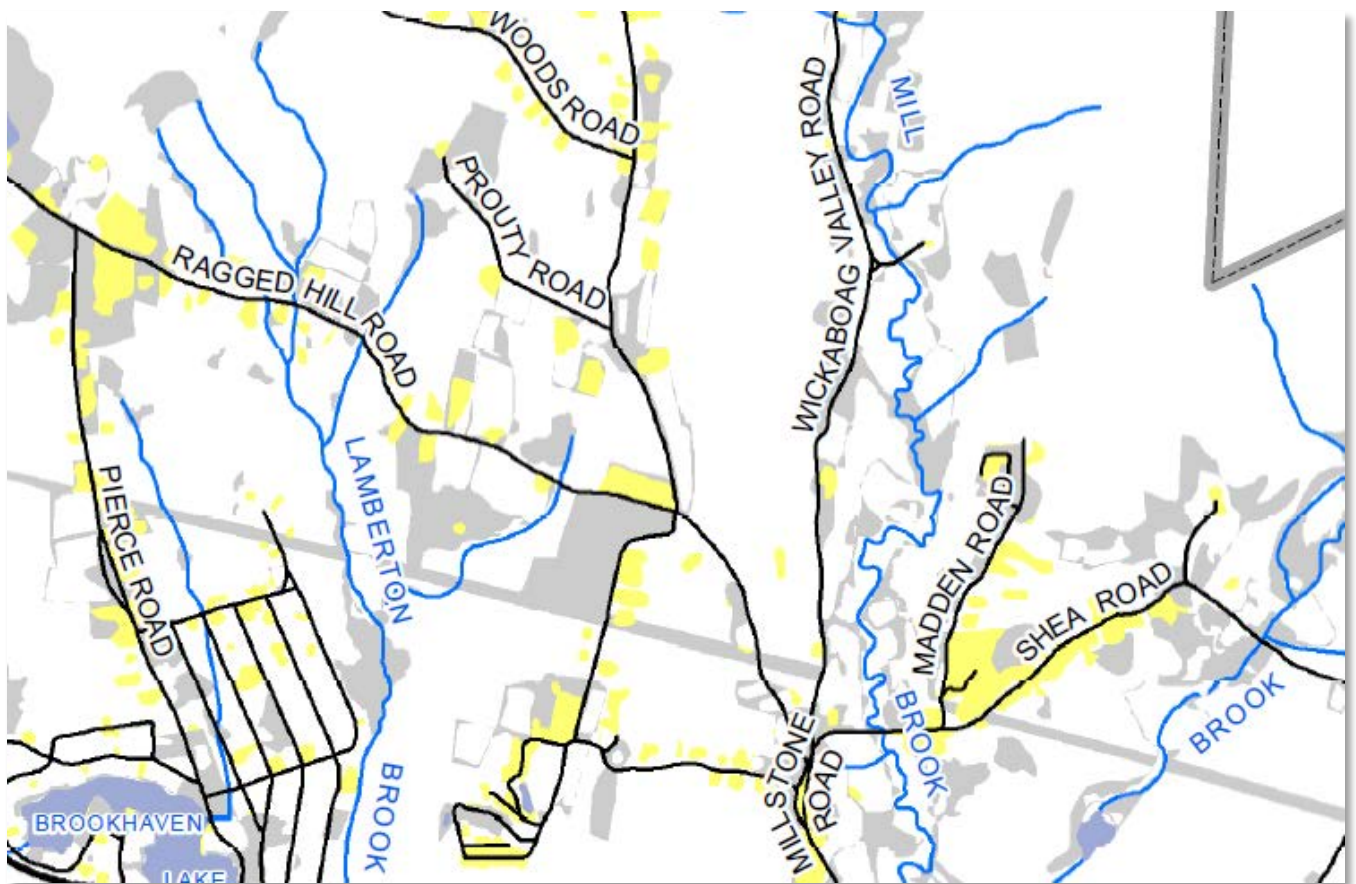
### Open Space Residential Development

Since adoption in 2007, only two subdivisions have been considered under this bylaw resulting in approximately seven building lots. A key recommendation of this plan is to consider revisions to the existing Open Space Residential Development Bylaw to ensure that it incorporates best practices, such as allowing these types of developments by-right, or providing the proper incentives to encourage the use of this method over a conventional subdivision.

### Farmland Conservation

A Farmland Conservation District is an overlay district, configured to include, and intended to protect those lands which, by virtue of their soils, acreage, location adjacent to and contiguous with other farm land, and lack of protection under existing underlying zoning, comprise identified critical farmland.

Map 2-11 Land Use Change Showing ANR Lots





## Natural Resource Protection Zoning

The adoption of NRPZ can help mitigate suburban sprawl impacts by addressing both open space/natural resource preservation and construction of housing. This technique is an innovative form of subdivision design that maximizes resource protection while providing economic profit. OSD provides the flexibility to allow various lot sizes, setbacks, and frontage within the development\*. The requirements can be applied to a specific area may be applicable in West Brookfield for areas of significant importance to the town and where it acknowledges and enables some new housing developments to occur; with added design standards.

**Figure 2-12 Natural Resource Protection Zoning Image**



Source: Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit

## Agricultural Protection Restriction

Educate and encourage additional property owners to consider selling the development rights in exchange for the permanent protection of land. While preserving the rural character of the town for others, it also supports other goals of the master plan to expand and diversify the types of farming activities to support additional business growth, such as agricultural tourism (farm brewery, farm stand, café, corn maze, equestrian center, hard cider/apple orchard, haunted hay-ride), or the diversification of products, or to ensure that key parcels remain and/or contribute to the character of an area.

## Forest Conservation Overlay District

Consider creation of other, more innovated zoning protections aimed at conserving forests and their wildlife habitat, forest products, and recreational values. Determine which critical resource areas would be best protected through the acquisition of conservation easements which can be written to address commercial agriculture or forestry activities or lands in fee, and which would be best protected by a Forest Conservation Overlay District that could have conservation development design as the by-right development option.

## Scenic Roads

The Town has protected several roads through utilization of the scenic road designation. This general bylaw was adopted in 1973 and currently consists of 15 roads. A scenic road designation that the Planning Board must hold a public hearing prior to work involving cutting or removal of trees over 4 inches and/or demolition or removal of any stone walls. The Town should consider whether additional roads warrant this level of protection to aid in preserving rural qualities.

## Residential Uses Surrounding Lake Wickaboag

The Town has identified concerns related to the conversion of older three season cottages to full time residences. A key goal of this Master Plan is for the Town to explore and identify a series of strategies through an additional study of the lake-side development patterns. Many coastal communities have had to contend with this complex issue. A variety of models and examples of zoning overlay districts, new septic system requirements, and streamlined permitting for certain smaller protects can be created while retaining full hearing/abutters notice process for more significant renovations or demolition and reconstruction projects. The residential land use patterns around Lake Wickaboag relate to and connect with the long term consideration for a sewer project. It is imperative for all residents to understand that a concept such as sewer extension is long term. Additionally, in any such concept newer systems are exempt for a significant period of time (often 10-15 years) from any type of requirement to connect.

Understanding that the creation of a municipal sewer system is long-term, and potentially cost prohibitive, the Town should also explore other options to enhance existing septic systems. In addition, the Town should continue to explore and consider any new technology or methods for small septic system designs that can reduce the potential impact to water quality.

With regard to zoning, the Town should continue to pursue research, study, and evaluation of the potential build-out of the lake-side parcels and consider a **“cottage overlay district” or similar zoning bylaw** to allow for controlled development and redevelopment in these sensitive areas. Coastal communities should be considered as models as many have experienced the conversion of seasonal cottages to full time residences.

## Residential Uses Surrounding Brookhaven Pond

In 1970, a group of residents filed a lawsuit against the Town of West Brookfield for an inability to obtain building permits on undersized lots in certain sections around the pond. The resulting superior court decision has created significant confusion amongst town officials and property owners regarding the legal status of many lots around the lake. Similar to the recommendations related to Lake Wickaboag, the Town should continue to pursue research, study, and evaluation of the potential build-out of the lake-side parcels and consider a **“cottage overlay district” or similar zoning bylaw** to allow for controlled development and redevelopment in these sensitive areas.

# Buildout Analysis

## Purpose and Limitations

A build out analysis is a process which seeks to estimate the total acreage of land suitable for development in a given community and then, given the geographical, geological and statutory constraints unique to that community, produce an estimate of the total number of buildable lots that land could yield. The process does not seek to arrive at an absolute number of buildable lots. Rather, this estimate is intended to serve as a guide as the town decides how it intends to encourage and direct new development over the next few years.

**As part of most Master Plan processes, a “build-out analysis” is completed** and is intended to provide an estimated number of new housing lots that could be created under the current zoning requirements. An important part of the analysis involves identifying and accounting for constraints to development, which are categorized as Absolute Constraints such as but not limited to wetlands, water bodies, and steep slopes, and Partial Constraints such as but not limited to protective zoning bylaws (e.g. Wellhead Protection), wetland buffers, or lands in Chapter 61. The format for this buildout analysis includes maps for each of the constraints and a composite map which shows the remaining developable lands. The final analysis evaluates the existing zoning and resulting number of housing units that could be developed.

Our analysis included review of the Rural Residential and Neighborhood residential zoning districts. After accounting for various constraints, the buildout analysis identifies that approximately 7,730 acres could be developed and could result in approximately 3,583 new residential building lots.

These projections are intended to be a liberal estimate to guide and inform future decisions by the Planning Board, other local boards, and Town Meeting. It is intended to be one aspect to consider in determining how best to plan for, accommodate, or restrict new residential growth. The numbers shown in a buildout analysis are speculative in that in most cases, not all lots would be developed. In addition, given the complexities of evaluating potential costs and impacts associated with new development, a key recommendation of the plan is for the Town to conduct a separate fiscal impact analysis. This next level of future study should be conducted prior to the town making significant policy decisions regarding new residential growth. As indicated in the housing chapter, new residential growth in the outlying area may have a more substantial fiscal impacts than more compact housing in areas already developed for housing, mainly in the broader town center area currently zoned General district.

## Methodology

This process produces a fairly conservative estimate of the total available lots and should not be viewed as scientific. Many variables can impact the final lot count derived from this exercise. For the purposes of this section, the project team utilized a simplified methodology **derived from the “Expanded Summary of MAPC generic buildout analysis methodology”** prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) in 2000. A copy of this methodology is provided in Appendix XX. In simplified terms, the MAPC methodology breaks down the build out analysis process into the following steps:

## Estimate Developable Acreage

Developable acreage is estimated from the Massachusetts state Land Use GIS layer (2005), cross-referenced against the most recent orthographic (aerial photo) data layer. This allows the project team to arrive at high-confidence estimate of the total acres of open space.

## Absolute Constraints

These constraints prohibit the development on parcels and are typically based on state laws, environmental laws, site features (such as steep slopes), local zoning bylaws, permanently protected lands, and other limitations that would prevent any development from occurring on a given piece of land. The following table identifies all the absolute constraints used in the analysis:

**Table 2-13 Absolute Constraints**

Absolute Constraints	
Roads	Water bodies (ponds, lakes, rivers)
Streams	Slopes greater than 25%
<b>Rivers Protection Act (200' from shore)</b>	Developed Lands
Permanently protected open space	

The land that remains is considered to be the “Raw Acreage” or the total open space acreage minus all undevelopable land. This then is converted in square feet to render it suitable for later calculations. This is achieved by multiplying the Raw Acreage by 43,560 to produce the calculation. The complete buildout analysis data can be found in Appendix J.

## Partial Constraints

Once the absolute constraints have been removed from the available land estimates, the remaining acreage must be analyzed for any constraints which might act to partially, though not completely, inhibit the development potential of the available land. These constraints can include slopes, watershed or wellhead protection areas, special zoning restrictions or any combination thereof. For the purposes of this section, the project team identified the following factors as partial constraints.

- 0-8% Slope
- 8-15% Slope
- 15-25% Slope
- 100-200ft RPA
- Overlay Districts
- Wetland

These constraints do not expressly prohibit development but may in many cases create a financial or other type of barrier which can render a project more challenging and costly. These include areas within a wetland buffer that can be altered but only after approval by the Conservation Commission, or may include the development of lands that must first be taken out of non-permanent protection such as Chapter lands.

The following table identifies all the partial constraints used in the analysis:

**Table 2-14 Partial Constraints**

Partial Constraints	
Wetland buffers (100 feet)	Riverfront Areas (200 feet)
Steep Slopes (12-24%)	Well Head Protection Zoning
Flood Plain Zoning	Non-permanently protected Open Space (e.g. Chapter 61)

The acreage in each of the partial constraints is not completely removed from the final **developable acreage**. Rather, it is reduced by fraction to produce the final “Net Land Area” estimate which be used to produce our final *Lot Yield*. This fraction varies greatly from town to town is most typically derived at through consultation with planning board or other town staff. This estimate uses a simplified constraint factor process. In the following calculations, each partial constraint is assumed to reduce the available buildable land by 10%, compounding. That is to say, any one constraint would reduce the available land by 10%; a combination of two constraints would reduce it by 20%; three by 30% and so on. This is not a scientific calculation and should not be viewed as such. It is intended to provide the Town of West Brookfield with a demonstration of the capabilities of this process. CMRPC highly recommends the Town consider producing a more robust build-out analysis that is better able to take into account more nuanced variables and development scenarios

### Estimate Build Factor from Zoning Restrictions

Once the *Net Land Area* calculation is arrived at, the estimates must go through a further process to convert it into an estimate of available lots. The first step in this process is to remove from the available land area odd lots and right of way (ROW). This is done by calculating a ration of developable land to non-developable land. This is derived from right of way (ROW), Frontage and Minimum lot sizes. CMRPC utilizes the following calculation:

$$1 - \frac{\left(\frac{ROW}{2}\right) * Minimum\ Frontage}{Minimum\ Lot\ Size + \left(\frac{ROW}{2}\right) * Minimum\ Frontage}$$

This produces the fraction of land available of development in each potential lot.

### Residential Lot Yield Calculations

The final step in this process is to estimate the total number of lots that could reasonably be produced from the available land area. To understand these calculations, it is important to keep in mind a few things. First, this process does not assume the available land to be geographically distributed. Rather, it is better to think of it as though all of the land suitable for development is being brought together into a single place.



This aggregated developable land is then subdivided into lots based on the restrictions factored in the calculation above. The calculation used is:

$$\frac{\text{Net Available Land} * \text{Zoning Factor}}{\text{Minimum Lot Size}}$$

## Findings

The GIS analysis identified 7,730 acres of potentially developable land town-wide. Of these 2,912 were buildable with no constraints beyond what is established by zoning. 4,818 acres have one or more of the partial constraints listed above. It is important to note that this is only an estimate of what is possible. Many factors, including local and regional demand, willingness of property owners to sell and local controls will greatly limit the actual number of acres available for development.

The following chart identifies the total number of new residential lots and population growth result from this build-out analysis:

**Table 2-15 West Brookfield Summary Buildout Statistics**

WEST BROOKFIELD SUMMARY BUILDOUT STATISTICS (New Development and Growth 2017 - 2037)			
	Total	No Constraints	Partial
Town-wide			
Developable Land (sq.ft.)	336,734,736	126,841,135	209,893,601
Developable Land (acres)	7,730	2,912	4,818
Total Residential Lots	3,583	1,475	2,107
New Residents	8,635	3,556	5,079
Potential Housing Units By Zone			
General District	194	74	120
Rural Residential	3,081	1,228	1,853
Neighborhood Residential	276	141	134
Town Common	32	32	0

## Housing Units by Zone

The “housing units by zone” header summarizes the potential number of housing units the developable land in each zone can yield. Again, it is important to note that these numbers only represent an estimate of the development potential and should not be seen as prediction of what will be built in the future. For instance, the Rural Residential zone shows a yield of 3,081 potential housing units. This is undoubtedly a much higher number than local and regional demand will eventually produce.

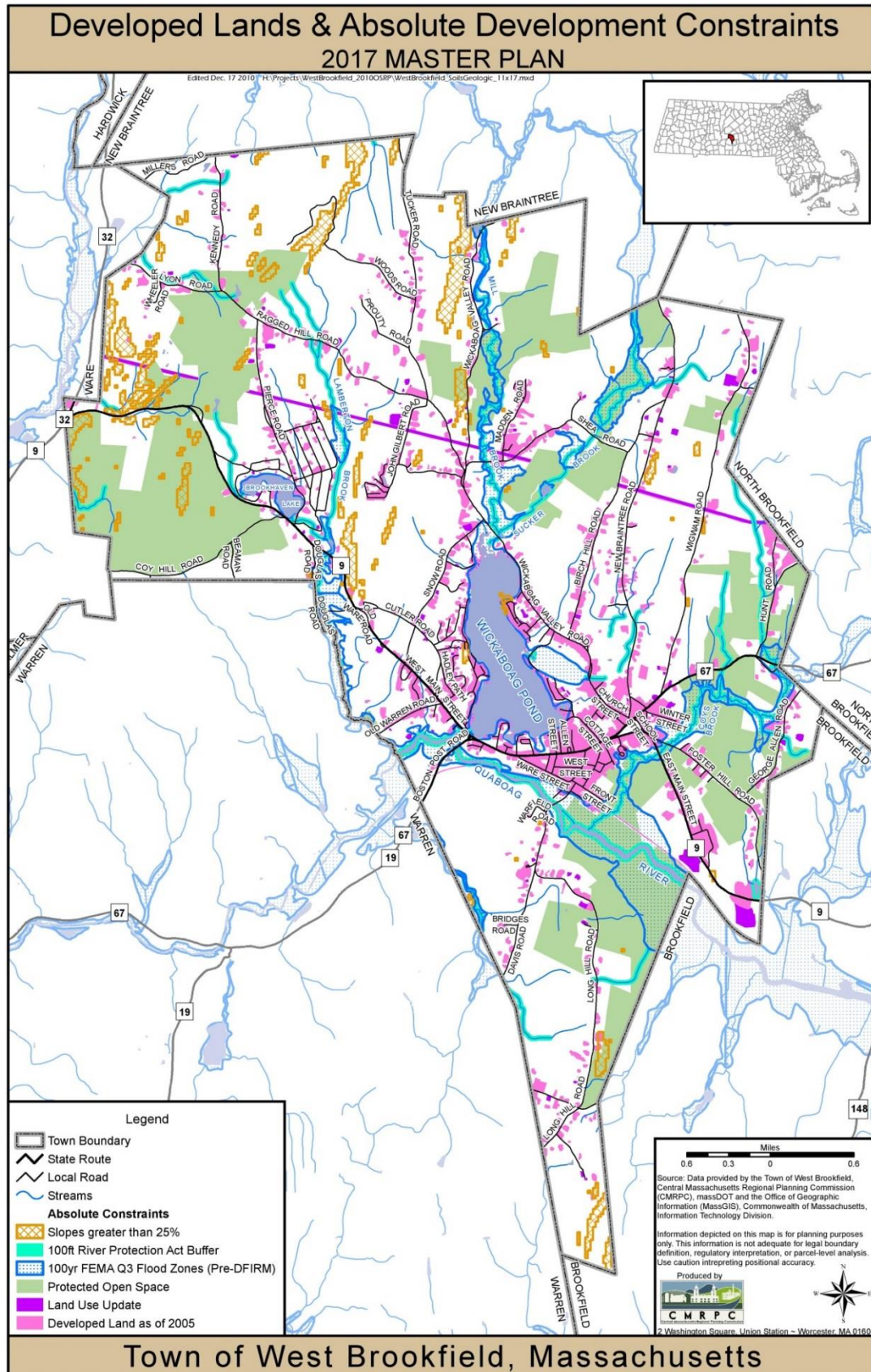
Much of this land is currently under limited Chapter 61 protection, which will likely slow the rate of actual development. Further, of this number, less than half could be produced on land with no constraints. The remaining numbers are at least partially constrained by slope, wetlands or other factors. This again will limit the actual development potential the land in these districts.

### **Building on the Results (Next Steps)**

This buildout analysis was completed as part of the larger Master Plan project. As noted above, it is intended to serve as a guide to help the town determine how it may intend to direct, encourage, limit, or control new development over the next 10 years. If the town believes that this is a critical issue to prioritize and examine in more detail, a series of additional steps must occur.

As outlined in the goals and actions, a complete buildout and fiscal impact analysis should be completed to provide a greater level of detail, research, analysis, and tailored recommendations. A complete buildout would allow for more specific areas and unique constraints to be factored and analyzed. Build-out projections could be completed for each proposed zoning amendment that emerges from this master plan. These build-out projections could then be compared to give the Town a more robust tool for evaluating the costs and benefits of each change. This greater level of analysis would provide more detailed information, thus allowing for much more tailored and directed recommendations.

Map 2-16 Developed Lands and Absolute Development Constraints (Appendix N5)



# Route 9 and Route 67 Corridor Analysis

## Introduction

The purpose of the Route 9 and Route 67 Corridor Analysis is to provide the town with more detailed information about the existing uses, constraints, and potential development or preservation opportunities within its boundaries. The study was identified in the Master Plan **Committee's initial Request For Proposals (RFP)** as an additional aspect to be considered and incorporated into the Master Plan. The resulting maps and analysis contain detailed information and specific recommendations. However, all recommendations should only be considered a basis for formulating future policy decisions along this important stretch of land.

Through the community event process and town-wide survey, the Route 9 and Route 67 corridor was identified as key component of the town in that it is the gateway and main thoroughfare through the town. It requires independent analysis given its substantially different characteristics along various locations. The study area was divided into three primary sections to ensure that each could be clearly inventoried and evaluated.

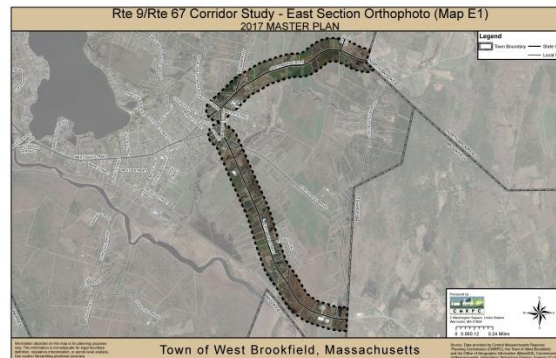
The mapping exercise results in the following series of six maps consistent across each study area and a final opportunities map for the entire corridor:

1. *Aerial/Orthophoto* showing existing features and establishes a study area of 400 feet from both sides of the center line of Route 9 and Route 67
2. *Zoning District* map showing the existing zoning districts
3. *Department of Revenue Land Use* map shows existing residential, commercial, and exempt uses
4. *Primary Constraints* map shows slopes greater than 25%, FEMA flood zones, River Protection Act buffers, permanently protected open space, and developed land
5. *Secondary Constraints* map shows slopes between 15%-25%, 200 foot River Protection Act buffers, Ground Water Protection Overlay District, and undersized lots
6. *Composite* map shows both areas of primary and secondary constraints revealing remaining parcels potentially suitable for development
7. *Potential Development or Preservation Opportunities* map identifies key areas and parcels that should be further studied for development or preservation.

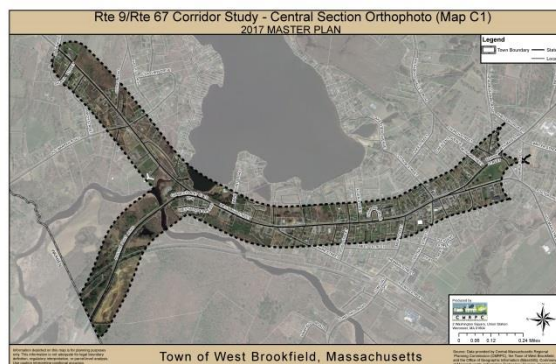


Route 9 and the bisecting Route 67 corridors contain both the heart of the developed areas, as well as the scenic gateways in and out of the Town of West Brookfield. In order to help evaluate the different characteristics, the corridor analysis is generally broken into three primary areas:

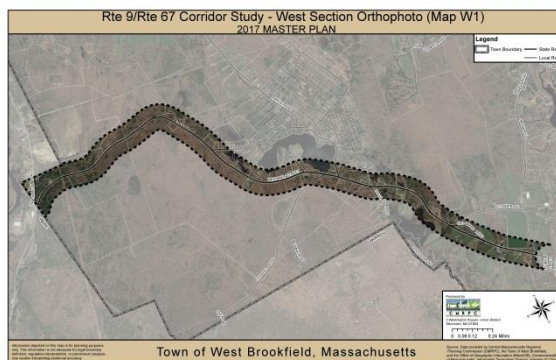
1. The East Section - Beginning at the eastern edge of the Town Common extending east to the border with the Town of Brookfield. The area also includes North Main Street (Route 67 North) which extends northerly to the border of the Town of North Brookfield.



2. The Central Section - Beginning on the East side of the Town Common and extending **West through the “town center” and to Snow Road**. The area also includes Boston Post Road (Route 67 South) which extends southerly to the border of the Town of Warren. This area is the largest portion of the study area.



3. The West Section - Beginning at Snow Road, this area extends west to the border of the Town of Ware.





## East Section

### East Main Street Area

East Main Street begins at the Brookfield town line and extends west toward the Town Common. The area closest to Brookfield contains several light industrial uses, such as Brookfield Wire and Safety Kleen Systems. The area also contains a large scale solar facility. The remaining stretch is a mix of residential use, agricultural businesses such as Red River Farm Supply and Honey Bee Orchards, and, some commercial and light industrial uses such as **Howard's Drive In, Westbrook Insurance, and Quirk Wire**. Additionally, the area contains important scenic views looking westerly towards the Quaboag River.

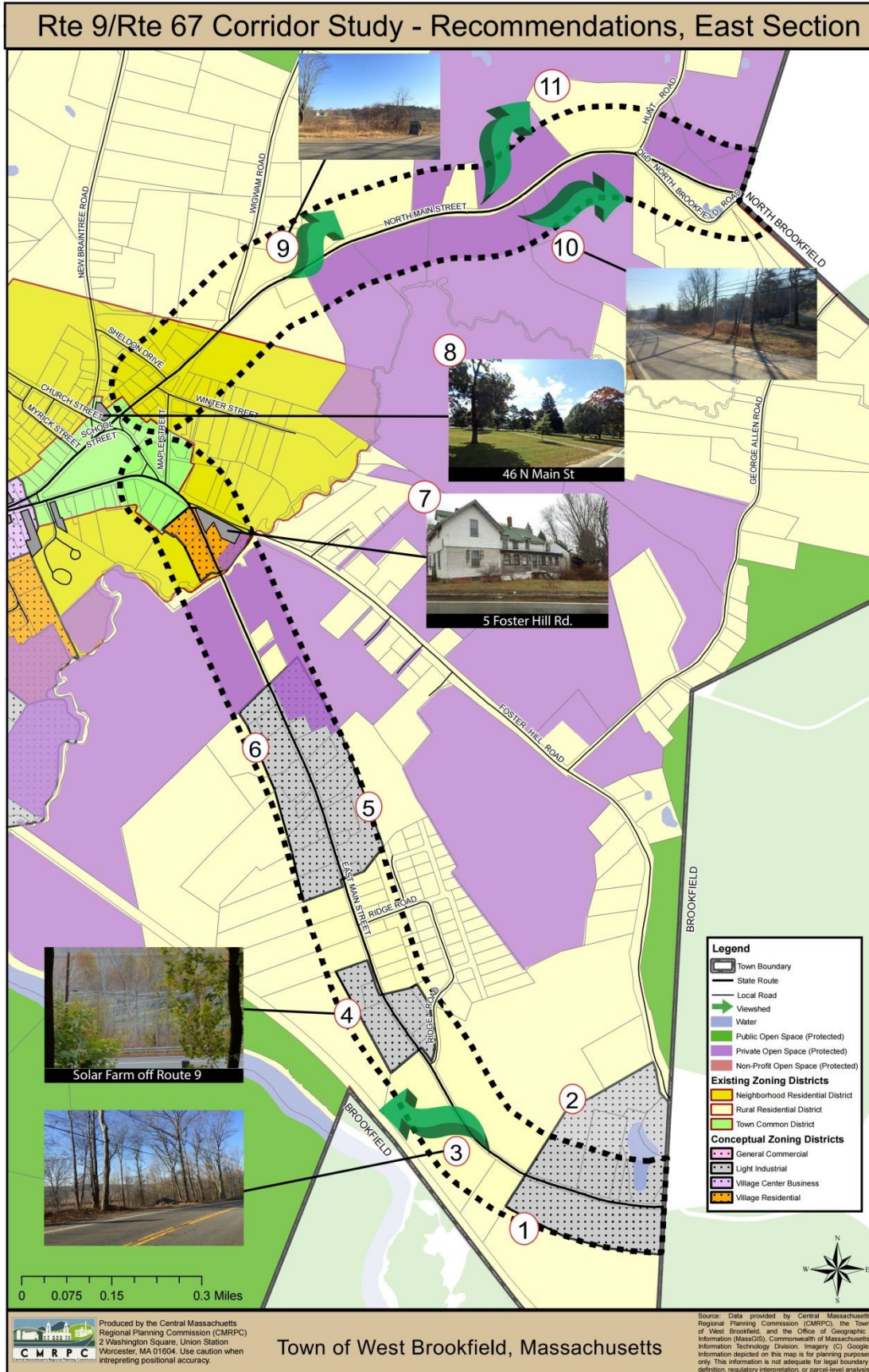
- Map ID # 1 (231 East Main Street) - This property contains the Brookfield Wire Company.
- Map ID # 2 (224 East Main Street) - This property contains the Safety Kleen facility and is adjacent to a Mass DOT facility.
- Map ID # 3 - This area may be developable and also contains scenic views of the Quaboag River and adjacent protected lands. This parcel, along with several other parcels which are unprotected, provide views, and, are also developable present a policy question for the Town whether they should be designated for protection or considered as potential development sights for light industrial uses. The plan contemplates both options.
- Map ID # 4 - This property contains an approximately 1.8 MW commercial solar facility. Throughout the Master Plan process, the construction of a solar facility in this area was identified as negatively impacting the viewshed.
- Map ID # 5 (146 East Main Street) - This property contains the Quirk Wire Company.
- Map ID # 6 (131 East Main Street) - This property contains the Gremarco Industries building.
- Map ID # 7 (5 Foster Hill Road) - This property, known throughout the Master Plan process colloquially as **“the falling down house”**, is an existing, abandoned and dilapidated residential structure that is currently in the process of being demolished by the Town. As identified in the community event exercise, the site could be better served as a small office or other small commercial use. Other concepts included potential institutional uses such as a museum or visitors center. Parking could also be accommodated on this site for events and other purposes.

With the exception of the scenic viewshed and existing single-family homes, the concentration of these mostly non-conforming commercial and industrial uses is the basis for recommendations to consider potential light industrial zoning districts in this area to bring the uses into full zoning conformity and allow for limited expansion and growth of similar uses. As discussed in the Economic Development chapter, the community wide survey results showed general support for maintaining and expanding small-scale light industrial uses.

### North Main Street Area

North Main Street begins at the intersection of School Street and Church Street and extends northerly toward the North Brookfield town line. The area closest to the Town Common is primarily historic residential structures. The West Brookfield Elementary School is approximately ¼ mile from the Town Common followed by a small pocket containing an agricultural and antique business. The remainder of North Main Street is largely rural contain a few residences and several farms and scenic views.

- Map ID # 8 (46 North Main Street) - This property is a vacant parcel adjacent to single-family residential. The site could be developed for single- or two-family dwelling. A small-scale multi-family building could be possible but would require a change to the existing zoning.
- Map ID # 9 - This area contains farmland views. It is not protected and appears potentially developable.
- Map ID # 10 - This area contains a few residences and is largely forested. However, the land is unprotected.
- Map ID # 11 - This area contains farmland views. It is not protected and appears potentially developable.



## Central Section

The Central Section begins at the eastern edge of the Town Common and extends west to Snow Road. Within the area, there are four general subsections each containing distinct characteristics:

- Town Common area
- **“Town Center” area**
- Route 9 residential/commercial corridor area
- Route 9 West and Route 67 South areas

### Town Common Area

**This area may provide the most visual representation of the Town’s character and truly** represents a quintessential and ideal New England town common. While there are no significant recommendations for the Town Common area as part of this plan, further study and evaluation of the zoning overlay district should be considered in the future to ensure that it can support desirable changes in use over time.

- Map ID # 12 (31 East Main) - This property is an underdeveloped corner parcel with a long driveway. Although not currently allowed in the Town Common Overlay District, the creation of additional dwelling units on the property could provide new housing options. With design standards and revised zoning, a new residential building close to the street with additional units behind could be compatible with other properties around the Common.

### “Town Center” Area

The **“Town Center” area** generally begins at the western edge of the Town Common and extends approximately to Milk Street. The area around Town Hall and Central Street represent a pattern of village center development with a civic core of public buildings such as Town Hall, Library, the post office, and two churches. The area around Central Street extending to Milk Street contains a mix of uses including but not limited to a bank, dental office, hardware store and larger historic residences. The prominent corner block at Central Street and Route 9 contains an existing mixed used building known colloquially as the **“Plantation Store”**. **This area is an important focal point in the Town of West Brookfield.**

- Map ID # 13 (21 East Main Street) - This property contains a small building occupied by **Dee’s Do’s hairdresser shop and a garage**. **The building size and location** are not optimal in the town center and are generally out of character with other properties in the vicinity. A new two-story, mixed use building constructed with design standards could enhance the property in the future.
- Map ID # 14 (11 East Main Street) - This property contains an existing 1.5 story, non-descript commercial building currently occupied by a package store. The building location is set back from the street with a large paved parking area in front. A new two-story mixed use building constructed closer to the street with parking behind would create a pedestrian orientation and would enhance the walking experience from the Town Center to the Town Common.



- Map ID # 15 (4-18 East Main Street) - This is a series of four contiguous properties situated at a critical point between the Town Center and Town Common. The existing buildings are historic and have been converted to small business uses over time. The existing architecture and building exteriors are suitable in the location **and contain a good mix of uses, including but not limited to George's Pizza, Haymakers Grille, and Worcester Art & Frame.** Eventually, these properties may be redeveloped. A full block of mixed-use buildings with retail and commercial establishments facing the street could result in significant additional commercial and residential square footage for the land area, provide more income for the property owner, and more tax revenues for the Town. It could also, if designed properly, create an additional focal point and gathering spot for the center of West Brookfield. However, the current zoning does not contain the necessary provisions to ensure that this type of redevelopment would occur. With revised village center zoning and design standards, potential future redevelopment could be more compatible with, and enhance, the character of the town center and town common areas.
- Map ID # 16 (1 East Main Street) - This property is the most prominent commercial building in the town center area. The building's architecture and location typify the core character of this intersection and contributes immensely to the character of the Town. Throughout the Master Plan process, participants noted the potential for the building to be demolished and that it had at least been considered for a gas station in the past. Unfortunately, there are several constraints that may limit the revitalization of this property. The primary constraint is the lack of sewer (see the Economic Development Section). The second constraint is the lack of regulations to protect the existing structure to prevent demolition or to provide for an appropriate new building. Finally, the existing zoning requirements are extremely limiting and prohibit the creation of new apartments on the second floor.
- Map ID # 17 (12 Central Street) - This property contains a small, one-story commercial building recently occupied by a daycare business. While the business provides a perfect use for the building and location within the town center, zoning changes to support the potential future redevelopment with a two or three-story building with apartments or offices above should be considered.
- Map ID # 18 (18 West Main Street) - This property contains a one-story building occupied by a True Value hardware store. This existing use and building orientation **is ideal for this location. The existence of a "downtown" hardware store provides** essential goods and services to residents. The property is within easy walking distance from the town center and the building façade represents an important relic contributing to the small-town character of West Brookfield. The Town should aggressively seek to maintain the building use and architecture of the front of the building. However, as noted in the Land Use chapter, existing regulations (zoning, historic protection) do not ensure any protections for this site.



### Route 9 Residential/Commercial Corridor Area

The Route 9 residential/commercial corridor area begins with a variety of single-family **dwelling types from Milk Street extending west to O'Day Lane**. The variety is noteworthy in that there are historic homes, mid-century homes, cottages, and small and large lots.

**From O'Day Lane** west to approximately Ware Street represents the **town's most** commercialized area which includes a book store, a defunct gas station (still operating for repairs), Dunkin Donuts, an active gas station and convenient store (Country Corners), apartments, a strip commercial plaza, bank, and veterinary office. The area contains the most auto-mobile oriented businesses and is perhaps the area which contributes the least to the character of the town.

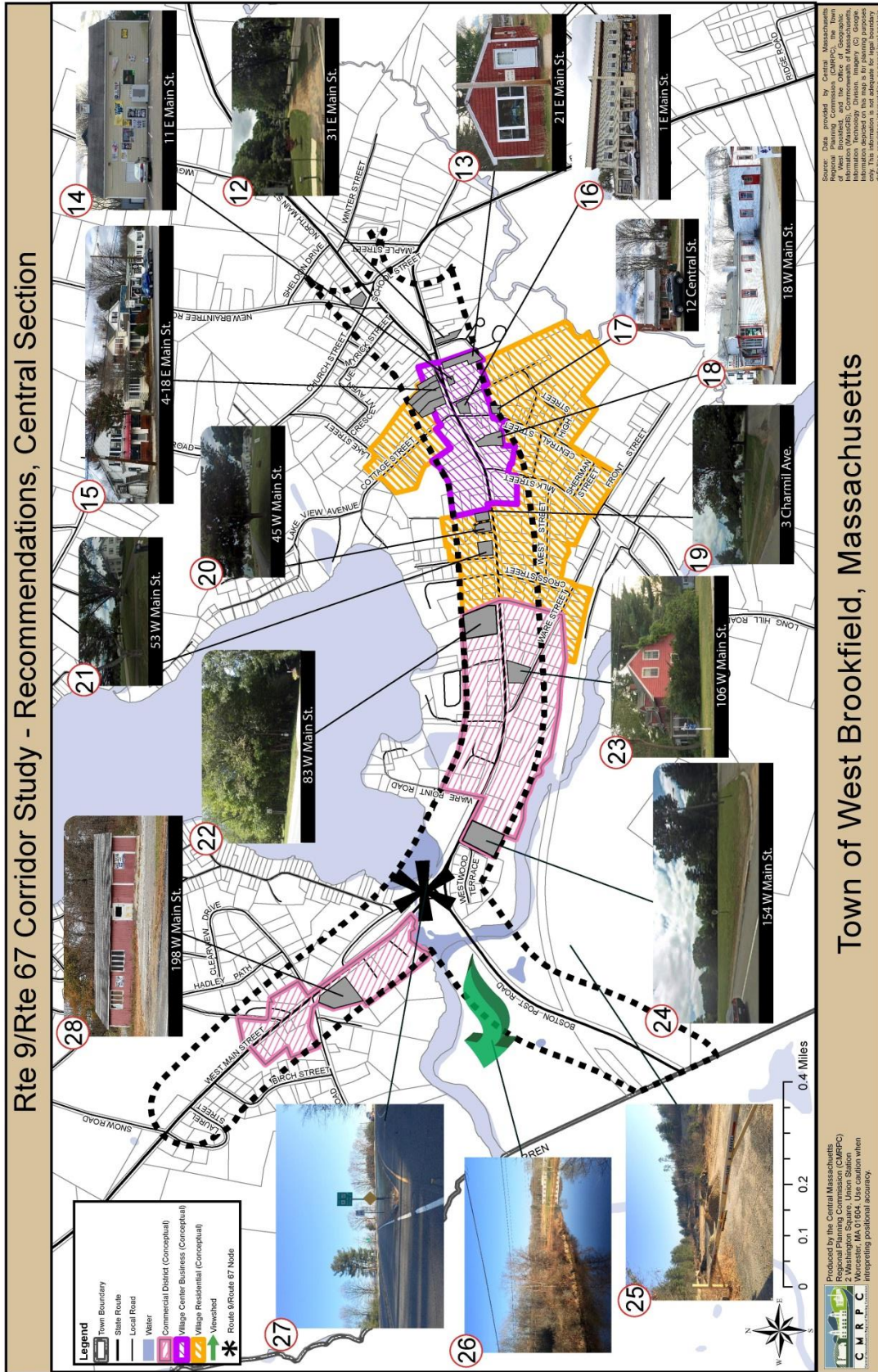
- Map ID # 19 (3 Charmil Avenue) - This property is a small corner lot at Charmil Drive and West Main Street. It could be suitable for the construction of an additional one or two family dwelling.
- Map ID # 20 (45 West Main Street) - This property is the open space created by the Charmil Drive loop road. It is unclear if this is required open space. However, it could be suitable for the construction of two additional housing units of either single-family or two-family design.
- Map ID # 21 (53 West Main Street) - This property contains enough lot area for four units, if the required septic system could be accommodated. It contains an existing historic structure where a second residential building constructed with design standards may be suitable.
- Map ID # 22 (83 Main Street) - This is a large vacant parcel that could be developed for residential or commercial uses. Based on the conceptual zoning map, the area would remain commercial in nature. However, the location could also provide moderately dense town house or apartment development or a moderately sized mixed use building.
- Map ID # 23 (106 West Main Street) - This property contains frontage on both Route 9 and Ware Street. During the Master Plan process this property was for sale. During the land use activity during the final community event, this parcel was identified as an ideal site for a public safety facility. Other uses identified as potentially suitable was a small-scale office or small-scale townhouse-style residential use.
- Map ID # 24 (154 West Main Street) - This property is a vacant parcel situated adjacent to an existing restaurant and at the corner of West Main Street and Westwood Drive. This property represents a potential transition between a commercial zoning district and residential parcels and the Route 9 and Route 67 intersection to the west. The construction of a well-designed townhouse development could provide necessary housing close to the Town Center.

## The Route 9 and Route 67 South areas

The Route 67 south segment extends south to the Warren town line and is largely wooded except for a large quarry operation which is not visible from the road. This is the shortest section of the study area. The portion of Route 9 from the Route 67 intersection to Snow Road contains a range of small-scale commercial uses including the Copper Lantern Inn, a small manufacturing business, a vacant former farm stand property, a pizza shop, and a small automotive salvage yard.

- Map ID # 25 - This property is a large parcel situated on the east side of Boston Post Road and south of the CSX railroad. The property is currently used as a quarry. Throughout the Master Plan process and via the Master Plan Committee this site was identified as a possible location for additional light industrial uses or a possible small industrial park. A significant amount of additional research would be required to further assess the issues and opportunities associated with this property.
- Map ID # 26 (Scenic view area) - This area is a primary gateway into West Brookfield from the Mass Pike. Even though it is possible to see the existing Copper Lantern Inn from Route 67, the views to the west toward the Quaboag River should be considered for some level of protection or be a consideration in the event the Copper Lantern Inn site is redeveloped in the future.
- Map ID # 27 - Intersection node - Route 9/67 south intersection could be a key activity node. A long-term goal of the Town should be to the issues and opportunities around a reconfiguration of the intersection. A squared T intersection could create a development parcel suitable for a wide range of uses, such as a visitor center or other small-scale business or businesses to serve residents as well as tourists.
- Map ID # 28 (198 West Main Street) - This parcel contains a vacant farm stand and during the Master Plan process was listed for sale. As part of the land use activity at the final community event, this parcel was identified as an ideal site for a range of uses including a small niche restaurant, small-scale office or commercial use, small-scale residential townhouse building, or a gas station.

Map 2-18 Route 9/67 Corridor Study, Central Section (Appendix N25)



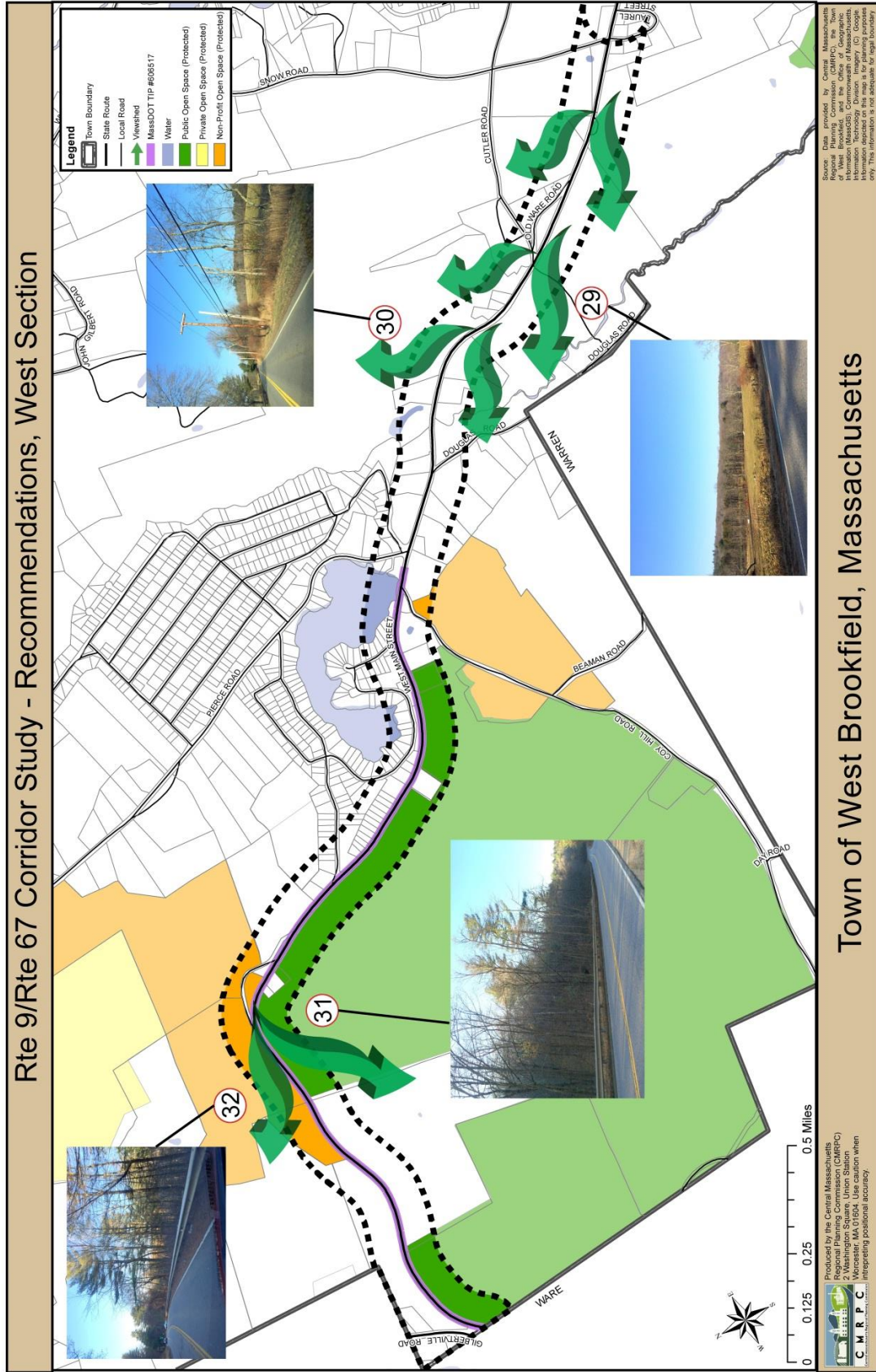
## West Section

Beginning at Snow Road, the West Section extends west to the border of the Town of Ware. This section contains very few single-family dwellings with the prominent land use features being the Salem Cross Inn, Brookhaven Pond, and the public access to the Rock House Reservation. The section from Snow Road to approximately Pierce Road provides scenic views of farm and forested lands. However, much of this land is unprotected and susceptible to potential development, especially the creation of frontage (ANR) lots. With the exception of several larger lots, the western end of the road from Coy Hill Road to the Warren town line is largely protected. The Town should continue to examine and evaluate those unprotected parcels and determine their vulnerability to development and desirability for protection.

- Map ID # 29 - This area provides significant scenic views to the south of rolling farmland, forested land, and wetlands. While some protections are offered to environmentally sensitive areas, the Town should focus on the potential preservation of developable lands in this area.
- Map ID # 30 - This area provides scenic views to the north of some farmland and large areas of forested land. This area is signified by very large parcels that should be examined in detail (through a full build-out analysis) to understand and determine the likelihood that, if left unprotected, these areas would be vulnerable to a subdivision or a series of subdivisions in the future.
- Map ID # 31 & 32 - These areas consist of large forested parcels that are not protected. Similar to other areas in the West Section, a full build-out analysis would allow the Town to better understand the likelihood that these parcels would be developed for residential subdivisions. With that information, the Town would be better equipped to make policy decisions about the importance or need to seek protection of these parcels.



Map 2-19 Route 9/67 Corridor Study, West Section (Appendix N32)





## Summary and Conclusion

The results of this analysis conclude that the Route 9 and Route 67 corridor is diverse and will require a nuanced approach to tailor the land use regulations for various areas. The findings herein should serve as guidance in considering future analysis, policy decisions, and planning activities. **Nothing herein is intended to be “set in stone” and is** merely an initial assessment of key issues and opportunities.

In areas identified as important view sheds, or areas potentially in need of protection, the Town should consider a range of tools. Conservation-oriented zoning tools could direct and influence development if it were to occur. Preservation and/or protection require a commitment from a land owner or purchasing by the Town. In order for the Town to actively purchase and protect important land, it should consider a long-term goal of adopting the Community Preservation Act. The act if adopted would provide the town with funding specifically for the purchase open space land (amongst other options).

In areas identified as potential development sites, a variety of zoning tools must be explored. Those include village-scale regulations on use and building sizes, design guidelines, and historic preservation.

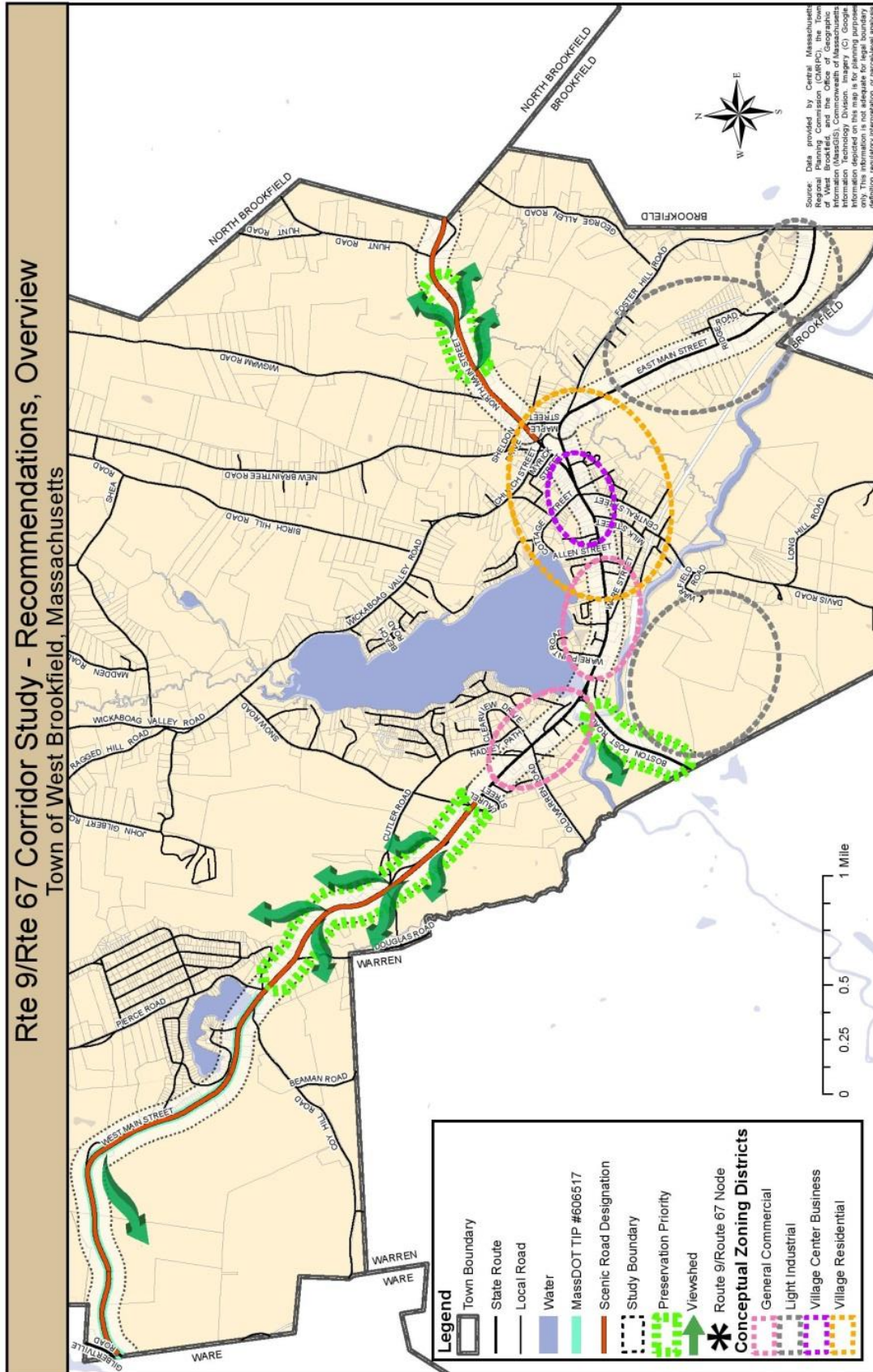
## Issues and Opportunities Map

The final map of this analysis provides a broad overview of key areas and general actions. It is important for any policy decisions to fully examine and incorporate other existing studies and actions identified in other chapters of the Master Plan. For example, any step to protect view shed through zoning or purchasing should include evaluation of the Open Space Plan and the recommendations of the Open Space and Recreation chapter. Any step to pursue historic preservation through the creation of a Local Historic District, should incorporate the 2008 Reconnaissance Report and the recommendations of the Natural, Cultural, and Historic resources chapter. In nearly all cases, additional research, public outreach, and hard work will be required to implement these recommendations. Many, if not all, will ultimately require adoption by or funding from Town Meeting prior to implementation.

As illustrated on the map, the primary recommendations include:

- Consider adopting a series of Village Center related zoning districts to ensure that residential and business growth is compatible with the uses desired in those areas.
- Consider adopting design guidelines for any Village Center or commercial zoning district along the Route 9 corridor to ensure that building and site changes will protect and enhance the town.
- Consider establishing a Local Historic District (LHD) in certain designated areas, including but not limited to the Town Common and Town Center areas.
- Consider completing a complete build-out and fiscal impact analysis to more clearly and accurately assess the location and extent of developable land in Town. Specifically, key areas along the corridor which provide scenic views are not protected. Such a study and effort must be followed by or correspond with efforts to identify funding sources for open space preservation, especially Community Preservation Act.

- Consider zoning bylaw amendments aimed at protecting scenic views, farmland, or forested lands. Unless land is protected, certain zoning measures may be appropriate to steer, direct, limit, and/or guide future growth so that it does not erode the rural character of the Town. Such methods are outlined in the Land Use chapter and include, but are not limited to:
  - Lot size requirements
  - Building citing requirements
  - Tree clearing provisions
  - Steep slope provisions
  - Driveway and common driveway standards
  - Scenic Road designations
  - Subdivision standards
  - Natural Resource Protection zoning
  - Other special overlay districts
- Within the Town Center area and portions of Route 9 heading west, sidewalks and the pedestrian network (including bicycles) should be examined and improvements sought. Continued participation **in the State's Complete Streets** program is specifically designed to accomplish this type of evaluation and in some cases can provide funding for actual infrastructure improvements.
- Consider the creation of designated light industrial zoning to allow for the continuation and expansion of existing businesses and identifying areas for new commercial and light industrial growth. As outlined in the Economic Development chapter (Chapter 3), creating the ability for existing businesses to grow and new businesses to locate in West Brookfield is essential to offset the tax burden on residents.
- Consider working with MassDOT to ensure that plans for significant road improvements on West Main Street from Laurel Street to the Ware line maintain and protect scenic views and the character of the road. The project is currently listed on the 2026 Transportation Improvement Project (TIP) list.



# GOALS AND ACTIONS – LAND USE

1. *Preserve and enhance the existing Town Center area and Route 9 and Route 67 corridors*
  - a. Consider alternate zoning districts for the Town Center and Route 9/67 corridor to encourage and support desirable, small-scale business growth
    - i. Consider, evaluate, and further investigate areas close to the Town Center that may be suitable or acceptable for new residential development
    - ii. Build upon the findings of the Route 9 corridor study by conducting a more thorough inventory of existing uses and with community involvement, identify those uses that are desirable and those that are not desirable in certain locations
    - iii. Create additional zoning districts and specialized use and dimensional regulations to encourage desirable types of development based on identified characteristics
    - iv. Consider and create design guidelines for areas along Route 9 and design requirements in the core areas of the existing General District
2. *Preserve and protect important scenic landscapes and rural character of outlying areas through permanent protection or conservation-oriented zoning provisions*
  - a. Create areas for Natural Resource Protection Zoning (NRPZ) or other similar conservation zoning techniques
  - b. Utilize the findings of a complete buildout analysis to assist the town in prioritizing key parcels for protection
  - c. Consider revisions to the Open Space Residential Development Bylaw to ensure that it incorporates best practices, such as allowing these types of developments by-right, or providing the proper incentives to encourage the use of this method over a conventional subdivision
3. *Identify options for increasing small scale, light industry*
  - a. Consider a Light Industrial Overlay District or zoning bylaw designation for certain key areas
4. *Explore options to moderate lakeside growth and protection of water resources*
  - a. Create a residential lake zoning overlay district to provide reasonable regulations for new or renovated homes, including consideration for sanitary and water infrastructure



5. *Make the permitting process clearer and more predictable for applicants and town officials*
  - a. Review key processes and procedures to determine key areas of improvement
    - i. Assess the ability for key town officials to maintain clearer office hours
    - ii. Consider the long-term goal of increasing the hours for the building inspector
    - iii. Consider the potential to create a shared-town planner, part-time, or full-time town planner position
  - b. Create a permit process guide to outline a typical permit process for applicants
    - i. Prepare an inventory of all town officials, departments, application forms, fees, and other information that may be used by a homeowner or developer seeking permits in the town
6. *Conduct a complete build-out analysis to provide more detailed information on outlying residential development as the basis for future land use policy questions*
  - a. Conduct a thorough review and inventory of subdivisions over a period of time to determine the rate of development for each method. Identify the underlying characteristics in each area, and consider application of more tailored zoning in certain areas (such as Farmland Conservation around Snow Road and Natural Resource Protection Zoning around Wickaboag Valley Road). For each specific area, an inventory and analysis should occur along with preparation of information for property owners and town meeting.
7. *Conduct a site assessment and evaluation for 1 East Main Street*
  - a. The evaluation should consider zoning constraints, sanitary sewer capacity, building code requirements for changes in use, and other factors necessary to preserve, restore, and/or revitalize the building.
8. *Review and amend portions of the Town Common Overlay District to incorporate newer best practices associated with adaptive reuse of existing historic structures and preserve community character*
9. *Consider adoption of a comprehensive solar bylaw incorporating new best practices for appropriate siting and preservation of community character*
10. *Review and amend the sign bylaw requirements to ensure that new future signs are compatible with the characteristics of a certain area or the town as a whole.*

- a. Consider suitably located tourist-oriented wayfinding signs
  - b. Consider size, height, and citing aspects
  - c. Consider requiring multi-tenant signs where applicable
11. *Consider and explore different parking strategies in certain areas.*
- a. Consider a small scale parking inventory and utilization study in the town center to identify available parking and/or options to increase parking supply or efficiency.
  - b. Explore options to create a more coordinated event parking plan coordinated with event organizers, police, DPW, and day of volunteers to direct visitors to other available parking areas or shuttles.
  - c. Review parking policies associated with pick up and drop off at the Elementary School and explore any feasible options to alleviate congestion on North Main Street and adjacent streets.

# Economic Development





# INTRODUCTION

*Economic Development* means different things to different people. For the purpose of this Master Plan, **we define economic development as “efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and/or retaining jobs and supporting or growing incomes and the tax base.”**<sup>1</sup> From its agricultural sector to its low cost of living, West Brookfield possesses many economic assets. Economic development strategies that leverage and support these existing resources have the potential to help the Town meet a number of goals identified by residents and outlined in this Master Plan, including:

- Increasing the tax base without placing additional strain on homeowners
- Providing local jobs to residents across education levels and stages of life
- Supporting existing small businesses and encouraging entrepreneurship
- **Raising awareness of West Brookfield’s unique features and promoting visitorship**
- Preserving important heritage sites
- Attracting desirable new businesses and amenities

Such goals are derived from a survey of local economic development preferences. In this survey, a large majority of West Brookfield residents indicated support for economic **development strategies that preserve the Town’s existing character while growing select industries**, including:

- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Small business development
- Outdoor recreation
- Light industry that is geographically targeted

**Given the strength of West Brookfield’s agricultural, natural, and historical assets, these strategies are not only realistic but provide a solid vision to guide economic development policy.** Prior to pursuing any interventions, it is important to understand existing conditions in areas that relate to economic development. The following section will orient the reader to **the Town’s economy, provide a baseline from which to benchmark the success of future economic development strategies, and establish a context for issues and opportunities relating to the preferred development strategies.**

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<sup>1</sup> Salmon Valley Business and Innovation Center (<http://www.svbic.com/node/24>)



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## History and Overview

West Brookfield’s commercial and industrial roots date to the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as dairy producers emerged along Boston Post Road. Light industry emerged in the 1830s, when the Western Railroad established a depot southwest of the village center. With rich soils and connectivity, agriculture and a multiplicity of industries blossomed.<sup>2</sup> Shoe, heel, and boot manufacturing flourished, followed by corset manufacturing as well as a broad range of **businesses, from fishing rod manufacturing to furniture production. West Brookfield’s agricultural industry remained vibrant throughout this time, especially dairy production. In the early 1880s, approximately fifteen (15) percent of West Brookfield heads of household were farmers. Tourism also blossomed in the nineteenth century. West Brookfield became a popular destination for visitors, who enjoyed steamboat rides along Lake Wickaboag and enjoyed socializing among the Town’s many “groves.”**<sup>3</sup>

Although the Town’s shoe and corset sector declined due to competition and changing preferences, wire manufacturing emerged to fill the vacant centers of production. In conjunction with various smaller businesses, this allowed the Town to retain a thriving industrial base until World War I, which limited production capacity. Overall, manufacturing trends in West Brookfield followed those of Worcester County. County-wide, the value of products increased seventy (70) percent between 1870 and 1900, followed by a sixty-five (65) percent decrease from 1900 to 1940.

Today, West Brookfield contains a unique mix of agricultural, small business, and industrial resources. The Town retains many of its historic assets, from the Salem Cross Inn (circa 1740) to the Ye Olde Tavern (1790). Viewsheds along North Main Street showcase the **beauty that attracted tourists to the Town in eras past. Few of West Brookfield’s historical industrial sites remain; however, the Town contains pockets of light industry, including several wire manufacturers. Appropriately leveraged, these assets will enable West Brookfield to reclaim its position as an ideal place to visit, work, and live. The following section details current economic conditions in West Brookfield across a variety of indicators.**

## Economic Conditions

### Income and Employment

Between 2001 and 2015, the number of jobs in West Brookfield grew from 933 to 958 for an increase of 2.68 percent. During the same period, average weekly wages increased by \$167 (from \$540 to \$707) and the number of establishments expanded from eighty-three (83) to 102.

<sup>2</sup>A History of Local Capitalism in Warren and West Brookfield, Massachusetts (1870-1900). Jeff Robbins. Worcester State University. MA Paper. 2015.

<sup>3</sup> West Brookfield Reconnaissance Report. Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. 2008.

During a similar period (2000-2015) West Brookfield’s population declined by 0.52 percent. Consequently, during the last decade-and-a-half, jobs per capita increased slightly while per capita and household income increased significantly. In 2000, per capita income was \$21,501 and median household income was \$49,722. By 2015, per capita income reached \$46,018 and median household income reached \$64,375. Despite these increases, West Brookfield falls below the statewide average on nearly all measures of earning and poverty.

### Tax Base

In 2017, West Brookfield’s tax rate was \$16.06 per \$1,000 of assessed value for all property types. As shown in Table 3-1, this tax rate is consistent with those of neighboring communities; however, it is in the bottom fifth of all communities region-wide, where commercial tax rates range from \$11.94 to \$32.93.

Despite a relatively low tax rate, the assessed value of all West Brookfield property totaled nearly \$1.5 billion in 2016. Of this total, residential properties represented nearly ninety-four (94) percent. Commercial and Industrial properties comprised just four (4) and two (2) percent of property tax base, respectively. Of the region’s forty (40) communities, West Brookfield ranks 27<sup>th</sup> in tax ratio health (although, as shown in Table 3-1, it is relatively consistent with its neighboring municipalities). In order to increase tax assessment without further burdening homeowners, West Brookfield must, at minimum, increase commercial and industrial activity as a percentage of its tax base.

**Table 3-1 Tax Rates and Property Class Ratios**

Municipality	Tax Rate by Property Type					Tax Ratio		
	R	OS	C	I	PP	C	I	R
Hardwick	16.00	0.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	5.64%	0.79%	93.56%
West Brookfield	16.06	0.00	16.06	16.06	16.06	3.62%	2.53%	93.85%
East Brookfield	16.28	0.00	16.28	16.28	16.28	6.54%	1.20%	92.26%
North Brookfield	16.53	0.00	16.53	16.53	16.53	3.77%	2.36%	93.86%
New Braintree	18.06	0.00	18.06	18.06	18.06	4.02%	0.00%	95.98%
Warren	18.56	0.00	18.56	18.56	18.56	2.97%	2.79%	94.24%
Brookfield	19.62	0.00	19.62	19.62	19.62	3.78%	0.93%	95.29%

**Key: R= Residential OS= open Space C= Commercial I= Industrial PP=Personal Property**

Source: Municipal Databank. Massachusetts Department of Revenue. 2016.

### Business

To fully understand the scope of businesses in a municipality, it is important review multiple types of **databases and inventories**. CMRPC reviewed numerous data sources, including “Doing Business As” (DBA) records filed with the Town Clerk, the U.S. Census Survey of Business Owners (2012), and propriety data. Each of these datasets provided a separate (but complementary) view of the business climate in West Brookfield.

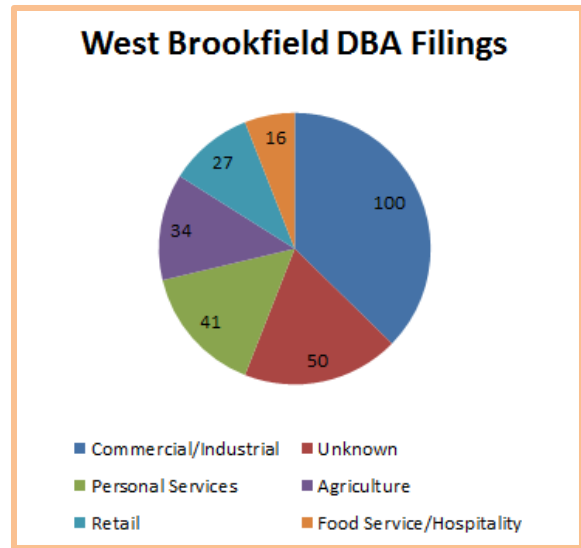
According to DBA filings, West Brookfield is home to approximately 270 businesses. These filings are required under Massachusetts General Law **Chapter 110 Section 5, which states that “any person conducting business under any business name other than the real name of the person conducting the business must file a Doing Business As certificate with the *Town Clerk’s office.*”** They provide important insights into a Town’s small, locally-owned enterprises; corporations and partnerships already registered with the Secretary of the Commonwealth operating a business under their registered name are exempt from the DBA filing requirement.

In contrast to the DBA filings, the U.S. Census Survey of Business Owners identified 440 businesses in West Brookfield. This dataset provides a different view of West Brookfield’s business landscape, capturing enterprises registered with the Secretary of the Commonwealth and excluding many small businesses and extended proprietorships (businesses that are not the primary occupation of the business owner). Together, these data sets provide a more complete picture of business and industry in West Brookfield.

CMRPC’s review of West Brookfield’s DBA filings indicated five (5) common types of businesses: commercial and industrial, agricultural, retail, personal services, and food service and hospitality. Figure 3-2 depicts that actual number of certificates filed for each category, with sixth category (“unknown”) reflecting business types not readily identifiable. Notably, the DBA filings indicate a strong agricultural cluster in West Brookfield; thirty-four (34) such businesses are registered with the Town and the unknown category likely includes others.

In contrast to the DBA filings, the U.S. Census data indicates that just twelve residents were employed in agricultural or related fields (down from twenty-five (25) such individuals in 2000). Consequently, it does not fully capture the strength of this industry in West Brookfield. However, it does provide insight into the growth and decline of other industries. Between 2000 and 2015, several industries experienced a significant increase in the number of jobs. As shown in Figure 3-3 (below), these industries include education, health, and social assistance; public administration; and finance, insurance, real-estate; and education and health care.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, several industries experienced a decline in employment, including manufacturing, wholesale trade, and retail trade.

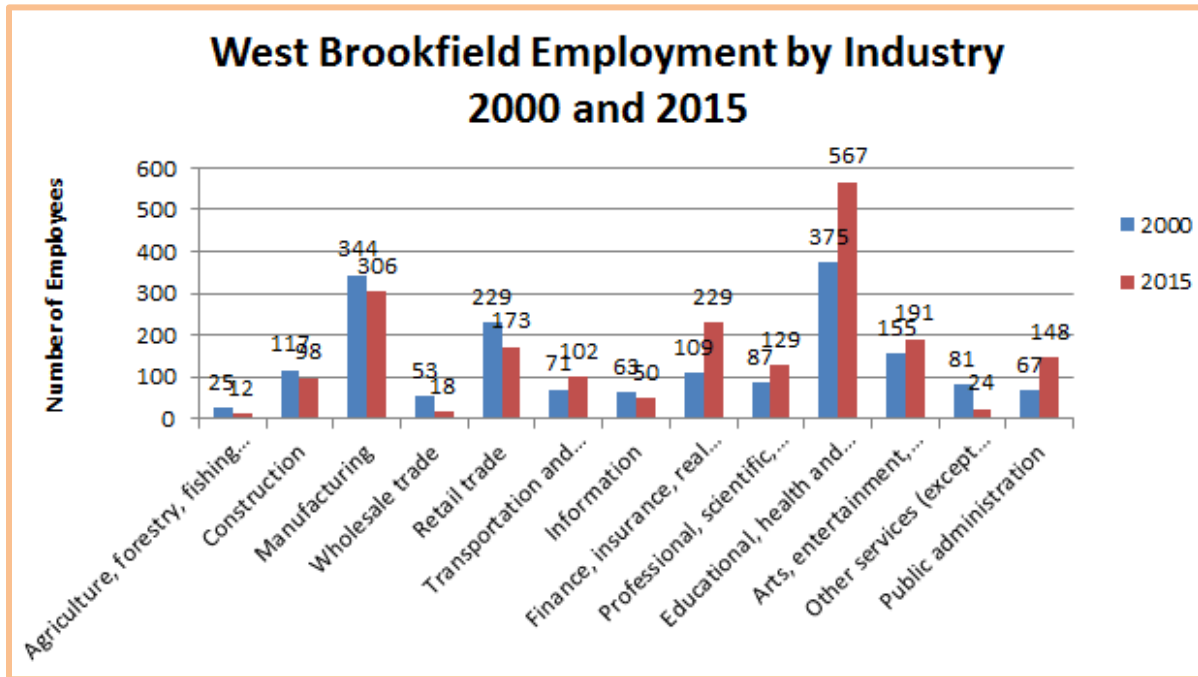
**Figure 3-2 West Brookfield DBA Filings**



Source: West Brookfield Town Clerk. 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Figure 3-3 West Brookfield Employment by Industry 2000-2015



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Data from the consulting firm EMSI provided a more detailed view of industry changes. **According to this dataset, several subsectors of West Brookfield's economy** experienced noteworthy growth. These subsectors include:

- Wineries (possibly includes Ragged Hill Cider Company) (up 117%)
- Miscellaneous General Purpose Machinery Manufacturing (up 62%)
- Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment (except Automotive and Electronic) Repair and Maintenance (up 19%)
- Landscaping Services (up 18%)

However, some of this growth is offset by job loss in areas such as:

- Copper Rolling, Drawing, Extruding, and Alloying (down 39%),
- Residential Intellectual and Developmental Disability Facilities (down 15%)
- Local Government Excluding Education and Hospitals (down 10%)

The growth of wineries, landscaping, and machinery and equipment repair (which potentially includes farm equipment) indicate a continued local emphasis on natural and food-based industries. **Personal services and manufacturing also play an important role West Brookfield's** current economy; however, the decline in copper rolling, drawing, extruding, and alloying jobs reflects the closure or downsizing of one or more industrial facilities.



## Retail Supply, Demand, and Leakage

As noted in the previous section, the number of people employed in West Brookfield's retail sector declined twenty-four (24) percent between 2000 and 2015. Another way of measuring retail sector health is assessing the supply and demand of retail goods. Typically, retail supply and demand are measured based on drive times. On average, people are willing to drive ten (10) minutes to purchase convenience goods. Although this number varies slightly depending on the person, the products, and other factors, ten-minute drive times are a standard measure of whether an area has everything its residents need for everyday living.

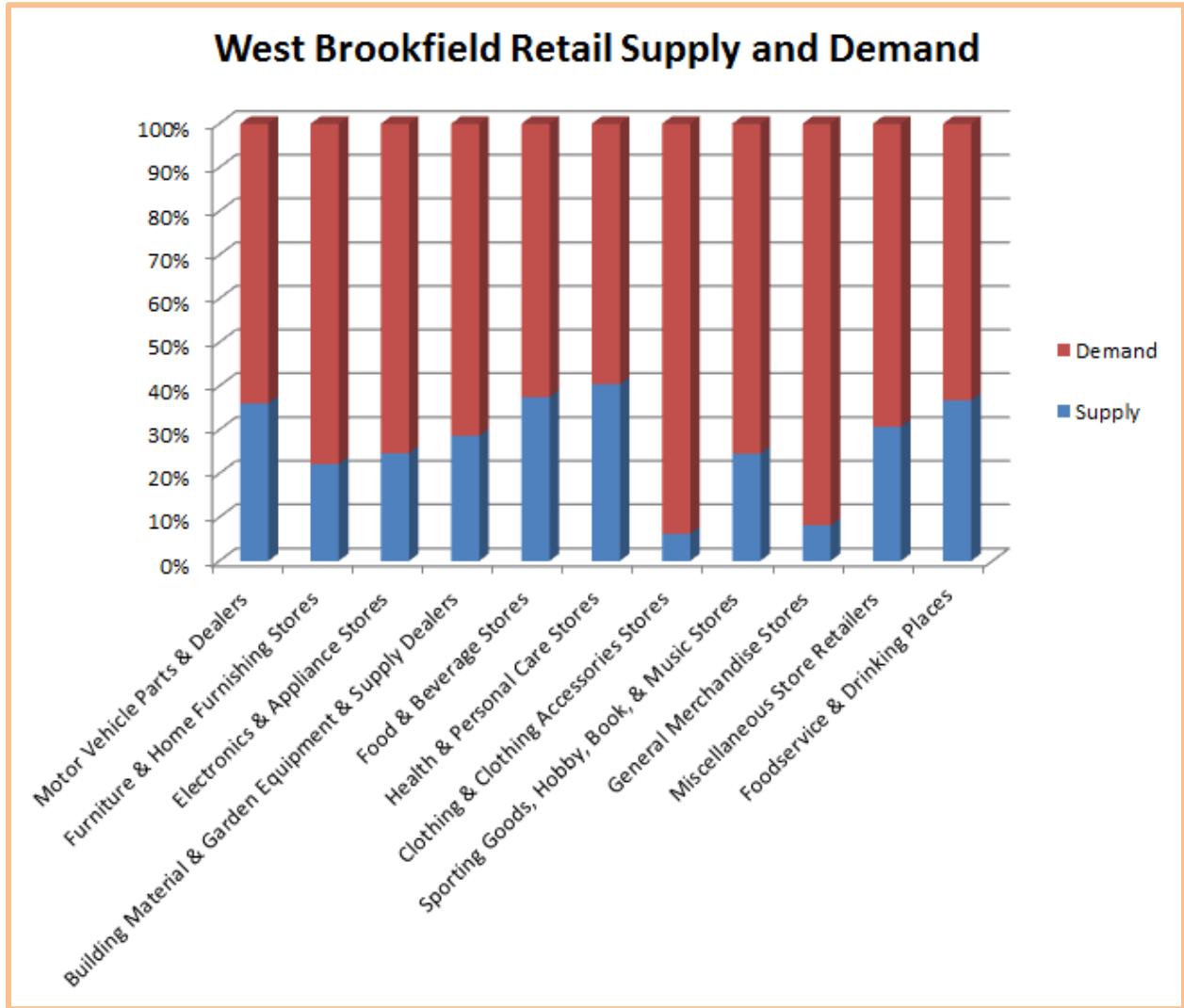
Just as we can predict how far most people will drive to pick up convenience goods, we can also determine the amount of money people will typically spend on items. If local stores are not selling a certain amount of a product, it is extremely likely that residents are purchasing that item from a business outside of town. **Generally, such "leakage" out of the local economy is the result of goods not being available at stores within town.** High degrees of leakage can indicate that new businesses providing such goods within the trade area could be viable.

Based on West Brookfield's population and the sales of certain products within a ten (10) minute drive time, it is clear that West Brookfield residents have a demand for certain goods that they are not able to satisfy through their local stores. As shown in Figure 3-4, these include:

- Motor Vehicle Parts & Dealers
- Furniture & Home Furnishing Stores
- Electronics & Appliance Stores
- Food & Beverage Stores
- Building Material & Garden Equipment & Supply Dealers
- Health & Personal Care Stores
- Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores
- General Merchandise Stores
- Miscellaneous Store Retailers
- Foodservice & Drinking Places
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores

It is important to note that although West Brookfield is experiencing leakage in number of retail categories, many of these retail types are inconsistent with the expressed preferences of its residents. For example, the demand for *Motor Vehicle Parts and Dealers* and *Electronics and Appliances Stores* is partially unmet; however, "big box" electronics stores and car dealerships do not reflect the aesthetic priorities of most West Brookfield residents. Consequently, business development strategies should reflect the smaller, niche retail and specialty store types favored by the townspeople and leakage should be selectively addressed based on these preferences.

Figure 3-4 West Brookfield Retail Supply and Demand



Source: Retail Leakage Analysis. Buxton. 2016.

### Specialty Retail

West Brookfield contains a small but vibrant cluster of niche retail enterprises. These locally-owned businesses are part of what makes the town unique and serve as points of interest for residents and visitors alike. Such businesses are not subject to the ten-minute drive time rule. By providing specialized goods and unique shopping experiences, for many people they often warrant longer travel distances. A critical mass (and complementary mix) of specialty retailers can therefore facilitate visitorship. In a town with few large employers, they are also an important source of jobs.

According to residents interviewed for this plan, West Brookfield contains several specialty retailers that are popular with locals and attract a significant number of visitors. Among these businesses is the Purple Onion. Offering hand-crafted furnishings and gifts from within a restored barn, the Purple Onion attracts patrons from across the region. Similarly, the **Glassgirl's Studio and Gallery is a new** addition to Main Street that serves as a regional draw. Beyond art classes and gallery space, the studio has also become a popular spot for unexpected gifts and local crafts. Located just steps from the Town Common, Olson's Seafood and Specialty Foods is another recent addition to West Brookfield. This 5,500 square foot facility has quickly become a local favorite. Nearby, Lyon Iron is a purveyor of antique iron fireplace furniture, cooking utensils, and door hardware; Civil War and other military memorabilia; and quality antiques. Also popular among residents and visitors is the Book Bear, a shop that features used, rare, and out-of-print books and is located approximately 0.5 miles from the Town Center. **Combined with West Brookfield's** numerous artisans and home businesses, such enterprises represent an important asset in facilitating economic growth.

The Purple Onion



the **Glassgirl's Studio and Gallery is a new** addition to Main Street that serves as a regional draw. Beyond art classes and gallery space, the studio has also become a popular spot for unexpected gifts and local crafts. Located just steps from the Town Common, Olson's Seafood and Specialty Foods is another recent addition to West Brookfield. This 5,500 square foot facility has quickly become a local favorite. Nearby, Lyon Iron is a purveyor of antique iron fireplace furniture, cooking utensils, and door hardware; Civil War and other military memorabilia; and quality antiques. Also popular among residents and visitors is the Book Bear, a shop that features used, rare, and out-of-print books and is located approximately 0.5 miles from the Town Center. **Combined with West Brookfield's** numerous artisans and home businesses, such enterprises represent an important asset in facilitating economic growth.

## Agriculture and Tourism

**West Brookfield's legacy as an agricultural breadbasket and tourist destination is still visible** today. Many of its historic and natural sites have been preserved and some farms are still in operation. Although farming has experienced a strong decline since its heyday in the 1800s, **the Town's thirty-four (34) registered agricultural businesses** make the Town unique among its peers. Given the strength of this local industry and a strong nationwide demand for local, farm-to-table, sustainable products (and experiences), **West Brookfield's agricultural economy presents a key economic asset that should be supported and leveraged.** This subset of **West Brookfield's economy currently includes the following agricultural enterprises:**

- Coy Brook Farm
- Hunt Road Berry Farm
- Samek Farms
- Mountain Mist Farms
- Frog Pond Farm
- Soaring Eagle Farm
- Brook Gardens
- Double J Farm
- Ragged Hill Orchards
- LBF Farm
- Just a Mere Farm
- In a Jam/ Positively Perennials
- Quaboag Clovers 4-H Club
- West Brookfield **Farmers' Market**
- Sawmill River Farm
- Wild Mountain Farm
- Clover Springs Organic Farm
- Ducharme Farm
- Rock Valley Farm and Track (horses)
- Windy Hamlet Farm (sheep and fiber arts)
- Hamlet Grove Pastured Poultry
- Merryfields Farm
- Wildwood Acres (horse riding)
- Honey Bee Orchards
- Red River Farm and Landscaping
- Moreland Farm
- Petals and Prayers
- The Old Cider Mill Farm Stand

## Commercial Building Stock

As noted in the **Land Use** section, West Brookfield’s “Town Center” area is a focal point of activity and visitorship. From specialty retailers to civic buildings and banks, the area contains a mix of complementary uses that lend themselves to multiple stops. Attractive and walkable, the Town Center is an important component of the Town’s character; however, it contains several underutilized or poorly-maintained buildings, as well as uses that may be more compatible elsewhere. These uses include:

- A social services agency
- A liquor store
- Outdated buildings
- Buildings in need of façade improvements
- Vacant buildable lots
- Businesses with limited hours

Moving forward, the Town should provide more specific guidance on the uses and building types it desires in this area.

## Zoning

Zoning is a critical factor in economic development. It determines what types of businesses are permitted, where they are permitted, and how difficult it is to open one. West Brookfield currently contains three (3) zoning districts: Rural Residential, Residential Neighborhood, and General. The General District is of particular relevance to economic growth. Currently, this district includes areas that range from Town Center to farmland along North Main Street to industrial areas. Thus, it allows a variety of by-right uses including:

- Renting of rooms and bed and breakfast establishments
- Professional offices and studios
- Home occupations
- Retail stores
- Craft, consumer, or commercial service establishments
- Funeral Homes
- Restaurants and cafes
- Banks and other financial institutions
- Hotels and motels
- Public schools, churches, and other public buildings
- Agriculture (except commercial green houses and riding stables under 5 acres)



Uses allowed by special permit within the General District include:

- Industrial- manufacturing and warehousing
- Automotive-related
- Beauty and barber shops

Whether West Brookfield chooses to establish the new zoning districts recommended in this **plan, the town should review the uses in each district to determine if such uses fit the town's** vision.

As noted in the Land Use section, any new structures (or structures being substantially altered for a new use) must conform to the following dimensional requirements:

- 25,000 sq. ft. - Minimum Lot Size
- 125 feet - Minimum Lot Frontage
- 30 feet - Minimum Front Yard
- 20 feet - Minimum Side Yards
- 20 feet - Minimum Rear Yard
- 3 - Maximum Height in Stories
- 40 feet - Maximum Height

In part, these dimensional requirements reflect a lack of municipal sewer. Absent a public sewer system, property owners dispose of wastewater through leach fields that require **sizable setbacks. Such requirements apply to District's many uses, from shops in the center of town to manufacturing sites, which exists in several pockets.**

## Industry

Industry (i.e., the processing of raw materials, manufacturing, warehousing) exists in several areas of Town. A light industrial cluster is located in the Front Street, Central Street, Long Hill Road area (the "Depot" area), as well as two areas on East Main Street near the Brookfield border. Although the Depot Area contains some environmental constraints (several properties are located within the 100 year flood zone), these industrial areas may present opportunities for additional industrial uses that would create **jobs and increase the Town's** nonresidential tax revenue (without compromising the character of existing residential or commercial areas). Currently, industrial enterprises within the Depot area include:

Arland Tool & Mfg Inc.  
 45 Freight House Road

Arland Tool & Manufacturing, Inc. was founded in 1948 as a local tool and die shop. Today, Arland is a full-service machine shop, engineering facility, and leading international contract manufacturer with facilities in West Brookfield and Sturbridge.

Gavitt Wire and Cable Co. Inc.  
 62 Central Street

Founded in West Brookfield in 1923, Gavitt Wire and Cable Co. is a custom manufacturer of cables, wires, & cords. Their products include flat coiled cords, ribbon cables, waxed cotton braided wires, retractile cords, guitar cords, power cables, miniature cables & biomedical cables. Applications include medical, communications, aerospace, industrial, sports, racing & entertainment cables. The company employs between 20 and 49 individuals.

Gavitt Wire and Cable Co.



Precision Wire Shapes Inc.  
 11 Long Hill Road

Precision Shapes, Inc. was founded in 1967 on Pleasant Street, where it took over an old corset factory. The company was built on providing shaped wire products to companies such as Bausch and Lomb, Lufkin Rule and **Savage Arms. In the 1970's they expanded and moved** to their current location at 11 Long Hill Road in West Brookfield, MA. They service a variety of industries including: security, architecture, construction, aerospace, medical, model railroad, firearms, jewelry, fasteners, bearings, agriculture and more. The company employs between ten (10) and nineteen (19) individuals.

Precision Wire Shapes



Concrete Block Insulating Systems  
 (CBIS/Korfil)

29 Freight House Road

Established in 1992, CBIS/Korfil operates molding facilities in Massachusetts, Ohio and Utah that produce Expandable Polystyrene (EPS) Insulation Inserts. CBIS/Korfil first introduced Insulation Inserts to the Concrete Block Industry in 1971. Since that time, Korfil, Icon and Korfil Hi-R Inserts have become the most widely used Block Plant Installed Insulation Inserts in the United States and Canada. The West Brookfield facility employs between twenty (20) and forty-nine (49) individuals.

CBIS/Korfil



## East Main Street Area

Two industrial pockets also exist on East Main Street near the Brookfield border. Nonresidential uses in this area include:

### Area A:

#### Brookfield Wire Company

*231 East Main Street*

Brookfield Wire is a leading supplier of cold drawn stainless steel, nickel and nickel alloy wire. The company was established in 1994 and employs between fifty (50) and ninety-nine (99) individuals.



Brookfield Wire Company

#### Safety-Kleen Systems

*224 East Main Street*

Safety-Kleen is a leading provider of environmental services to commercial, industrial and automotive customers. The company specializes in the collection, processing, re-refining, recycling and disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous materials.



Safety-Kleen Systems

### Area B:

#### Quirk Wire Company

*146 East Main Street*

Quirk Wire Company manufactures top quality high temperature wire and cable products. The company was founded in 1956 as Wirecraft Products, Inc., to produce high-temperature insulated wire and cable. In 1978, the factory was purchased and reorganized by Harrison P. Quirk and became Quirk Wire Co. Inc. doing business as Wirecraft Products. In 2003, the company became an employee owned business through the establishment of an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). The company employs between twenty (20) and forty-nine (49) individuals.



Quirk Wire Company

Gremarco Industries  
*131 East Main Street*

A manufacturer of specialty absorbent media, Gremarco Industries produces materials to absorb odors and contain chemicals. The company specializes in high activity activated carbon on non-woven polyester but works with a variety of fabrics and absorbents. Gremarco employs between ten (10) and nineteen (19) individuals.

Gremarco Industries





# ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Summary of Public Outreach and Community Events

Throughout CMRPC's public outreach effort, West Brookfield residents expressed a preference for economic development strategies that leverage the Town's existing assets and advantages. This preference is most clearly reflected through the town-wide survey, which asked residents to identify where, what, and how they wanted economic development to take place. Through this survey, CMRPC learned the following:

- Type: West Brookfield residents strongly support economic development strategies that leverage the Town's existing character. **Residents overwhelmingly prefer a strategy of tourism and small business development (inside and outside the home) that capitalizes on West Brookfield's agricultural and historic assets.** Residents consider the following uses desirable or highly desirable, as shown by the percent of respondents who answered affirmatively:
  - Agriculture-based businesses: 88%
  - Culture and tourism: 75%
  - Small retail shops: 70%
  - Historic/cultural museums: 67%
  - Consumer services: 61%
  - Light industry: 61%
  - Small boutique hotels, Air BNB: 55%
- Method: Concerning tourism and visitors, residents largely support the following strategies:
  - Continue promotion and awareness of local businesses that may appeal to both residents and businesses: 87%
  - Explore additional community events (i.e., Asparagus Festival) that may offer significant appeal for visitors: 81%
  - Raise awareness of West Brookfield unique features and create a plan to promote visitorship: 72%
  - Encourage lodging opportunities such as bed and breakfast, Airbnb, and or small boutique hotels for overnight stays: 64%
- Location: Residents prefer that commercial growth take place along Route 9, especially in its existing business areas. Concerning light industry, the Front Street, Freight House Road Area is seen as potential sites for development. By contrast, the Town Center is not a desirable area for new development. Residents largely **prefer that the Town Center's existing character be maintained.**

Such preferences lend themselves to an asset-based economic development strategy focused on agriculture, natural and historic tourism, specialty retail, light industry. The following section explores issues and opportunities related to realizing this type of growth in West Brookfield.

## Lack of Municipal Sewer

As identified in the Land Use section, the lack of municipal sewer may be the most significant constraint to new business and residential growth in the town center area and along Route 9. Even small scale growth with design guidelines intended to protect the unique character of these areas may not actually occur due to a lack of municipal sewer. Without municipal sewer, the costs for local property owners to invest in the redevelopment of their properties may be prohibitive or it may be infeasible based on lot size or wastewater system requirements. This may ultimately create a situation where owners could be forced to sell properties rather than revitalize or redevelop them.

The costs and land area needed to install a new septic system can be prohibitive and it will prevent desirable changes. An example of this is the Plantation Country Store (1 East Main Street). During the community event process, many participants cited support and desire for a coffee shop to occupy the existing vacant space and for apartments to be created on the second floor. One of the primary constraints to these new uses is the inability for the site to accommodate the necessary septic system. While parking and potential building code issues may exist, those can be resolved. The need to install a new, significantly large septic system cannot be accommodated on the relatively small parcel. Therefore, those types of uses will likely never be available to revitalize and occupy the building.

Plantation Country Store and Vacant Space



*This large building is located on a corner lot in the center of Town. It is ideally situated upper-story residential units and additional commercial amenities such as a café, yet is **limited by the Town's lack of public sewer.***

Unfortunately, without addressing the lack of municipal sewer along Route 9, the primary results may be continued vacancy, or, undesirable changes. Long term, given the cost prohibitive nature of developing sites without municipal sewer, the primary driver of change in town center may be by larger sites developers or corporations who can absorb the costs of purchasing additional property and installing larger septic systems. Based on the input from the community events, there is a strong desire to prevent chain restaurants and common corporate entities, such as CVS, Rite Aid, Walmart, or larger grocery chains from locating in West Brookfield and interrupting the rural character which is still intact along Route 9. Throughout **this master plan process, numerous residents expressed a “do-nothing” approach.** While this may be sufficient in the short-term, it will likely result in the slow and random breakdown of the most desirable elements of town. Envision a Cumberland Farms, large office, or Taco Bell being located at the old Samek farm stand, or a self-storage facility being located next to Dunkin Donuts. Precedence indicates that the do-nothing approach is more

likely to result in undesirable changes than those that could be supported by revised zoning, design guidelines, and municipal sewer.

New commercial growth must occur over the long term to offset the tax burden of residents. Additionally, new housing options (even if only modest increases) are necessary to support and maintain a diverse population where existing residents can stay in town and new residents to choose to live in West Brookfield.

## Tax Burden

In this era of unfunded mandates and ever-tightening budgets, funding essential services **without overburdening taxpayers is a challenge. Currently, West Brookfield's tax levy** allows for limited staffing of Town offices. The Fire Department is funded enough to maintain only a **call department. The Town's water system is below the capacity necessary to adequately** provide for fire control. To maintain and expand support core services, West Brookfield must increase its tax revenue. Doing so without increasing the tax burden of homeowners requires increased commercial and industrial activity.

## Agriculture and Tourism

As expressed by residents, agriculture is an important and cherished component of West Brookfield's identity. It is also central to an economic development strategy of eco/agritourism. Yet, farming is a labor-intensive, low-return enterprise. Efforts to help the farmers generate more income can help mitigate challenges that may arise and protect these businesses long-term viability.

Preservation of **West Brookfield's farmland can be supported through zoning and strategies** to help owners generate additional income. Zoning protections for farms include:

- Agricultural Preservation Overlay Districts, which preserve farmland by requiring clustering of residential properties on smaller lots
- Scenic Roads Bylaws and Scenic Overlay Districts, which promote and protect farm views
- Local Historic Districts, which can be used to help ensure that an agricultural area maintains its rural character
- Adaptive Reuse Bylaws that encourage adaptive reuse of barns if the structures are no longer in agricultural use.
- Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) that identifies conservation areas and then integrates residential units into the remaining landscape
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), which direct growth away from farmland that should be preserved to locations suited to higher density development

Tools that help farm owners generate additional income include:

- Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR), which pay farmers the difference **between "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland** in exchange for a permanent deed restriction

- Chapter 61A, which provides farm owners with reduced local tax assessments while their land is kept in working agriculture
- Community Preservation Act funds, which can be used to purchase Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, document agricultural resources, repair barns, and acquire farmland.
- Historic preservation easements, which are voluntary legal agreements that permanently protect an historic property and offer tax benefits.
- Preservation/ Conservation Restrictions, which are permanent deed restrictions that can be donated to or acquired by a preservation organization which then monitors any future changes to the historic property for perpetuity.
- Leasing the land to one or more agricultural producers. Farm owners can issue RFPs to gauge interest from the local farming community or utilize New England Small Farm Institute's **New England Land Link, which is an online clearinghouse for parties interested in leasing out or utilizing farm land.**

Through the West Brookfield Agricultural Commission, **The Town should convene a farmers' roundtable, stakeholders' forum, or working group to identify challenges to local farms and find at-risk enterprises, working to find strategies that will preserve these important assets while increasing the financial viability of the properties.** It should also work to find opportunities to enhance local agricultural sector through work with advocacy and member organizations and pursue preservation of remaining agricultural properties and historic working landscapes.

Concurrently, West Brookfield should build on existing branding and marketing of the Brookfields and Quaboag Hills Region. The Town can build on its historic resources, agricultural sector, and natural assets as a key draw. Promoting these opportunities can bring more people into the town and its businesses. Strategies include creating an Open Space and Recreation Plan to guide policy and implementation and improving the connectivity between natural and historic resources through signage, designated paths, and walking tours.

## Synergy

West Brookfield has many unique businesses that are considered to be destinations on their own merits, and, each of these can operate on their own and thrive. However, if visitors to each business learn about or are aware of other destinations they will be more likely to plan a return visit to West Brookfield. If certain groups of complementary businesses are marketed together, and in a connected and coordinated way, it can create a network of resident owned businesses that can contribute to an energy and synergy to bring in visitors. The large number of these unique attractions coupled with the rural character of the town could help establish the town as a destination.

One of the primary concepts of creating multiple destinations is that visitors who visit once may come back to Town a second or third time to explore another destination. Creating synergy involves promotion amongst as many of the unique businesses as possible. One good experience can lead to another. Opportunities exist to create a network whereby visitors could visit more than one place per visit. Many participants in the community events cited the



need for the Town Center to seek and/or encourage additional complimentary food and drink establishments that can serve both residents and visitors.

An additional niche-style restaurant and a coffee shop were cited as being desirable in the Town Center. Having several options for dining in the Town Center will complement the existing restaurants, especially the Tavern, and will complete a circuit desired by many visitors who may plan to visit West Brookfield for the day: a specialty destination and a food establishment to patronize before heading home.

One example of this is the potential synergy between the Salem Cross Inn, Ragged Hill Cider Company, and Clover Springs Farm.

### The Salem Cross Inn Restaurant and Tavern

The Salem Cross Inn is a destination for visitors from across the region and even nationwide. Situated on 600 acres of rolling hills and pastures, the Inn dates to the 1740s and currently operates as a restaurant, tavern, and wedding destination. Popular with locals and tourists alike, Salem Cross Inn is known for its themed feasts, upscale events, and locally-sourced menu. The Inn employs upwards of fifty (50) staff and supplements its own produce and meats with those from nearby farms, including Front Yard farm, Hunt Road Farm, **Shepherd’s Gate Goat Farm, and Howe’s Farm.**

Tour at Salem Cross Inn



Through national advertising, the Inn’s owners participate in cross-country motorbus tours. The inn is a dining destination and prominent stop along the tour. Locally and regionally, no equivalent tours exist; however, the owners of the Salem Cross Inn expressed a desire to work with other local producers and businesses to increase tourism and extend the amount of time visitors spend in town. The owners of the Salem Cross Inn are currently in discussion with the owners of Ragged Hill Cider Company to bring groups from the Inn to the Cidery.

### Ragged Hill Orchard and Cider Company

Ragged Hill Orchard has been a destination farm stand and apple orchard for years. As part of a continued evolution, the owner has recently partnered to create, launch, and start a hard cider business. The concept of cidery and farm breweries has been a significant economic driver in the Central Mass Region and beyond over the past five (5) years. The uniqueness of a hard cider business in West Brookfield can serve as a new destination to wide audience. The owners began with bottling the product for wholesale but also made a strategic decision to create a specific bottle arrangement for guests at the Salem Cross Inn. A large number of guests travel to West Brookfield solely to attend an event at the Salem Cross. This is one example whereby guests may learn about and

Ragged Hill Cider Company



plan to tour, visit, or taste the product at its source. Plans for 2018 include expansion of the Cidery to create a tasting room, outside seating area and increased bottling facilities.

### Clover Springs Farm

Clover Springs Farm specializes in raising and selling grass fed beef. This specialty niche product is created as part of a larger farm operation including hay production and sales and a farm stand on 400 acres in West Brookfield. The vision and excitement to create a specialty product, as well as a strong connection to the community, and, interest in teaching and education is a key component of this business that can help West Brookfield highlight its agricultural heritage. Along with selling the grass-fed beef to local restaurants, the owners



Clover Springs Farm

have recently begun supplying the product to Wegmans grocery store. A place to buy quality grass fed beef direct from the farmer is an activity that residents and visitors alike will travel for. The owner has future plans to expand the farm stand offerings, and host events such as farm tours, educational cooking sessions, and other activities to highlight and educate people about the importance of farming. A grand vision of the future could be the creation of incubator farm plots and a farm education center that could include partnerships with other groups such as NOFA and/or the school of agriculture at UMass Amherst.

The cases of the Salem Cross Inn, Ragged Hill Cider Company, and Clover Springs Farm **highlight West Brookfield’s potential for tourism and economic development.** It also brings to light several areas for improvement and challenges that require redress. While West Brookfield is rich in agricultural assets and collaborative spirit, further synergy is necessary to transform such resources into a compelling case for tourism.

### Cooperative Capitalism

As illustrated in the previous section, interest in joint marketing and cross-promotion is growing. From formalized business organizations to self-guided makers tours, efforts to forge synergy through cooperative capitalism exist.

The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce was established in 1978 to assist business in the Quaboag Hills Region. Serving West Brookfield and fourteen (14) nearby communities, the **Chamber’s mission is to be the leading advocate for business and community** by connecting its business members with the people, products, and services within the region. In addition to member networking and educational events, the Chamber also publishes a recreation guide and business directory.

## Browse the Brookfields

Similarly, Browse the Brookfields is a group of area businesses whose goal is to promote the history and beauty of the area to encourage tourism. The group, whose members include restaurants, shops, destinations, and services, maintains an online presence and publishes a brochure that maps member businesses and promotes events.

## Backroads

Local makers' tours also present an opportunity for tourism and cooperative capitalism. The Backroads Studio Tour exemplifies this concept. A self-guided tour through the studios of local artisans across six towns, the tour includes five (5) stops in West Brookfield. As shown in the Browse the Brookfields brochure, tour participants utilize a free map on specified days to locate the open studios of woodworkers, mosaic artists, painters, and fiber artists. This model could be adopted for a variety of themes, such as farms and food, craft beverages, or culture. It could also be modified to include ticketed registration, transportation, dining, and overnight amenities. Such events are frequently used by economic developers in rural areas, as they can entice visitors who are unwilling to make longer treks to visit a single destination.

Browse the Brookfields Brochure



Backroads Studio Tour Brochure



Source: Backwoods Studio Tour Brochure. Online. 2017.



## Central Mass Grown

Central Mass Grown (CMG) is a nonprofit coalition of farmers and producers, local food businesses, and community leaders that uses joint-marketing and other strategies to increase awareness of farms and connect consumers with agricultural producers. Currently, seven (7) West Brookfield businesses are CMG members:

- Clover Springs Organic Farm
- Hamletgrove Pastured Poultry
- Honey Bee Orchard
- Hunt Road Berry Farm
- Red River Farm and Landscape
- Ragged Hill Orchard
- Salem Cross Inn Restaurant & Tavern

With demonstrated interest in collaborative promotion, these businesses are excellent candidates for local and regional tours and other synergistic activities. Beyond tours, such activities might include:

- Expanding inventories of local businesses
- Establishing additional focused fairs and events
- Improving wayfinding and signage
- Partnering businesses for strategic, intentional cross-promotion
- Creating themed events enlisting businesses across sectors
- Partnering with local reporters for ongoing business highlights
- Establishing a recurring local business spotlight at televised public meetings
- Cultivating relationships with active and passive recreation groups to create additional running and biking events, triathlons, unique water races, and other activities.

## Lodging Opportunities

Lodging is an essential component of tourism. **Currently, West Brookfield's lodging options are limited.** The financial impact of this limitation is evidenced through the case of the Salem Cross Inn. Visitors booking and planning weddings at the Inn are typically directed to overnight accommodations in Sturbridge. As the closest town with medium to upscale lodging options, Sturbridge benefits from **West Brookfield's lodging shortage.**

Copper Lantern Motor Lodge





In turn, West Brookfield loses commercial property taxes, potential hotel taxes, and visitor spending in convenience stores, restaurants, and other businesses. Presently, West Brookfield's overnight accommodations include:

- Copper Lantern Motor Lodge
- A Bed and Breakfast
- Several private homes and rooms available through Airbnb

For West Brookfield to capture overnight visitors, additional lodging amenities are needed. Several strategies are needed to encourage the development of new overnight accommodations and the revitalization of existing lodging. These include:

- Providing by-right zoning for a variety of lodging types including Airbnb, hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts
- Incentivizing the development and redevelopment of units through tax abatements and façade improvement matching programs;
- Working with the owners of existing lodging businesses to identify and address current limitations (e.g., quality of accommodations, vacancies, space limitations)

## Retail and General Business

West Brookfield's retail leakage analysis indicates that while there are a handful of industry sub-categories in which there is a retail surplus, overall there is great opportunity for growth in West Brookfield as residents are spending more for products than the local businesses capture (see Appendix I). Increasing retail amenities will make the lives of residents more **convenient and is essential to growing the town's tourist economy; however, such amenities** must be consistent with the character of the Town and the small-scale preferences of residents. The following retail subtypes are, depending on scale and style, are potentially consistent with these preferences, will add to the convenience and quality of life for residents, and round out the mix of amenities typically desired by tourists:

- Grocery Stores: \$46.5 million in total local demand, \$28.7 million in sales
- Specialty Food Stores: \$1.9 million in total local demand
- Drinking establishments \$2.2 million in total local demand, \$661,352 in sales
- Restaurants and other eating places: \$41.1 million in total local demand, \$17.9 million in sales
- Clothing & Accessory Stores (all types): \$25.5 million in total local demand, \$1.7 million in sales

Growing the small business community is best done through a two-part strategy: 1) support existing businesses, and 2) attract new businesses.

To support existing retailers, programming and promotion are vital. The availability of online retailers (and their discounts) means that retailers must find creative way to draw customers to their shops. Innumerable events and promotional mechanisms exist, from themed discount days across a variety of business types to pop up events and galleries. Annual events present opportunities for marketing across sectors and spillover purchases.

Whether it is **the town’s weekly farmers market or the annual Asparagus Festival, events are** a great way to introduce participants to other amenities within the community. Distributing coupons at events is an excellent method for increasing local purchases. Examples include **“First Fridays,” sporting events such as 5-k kilometer runs, restaurant week, art walks, etc.** Cultural Districts or Business Associations often coordinate such events.

In conjunction with programming, promotion plays a major role in the success of retail enterprises. Again, this can (and should) take a variety of forms. Some municipalities have had success using elected officials and the media to highlight local businesses. For example, one community had its Mayor and a local reporter visit one local business per month. Each business was highlighted in the local paper. Finally, the importance of maintaining a strong social media and web presence cannot be overstated.

Also of critical importance is the relationship between business owners and municipal staff. When such relationships are weak or absent, business many struggle unnecessarily with regulations, lack awareness of opportunities, go out of businesses, or choose to relocate elsewhere. By building strong relationships with local businesses, municipal staff and business advocates can identify at-risk businesses, proactively develop interventions, facilitate growth, and assist with succession plans. A part-time economic development staff person or community liaison could enable the further development of such relationships and support programming and promotional activities as well.

To support existing businesses and attract new ones, the Town should review its municipal processes and procedures to ensure its regulatory environment is consistent with typical developer needs. Some common processes include:

- Creation of a licensing and permitting handbook
- Increased amount of information online, such as application forms, decisions, and minutes
- Increased hours for key officials, such as Building Inspector and/or Zoning Enforcement Officer
- Consideration of creating a part-time, shared, or full-time town planner position to aid all applicants and provide internal staff and volunteer board coordination

## Town Center Commercial Building Stock

As the focal point of commerce and activity in West Brookfield, the town center area is **critical to the Town’s image. As previously stated, several commercial buildings in the area** require aesthetic improvements or have uses incompatible with town centers. Additional measures to enhance the existing aesthetic and help make Town Center a destination include:

- Establishing a façade improvement program using matching funds from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.
- Creating a tax abatement district in which property owners receive tax abatements for investing in their properties with the years of abatement determined by amount invested. This would encourage existing owners to rehabilitate properties regardless of whether rental rates are currently sufficient to make investment a cost effective.

- Business Improvement Districts (BID) are special assessment districts in which property owners vote to initiate, manage and finance supplemental services or enhancements above and beyond the baseline of services already provided by their local city or town governments. The goal of a BID is to improve a specific commercial area by attracting customers, clients, shoppers and other businesses. The assessments are collected and expended within the district for a range of services and/or programs, including marketing and public relations, improving the downtown marketplace or city/town center, capital improvements, public safety enhancements, and special events.
- The Town could work towards adopting a Community Preservation Act (CPA) surcharge. Such a surcharge could be used to establish a revolving loan fund to support historic preservation of Town Center properties.
- Crowdsourcing programs offer another tool for investment. Programs like Patronicity and CitizenInvestment help municipalities create fundraising campaigns for public projects and match the funds that are raised.

One or more of these strategies could be combined with a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement to facilitate redevelopment of a key building. Potential target properties include 1 East Main Street (the site of Plantation Country Store), where expanded septic is necessary to build out the upper story or add desired amenities. Other possible sites include 21 East Main Street (**Dee's Do's**), 12 Central Street (Dipody Doos preschool), and 11 East Main Street (Main Street Liquors), which would benefit from façade improvements. The appearance of 11 East Main Street would be improved through a reduction or elimination of exterior signage. The Town should work with the property owners to address this issue and consider passing a sign bylaw. Adoption of such a bylaw could prevent commercial enterprises from putting up signage that blocks **windows and detract from the Town Center's sense of place. Finally, best practices dictate that social service agencies not occupy prime real estate in prominent areas, as is currently the case with You Inc. at 7 East Main Street.**

To preserve and guide **the town center's character, West Brookfield should consider adopting** area Design Guidelines. Whether adopted as enforceable regulations or suggested standards, such guidelines typically go beyond standard zoning provisions to include guidance on facades, siting, and other design elements. The overriding objective of the design guidelines should be to ensure that new development and renovation/alterations and additions fit in well with their surroundings. Potential guidelines include:

- At-street corner-location commercial buildings should be placed at the corner to develop corner street frontages on both streets and avoid placement of off-street surface parking in front yards
- New commercial developments should place buildings at or closer to roadway frontages and place parking to the rear/side of buildings
- New site designs should coordinate with adjacent sites to include:
  - Shared driveways/curb cuts
  - Continuation of landscaped areas or open space
  - Planned access to service or refuse areas
  - Pedestrian circulation systems and pedestrian spaces
  - Internal vehicular circulation systems within a shared parking area

- Parking areas should be screened with hedges, fences and evergreen plantings
- Buildings should be oriented to create usable, safe and attractive pedestrian spaces, preserve significant natural site features and minimize the appearance of parking areas
- Building entries should be easily identifiable. Façade variations, porticos, roof variations, and architectural recesses or projections should be visible from public streets and parking areas

## Industry

According to feedback provided through survey and community events, West Brookfield residents support light industrial development in select areas. Several areas already possess light industrial businesses and represent ideal locations for new business development.

The Depot area is characterized by industrial and high-intensity uses such as metal alloy works, wire manufacturing, and the municipal Highway Department Barn. The Quaboag River is located due southwest of the area and the Coy Brook Pond bounds it on the east; however, much of the land appears unaffected by flooding and wetlands appear limited to the **“coastal” terrain**. The Floodplain Zoning Bylaw specifically restricts the available uses of floodplain land. Small pockets of wetlands appear likely on several parcels but leave sufficient area for buildout.

Sites within the Depot area that may be suitable for industrial buildout include:

- 58 Milk Street
  - 0.68 acres of undeveloped land
  - Owned by the Town of West Brookfield
  - Zoned General District
- 82 Ware Street
  - 0.8 acres of land with office
  - Owned by Sherman Oil
  - Zoned General District

58 Milk Street



82 Ware Street



Contiguous parcels east of Gavitt Wire and Cable Company including:

- 52 Front Street
  - 5.1 acres of undeveloped land
  - Zoned General District
  - Owned by South Pond LLC



- Approximately thirty (30) percent constrained by wetlands or other hydrology
- 0 Off Central Street
  - 1.98 acres of undeveloped land
  - Zoned General District
  - Owned by South Pond LLC
  - No known wetlands or other hydrologic constraint
- 107 East Main Street
  - 94 acres of farmland with an improvement
  - Zoned Rural Residential
  - Owned by Hasco Associates
  - Bounded on the east by hydrologic constraints.
  - Partially located within the 100-year flood zone

Contiguous parcels off of Freight House and Old Longhill Road including:

- 19 Freight House Road
  - 51.53 acres of undeveloped land
  - Privately owned
  - Zoned General District
  - Contains a small pocket of wetlands.
  - Bounded on the south by hydrologic constraints and located within the 100-year flood zone.
- 16 Long Hill Road
  - 3.95 acres of undeveloped land
  - Privately owned
  - Zoned General District
  - Contains a pocket of wetlands in its northwest corner.
  - Located within the 100-year flood zone
- 7 Freight House Road
  - 0.8 acres of undeveloped land
  - Corner lot
  - Owned by Town of West Brookfield
  - Zoned General District
  - Located within the 100-year flood zone

In addition to sites in the Depot area, vacant land at 50 Boston Post Road on the border of Warren also presents a potential opportunity for industry. This 80 acre lot is located on Route 19/67 just off the Route 9 intersection. It appears largely unaffected by the nearby Quaboag River.

Given West Brookfield's current lack of public sewer, industrial uses with low-intensity wastewater needs (such as warehousing and shipping) are best suited to these sites. Given the site's proximity to rail or major highways, they could be attractive to such industries. Zoning amendments will support this type of growth.

## Light Industrial Zoning

Best practices in planning for rural development include clustering industrial developments, rather than allowed them to grow in scattered-site patterns. Clustering such businesses has several benefits, including preserving the character of non-industrial areas; limiting supportive infrastructure costs; and attracting complementary enterprises.

Currently, West Brookfield's zoning does not support the clustering of industrial businesses. Existing high-intensity uses occur in pockets within the General District, where they are allowed only by special permit. To encourage the clustering of industry, the Town should consider establishing an Industrial or Light Industrial District separate from the General District. As noted in the Land Use section, this District is best suited to three areas:

- The Depot area
- The East Main Street area including Brookfield Wire Company and Safety Clean
- The East Main Street area including Quirk Wire Company and Gremarco Industries

To further encourage light industrial development within these areas, West Brookfield should also reassess the existing special permit requirements affecting all potential industrial uses. Amending the allowed uses in the proposed Industrial District to By-Right with Site Plan Review would make the Town more attractive to industrial developers.

# GOALS AND ACTIONS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## 1. *Increase tourism activity in West Brookfield*

- a. **Create a “brand” and “placemaking” program for the entire town with respect to its enticement from inside and outside the region**
  - i. Identify and connect assets to make West Brookfield a day-trip destination. This should build **from the “Browse the Brookfields” and “Central Mass Grown.”**
  - ii. Solidify, unify, distinguish, and publicize West Brookfield special events, activities, and programming (see additional info)
- b. Enhance and grow ecological, agricultural, and cultural tourism businesses in West Brookfield
- c. Establish a town brand based on quality of life, food and farms, plus active and passive outdoor recreation
  - i. Develop active recreation events (e.g. farm-based athletic competition in Barre or the pumpkin race on Lake Wickaboag)
  - ii. Allow visitors and recreational groups to use the Town Beach
  - iii. Use existing events (e.g. Asparagus festival) to direct visitors to local businesses
  - iv. Pass out coupons at events in town
  - v. **Create a Business or “Welcome to West Brookfield” brochure**
  - vi. Market the town regionally and nationally
  - vii. Utilize sub-regional branding techniques
  - viii. Increase wayfinding and signage for tourists and visitors to navigate
  - ix. Create a visitors center, cultural center, or interpretive kiosks
- d. Encourage lodging opportunities to capture business currently flowing to Sturbridge
  - i. Provide by-right zoning for a variety of lodging including Airbnb, hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts
  - ii. Work with owners of existing lodging businesses (e.g. Copper Lantern) to identify existing limitations such as the quality of accommodations, vacancies, or space limitations

2. *Increase tourism awareness for visitors outside of West Brookfield and/or the region*
  - a. Increase and/or support small businesses
    - i. Form a small business, merchants association, or home occupation cooperative
    - ii. Identify retail types that are both desired and in need
    - iii. Actively promote vacant sites and desired uses
    - iv. Support collaborative capitalism
    - v. Initiate a **“Business Matters”** campaign where a town official or member of the business community visits a local business with a reporter every week, highlighting the business
  - b. Enhance general marketing for the town as a destination within the region
    - i. Create a quality of life video
    - ii. Create a local access show and share to YouTube
    - iii. Create a **“Made in West Brookfield”** series and promote
3. *Study opportunities to increase moderate new commercial development in certain areas*
  - a. Explore the feasibility of increasing light industrial opportunities in three primary areas (South Route 67 on existing quarry land, the Railroad Street/Front Street area, and eastern end of Route 9) through zoning
    - i. Consider establishing an Industrial or Light Industrial district or an overlay that includes these areas. Such a strategy would encourage industrial development in these areas.
    - ii. Review and determine if any existing zoning regulations, such as the Wellhead Protection Overlay, can or should be modified to ensure that limited and desirable development can occur.
    - iii. A Priority Development Area (PDA) study can help determine the suitability of these sites to light industrial enterprises. Such studies typically include a preliminary review of zoning, infrastructure, topography, and environmental constraints.
4. *Consider rezoning of areas of Route 9/67, Town Center, and General District to ensure compatibility of new business and commercial uses.*
  - a. Explore development opportunities and constraints in key areas of the Route 9 corridor and the General District



5. *Increase tax base through encouraging and seeking appropriate and desirable businesses*
- e. Establish a municipal water and sewer infrastructure plan and seek funding for improvements via MassWorks, I-Cubed (Infrastructure Investment Incentive) Program, and other sources
  - f. Encourage a diverse retail and service base to meet the needs of residents and visitors
    - i. Identify retail types that are both desired and needed
    - ii. Ensure zoning allows desired by-right uses
    - iii. Promote vacant sites and desired uses online and through other means
    - iv. Incentivize retail and amenities that are currently missing from town
    - v. Address municipal processes and procedures that delay and complicate permitting
    - vi. Create a licensing and permitting guidebook
  - g. Support existing businesses to increase their viability and scale
    - i. Form a business/merchants association
    - ii. Create and support collaborative capitalism
    - iii. **Create a “Business Matters” campaign whereby** Town officials visit a local business with a reporter every week, who highlights the business
    - iv. Jointly market complementary businesses
    - v. Create and support methods for reciprocal referrals (e.g. cultural sites can promote restaurants)
    - vi. Ensure new businesses have the tools and skills they need to succeed and thrive, which can include:
      - Financing strategies
      - Marketing and social media strategies
      - Mentoring
      - Accounting and bookkeeping
      - Business plan review
  - h. Encourage the expansion of the industrial base by creating specific zoning districts and requirements for various compatible uses
    - i. Form an Industrial Development Authority, CDC, Economic Development Committee or other body to work market and negotiate development, redevelopment, and/or expansions





# Open Space and Recreation





# INTRODUCTION

Open Space and Recreation planning is crucial for preserving resources while enhancing recreational opportunities and experiences for the community. Policies and guidelines designed in conjunction with this Master Plan chapter provide a guide for future actions to ensure consistency with the preservation of open space and the enhancement of recreational uses. This chapter incorporates and builds off of the natural resources **inventory included in the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan completed in 2011, and identifies, updates, and incorporates relevant information to the town's open space and recreation resources.**

The Town of West Brookfield benefits from an extensive network of protected open space and popular active and passive recreational areas. However, key parcels and areas that contribute to the rural character of the town are not currently protected. Further, much of the land surrounding Lake Wickaboag, one of the central natural resources for the town, are vulnerable to new development. Such development could threaten the viability of the Lake as a water supply and recreation destination.



## Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Residents of West Brookfield have been actively engaged in the planning for the protection and preservation of vital land resources for many years now. Some of the past town planning efforts include:

### Community Development Plan (2004)

This report was prepared by the Community Development Planning Committee to guide the **Town's future growth. Assistance was provided to the Committee under Executive Order 418,** which supplies guidance and funding for the preparation of Community Development Plans (CDP). The four (4) elements addressed by the CDP included open space and resource protection, housing, economic development, and transportation. The 2004 West Brookfield CDP identified the preservation of **West Brookfield's rural character, open spaces and environmental quality** as goal towards natural resource protection. The CDP also identified five (5) objectives to meet this goal, including:

- Protect the health of lakes and brooks in Town
- **Protect the Town's water supplies**
- Preserve the Quaboag River Valley landscape between Route 9 and the River
- Protect scenic views
- Create greenway trails both within town and connecting with greenways in surrounding towns

## Reconnaissance Report, Heritage Landscape Inventory (2008)

This report identified and prioritized the landscapes that embody the community's character and its history. The report was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and its regional partners, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NORLP), **including members of the Town's Historical Commission. Recommendations include the potential for Smart Growth Zoning adoption, Local Historic District designation, and pursuit of additional protective measures on important natural and cultural areas through Conservation Restrictions and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions. The 2008 Reconnaissance Report identified three (3) primary goals for preservation of West Brookfield's heritage landscapes, including:**

- Adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA)
- Adoption of a Demolition Delay Bylaw
- Establish a Local Historic District (LHD) for the West Brookfield Center Historic District, and include the Western Railroad Depot Area

## Open Space and Recreation Plan (2011)

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) provides an overview and analysis of the Town's significant natural and scenic resources, inventory of conservation and recreation lands, and concrete steps to improve open space and recreation opportunities. This plan was approved by the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) in 2011 and requires an Update in 2018. Recommended objectives include water resource and land protection, preservation of the rural character, increased outreach and education, and developing connections between existing networks and already protected lands. The 2011 OSRP identified nine (9) goals for the protection and promotion of open space and recreational resources, including:

- **Promote the preservation of West Brookfield's important water resources**
- Promote the preservation of the important land resources in West Brookfield
- Provide recreational opportunities for all West Brookfield residents
- Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas of West Brookfield
- **Promote opportunities for the linkage of West Brookfield's open space**
- Increase educational awareness regarding resources
- Use regulations to balance development with the preservation of open space
- **Promote preservation of West Brookfield's community character**
- Promote the protection of Agricultural Lands within West Brookfield

## Open Space Residential Development Bylaw (2006)

In 2006, the Town of West Brookfield added a provision to their zoning bylaw covering Open Space Residential Developments (OSRD). The Bylaw was developed by the Stormwater Authority and the Planning Board, enacted through a vote at Annual Town Meeting. The Open Space Residential Development Bylaw applies to "major developments" which are defined in the bylaw as developments consisting of more than three (3) units. Developments of fewer than three (3) units can be considered, but only if the properties are contiguous and the planning board determines that the planned development meets the purpose of the bylaw. The law requires that a minimum of 50% of the total development lands be set aside as open



space. Open space must be reasonably accessible and earmarked for "wildlife habitat and conservation and the following additional purposes: historic preservation, outdoor education, passive recreation uses at the discretion of the planning board, aquifer protection, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, a combination of these uses, and shall be served by suitable access for such purposes."

Accomplishments since the completion of the 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan:

- Revised the Stormwater Bylaw, 2014
- Participated in multiple land conservation initiatives
- Improved surface water quality, particularly at Lake Wickaboag
- Prepared dredging plan for north end of Lake Wickaboag (awaiting funding)

## Commissions and Active Groups

### Open Space Implementation Committee

The Open Space Implementation Committee is 6-member appointed board that oversees implementation and updates of the Open Space & Recreation Plan. The West Brookfield Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed in 2011 and requires a Plan Update in 2018. The **members of the committee are also members of the town's** Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, and the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association.

### Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is comprised of a 7-member board that is charged with the **protection and promotion of the Town's natural and watershed resources through review of** permits, site visits, and meetings regarding the enforcement of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act. The Conservation Commission also reviews Forest Cutting Plans in order to notify local Board members about forest management activities. The Commission manages approximately 200 acres of permanently protected open space lands in Town. Commission meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month.

### Stormwater Authority

The West Brookfield Stormwater Authority was created in 2006 at Town Meeting through adoption of the *Town of West Brookfield Stormwater Bylaw*. The purpose of the Bylaw and the Regulations are to protect public health, safety, and welfare of the community by establishing requirements and procedures to manage stormwater runoff and to prevent water pollution from new development and redevelopment.

Comprised of 7-member board, the Stormwater Authority is charged with enforcing the provisions of the Stormwater Bylaw, as well as remaining actively involved with issues around Lake Wickaboag. The Authority coordinates activities that promote the water quality and health of Lake Wickaboag because the lake is the receiving water body for a major portion of **the Town's stormwater runoff. Therefore it is the Authority's role in ensuring that surrounding** developments do not harm the already impacted lake system.

Although West Brookfield is not covered by the MS4 Permit<sup>1</sup>, the Stormwater Authority has taken great strides to ensure oversight and protection of stormwater throughout the town.

In 2008 and 2011, the Town of West Brookfield was awarded two *Section 319* Grants to control nonpoint sources of water pollution in Town. West Brookfield received \$62,400 from MassDEP in 2008 and raised \$41,600 for the required non-federal match. The *Section 319 Nonpoint Source (NPS) program* is a funding source offered by the EPA that helps communities control nonpoint sources of water pollution in order to achieve and maintain efficient uses of waterways. Enacted by Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act, the grant is awarded to projects that target the prevention, control, and abatement of NPS pollution within a watershed or sub-watershed. The 2008 grant funded an infiltration Best Management Practice (BMP) design near Wickaboag Valley Road involving the West Brookfield Highway Department, Stormwater Authority, and LWPA.

In 2011, the Stormwater Authority applied for and successfully received another 319 grant. **The grant awarded in 2011 funded the “Two Ponds Project” which involved dredging of two adjacent ponds near the southeast region of Lake Wickaboag to include improved wet detention basins, sediment forebays, and vegetated swales on both sides of Lakeview Road.** West Brookfield was awarded \$350,000 from MassDEP, and the town raised \$235,000 in a non-federal match. ESS Group Inc. was hired to design and execute both projects for West Brookfield.

Among the projects the Stormwater Authority has undertaken since 2015:

- Actively reviews new development proposals to ensure compliance with the bylaw
- Continuously review and update the bylaw (last update was in 2013)
- Working closely with the Lake Wickaboag Association to develop and pursue funding for the North Cove Lake Dredging Project
- Worked with civil engineering students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) to produce an updated water quality report for Lake Wickaboag (2014)

## Recreation Committee

The West Brookfield Recreation Committee is comprised of a 5-member volunteer board appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Recreation Committee is tasked with monitoring and maintaining the Town Beach, maintenance of recreational sports facilities, coordinating movie nights and other events on the Town Common, and organizing youth summer activities and sports. Each summer, the Recreation Committee coordinates free summer recreation programs for youth residents including tennis lessons, swimming lessons, sports camp, and Camp SOAR. Camp SOAR is a weeklong summer camp available to children in grades 1-6 which takes place at the West Brookfield Elementary School. Camp SOAR has been successfully running for two (2) years, with day-to-day participation ranging from 40 to 60 total children. The Committee also worked to install an ice-rink in the Town Common in the winter of 2017-18. The Recreation Committee meetings are open to the public and all youth sports team Presidents are encouraged to attend.

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<sup>1</sup> A permit issued by the U.S. EPA to regulate management of Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer Systems (MS4s) which diverts the flow of stormwater runoff into larger water bodies.

## Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association

The Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association (LWPA) is a non-profit organization “dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the water quality and surroundings of Lake Wickaboag.” The organization is a private membership association composed of “concerned citizens” and residents of West Brookfield. They are funded through annual membership dues and private funder-raisers. Moreover, the LWPA collaborates with the Stormwater Authority to identify and encourage stormwater improvement projects aimed at reducing the amount of non-point source pollutants entering the lake. The 12-member committee is actively engaged with preservation, planning, and educational activities around the lake.

## Brookhaven Lake Association

The Brookhaven Lake Association is an organization comprised of residents committed to the preservation and improvement of the water quality and surroundings of the Town’s secondary lake, Brookhaven Lake. The group coordinates activities on the Lake. The Brookhaven Lake Association is a listed member of the Massachusetts Congress of Lake and Pond Associations.

## Town Affiliated Groups

### Opacum Land Trust

Founded by volunteers in 2000, the Opacum Land Trust operates to protect natural, cultural resources with significant ecological and historical value in South-Central Massachusetts. The Land Trust serves 13 communities including Southbridge, Sturbridge, Charlton, East Brookfield, Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield, Warren, Brimfield, Wales, Holland, Monson, and Palmer. The Land Trust focuses on preserving priority habitat and ecosystems, promoting proactive conservation, and the creation of greenways and wildlife corridors. Opacum Land Trust permanently protects open space through donation or purchase of land, bargain sales, or through Conservation Restriction holdings.

### The East Quabbin Land Trust

The East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) began in 1994 because of concern for the loss of farmland and wildlife habitat to unplanned sprawl in and around Hardwick. Since 1998, EQLT has expanded its protection efforts to Barre, Petersham, New Braintree and other nearby towns. By working cooperatively with property owners, government agencies, conservation groups and other land trust organizations, the Land Trust has been able to protect over 4,000 acres since 1998. The EQLT worked with West Brookfield in 2013 to acquire the Pyncheon’s Grist Mill Preserve, a 42-acre site located off Wickaboag Valley Road. The Town holds a Conservation Restriction on the land.

### The Trustees of Reservations

The Trustees of Reservations is a non-profit land conservation and historic preservation organization dedicated to preserving natural and historical places in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As the oldest regional land trust in Massachusetts, the Trustees manages 89 properties statewide including the Rock House Reservation in West Brookfield, a 135-acre site located off Route 9.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Brookfield contains an abundance of open space resources. Currently, there are over 2,100 acres of permanently protected open space and recreational lands in town. In addition, the town has nearly 3,600 acres of chapter land protected through MGL Chapter 61. The breakdown of open space lands in West Brookfield is as follows:

**Table 4-1 Open Space Inventory Summary**

Open Space Inventory Summary	
Permanently Protected Open Space	2,151 acres
Lands with Agricultural Preservation Restriction	966 acres
Lands with Conservation Restriction	322 acres
Chapter 61, 61A and 61 B Lands	3,597 acres
<b>Total Open Space Lands</b>	<b>7,036 acres</b>

## Agriculture

Farm land is an important resource for many community members in Town. Residents have cited West Brookfield’s rural character as a key attribute. The project team has identified the following in town:

- 966 acres of land have an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), which is permanently protects these lands from development.
- 3,597 acres of land are enrolled in the Chapter 61A program, which restricts the use of the land agricultural or horticultural use in exchange for significant reduction in taxes. Of these, 34 parcels (approximately 1,790 acres) are multiple-use properties.
- Over 950 animals in 2015: Beef Cows (311), Chickens (277), Horses (137), Swine (60), Goats (54), Turkeys (36), Dairy Cows (31), Waterfowl (30), Sheep (25)
- At least seven (7) farms and orchards with “for-sale” products

## Open Space Destinations

In addition to protected and semi-protected rural lands, West Brookfield is possessed of a number of open space and recreation destinations. These sites are noted for their active and passive recreational opportunities, natural beauty, as well as their contributions to preserving natural resources in the town.



## Town Common

The Town Common is the central location for community activities and leisure enjoyment. Numerous activities are held on the Common throughout the year including the Asparagus Festival in May, Annual Congregational Church tag sale in June, summer concerts, the **Farmer's Market during the summer and fall months, Annual Harvest Festival, and White Christmas**. Not only is the Town Common a central hub for community enjoyment, it is an area that is maintained and promoted by multiple departments and committees. The Common Committee oversees activities and events while the Highway Department and Burial Grounds Commission maintains the landscape of the common. In 2014, the Town initiated a **Lawn Fertilization Program with Casella Organics to revitalize the common's landscape, which also** included tree removal due to health and safety issues that were identified by the Tree Warden. There have ongoing efforts by the West Brookfield Little League and the Asparagus Festival Committee to redesign and construct a more functional ball field on the Town Common, which is frequently used by young athletes participating in T-ball and youth soccer. This past winter season, the Common also saw the addition of a new ice skating rink for the public to use and enjoy.

## West Brookfield Elementary School

West Brookfield Elementary School, located at 89 North Main Street, is a 20-acre campus equipped with an indoor gymnasium and several outdoor recreational facilities including two playgrounds designed for small children, two tennis courts, a basketball court, three baseball diamonds and three soccer fields. The playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts and one soccer field are on the level with the school and generally accessible by paved walkways. The baseball diamonds and two additional soccer fields are located at lower elevations. Access to the ball fields is through a sloping walkway. Access to the additional soccer fields is via a gravel walk or across the adjacent fields. There is a partially paved ½ mile long walking/running loop around the perimeter of the fields. The Recreation Committee uses the facilities at the West Brookfield Elementary School and the Quaboag Regional Middle-High School for their summer programs. The playground is only available outside of school hours and is the only playground in town. While these appear to be adequate facilities given the size of West Brookfield, additional recreational facilities may be needed to accommodate additional residents or to better meet the age demographics of the Town.

## Rock House Reservation

Rock House Reservation is a 196-acre tract with two spectacular geologic formations. This 135-acre parcel of forest and wetland is owned and maintained by the Trustees of Reservations. It is one of 96 properties operated by the Trustees. The Trustees maintain a parking area and trails so the public can enjoy the property year-round. The most popular trail on the property circles Carter Pond, a 2.5-acre spring-fed pond, constructed in the **1930's by Arthur Carter, who dammed a spring-fed stream to create the pond and constructed a cabin overlooking the pond.**

## Town Beach

Town Beach is a popular summertime destination for town residents. Owned by West Brookfield, the Town Beach is approximately a 7-acre site located on the southern shore of Lake Wickaboag on Lakeview Avenue. The beach offers opportunities for swimming canoeing and outdoor sports and is located across the street from a privately-owned athletic field. Parking is limited to residents with the appropriate permits.

## Public Beach Rules

Use of the public beach is by permit for residents only. All persons using public beach do so at their own risk. Visitors cannot swim beyond the ropes and buoys, and must obey lifeguard orders when a lifeguard is present. Visitors cannot litter or polluting the beach and must adhere to public beach hours (sunrise to 11:00 PM). Animals are prohibited on the beach from April through September. The use of loud or profane language, or the playing of amplified music at excessive volume, within the confines of the public beach, shall be considered a breach of the peace. Solid red flags displayed on lake indicates the lake is being treated for weeds or algae, or conditions are unsafe, and there is no boating or swimming allowed during that time. The West Brookfield Police, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the Lake Wickaboag Harbormaster all have the authority to enforce all lake and beach rules.

## Lake Wickaboag

Lake Wickaboag is the center-piece of West Brookfield's natural and open space resources. The lake is both a destination and water source for numerous residents and community members. It is managed by an active lake committee, the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association (LWPA), which works to improve water quality for lake residents. A public boat ramp is located in the southeast corner of the lake and parking is available for boat trailers. The lake is both a destination and water source for residents and visitors, serving as a focal point to quality of life for many. The lake is heavily used for recreation on an annual basis, and its significance is evidenced by the sheer number of water-based recreational activity in **the community. Lake Wickaboag is home to a majority of the town's water-based recreation** and there are a wide variety of activities take place on the lake including waterskiing, ATVing, boating and fishing in the summer, and hockey and ice fishing in the winter. Development along the shore has also been extensive with seasonal, summer cottages and year-round homes. Recent plans include a dredging project which has been shovel ready for some time. The Association and the town are actively seeking funding for this project.

## Lake Wickaboag Winter Rules

All persons using the frozen lake do so at their own risk and are advised not to venture onto the ice until it is completely safe. Reckless driving and speeding is not allowed, and speed limits are posted for different vehicle types. All state and federal rules and regulations apply regarding minimum operator ages, operator certifications, licenses, accident reporting, etc. No deliberate spinning, sliding, or racing is allowed, and all must yield right of way to unpowered vehicles. Cleared ice skating/hockey rink areas are not allowed beyond 150 feet from shore. Littering or polluting of ice is not permitted, exposed fishing holes should not be left in ice, and piles of ice chips from drilled holes should be smoothed out, not left on ice. The West Brookfield Police, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the Lake Wickaboag Harbormaster all have the authority to enforce all lake and beach rules.

## Lake Wickaboag Boating Rules

All persons using the lake do so at their own risk. Hydroplanes or air-boats are not allowed except for official lake managing activities. Solid red flags displayed on lake indicate the lake is being treated for weeds or algae, or conditions are unsafe, and there is no boating or swimming allowed during that time. Reckless driving and speeding is prohibited. Boat and personal watercraft (PWC) speed limits are posted for different times of day. Water skiing within 150 feet of swimmers, other water skiers, other boats, piers, rafts, divers, or shore, is prohibited except when launching or returning to shore. Swimming more than 50 feet from shore is not allowed unless accompanied by a boat, in which case the swimmer must stay

within 25 feet of boat at all times. Towing skiers, boarders, or tubes are not allowed without an onboard observer. No boats engaged in fishing are allowed within 50 feet of piers or rafts, and a catch and release policy is preferred for all types of fishing on this lake. Navigation buoys should not be tampered with, and the use of loud or profane language, or the playing of amplified music at excessive volume, shall be considered a breach of the peace. No operating a boat or jet-ski under the influence of alcohol or drugs. No littering or polluting the lake. Visitors must clean weeds off their engine prop before launching, again when leaving, and dispose all in trash barrel near ramp, or on dry land away from lake. All state and federal safe boating rules and regulations must be adhered to. The West Brookfield Police, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the Lake Wickaboag Harbormaster all have the authority to enforce all lake and beach rules.

### Quaboag River

The Quaboag River runs through the heart of West Brookfield. As a piece of a larger river system, the river heads at Quaboag Pond and flows west, running through Warren down to Palmer and connecting to the mouth of the Three Rivers system. The river boasts canoeing and water sports opportunities. Over the years, the town has undertaken significant work on river trails. Additionally, community outreach efforts undertaken as part of the 2011 OSRP and this plan have identified continued community interest in establishing kayak and canoe landings along the river.

### Wickaboag Sportsmen's Club Property

The Wickaboag Sportsmen's Club rents space in a Town-owned facility located at 89 New Braintree Road. **The Sportsmen's Club is a 44-acre tract with limited protection and is not publicly accessible.** **Sportsmen's Club** members gain access to this site via a gated entrance on New Braintree Road. The Club is focused on outdoor recreation and education with emphases on hunting, shooting, and fishing. The club has been involved with an educational program at the Elementary School for the last seven years.

## Inventory of Open Space

### Regional Open Space

The amount of open space lands as designated by the available MassGIS datalayer shows a number of contiguous open space lands in towns adjacent to West Brookfield. In particular, there are wide spans of open space in Brookfield in close proximity to the Quaboag Wildlife Management Area. Additionally, there are a number of open space lands in Warren and Ware that are adjacent to the Coy Hill region of West Brookfield. These areas of open space create the potential for linkages of protected lands that could be used for both recreational and wildlife habitat protection.

### Land Protected from Development

Protected land owned by the Town and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in West Brookfield totals approximately 1,918 acres, and although it is entirely possible for governmental agencies to remove land from public ownership, this scenario is unlikely and would require considerable public scrutiny if proposed. Public land is identified by State land use codes to differentiate between the level of government that owns the property: Commonwealth of Massachusetts (901), Counties (902) and Municipalities (903). These codes are helpful when **reviewing assessor's records.**

In addition to publicly held parcels, privately owned land may also be protected from development. Examples of private non-profit conservation entities include The Trustees of Reservations, who own and manage the Rock House Reservation and Lucy Stone site (159 acres). The Rock House Reservation is a 135-acre parcel of forest and wetland, which is owned and maintained by the Trustees of Reservations. It is one of 96 properties operated by the Trustees.

Beyond privately held land, less than fee interests in land can keep land in an open state in perpetuity. For example, a property owner might be willing to sell or donate a conservation easement or restriction, which would prevent future development on the land. As is true in most places, this land is preserved but not available for public access. The use of these easements and restrictions is helpful in maintaining community character.

**Table 4-2 Public (Non-Profit) Open Space Lands**

Public (Non-Profit) Open Space Lands					
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Site Purpose	Public Access	Protection Level	Size (GIS Acres)
Lucy Stone Home Site	Massachusetts Land Conservation Trust	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	4.26
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	9.07
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	45.05
Rock House Reservation	The Trustees of Reservations	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	7.44
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	1.50
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	72.97
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	50.03
Pynchons Grist Mill CR	East Quabbin Land Trust	Conservation	Limited	Perpetuity	42.55
<b>Total Size</b>					<b>232.89</b>

### Town Owned Land

Permanently protected Town lands include Conservation Commission holdings (approximately 251 acres) the Town Beach, cemetery, the Wickaboag Sportsmen’s Club, and water supply lands. Town-owned open space lands total approximately 272 acres. Several parcels present hiking and natural trails opportunities and should be considered for further investigation. Table 4-3 below describes the listing of state-owned lands and its accessibility and protection levels.





**Table 4-3 Town-owned Open Space and Recreation Lands**

Town-owned Open Space and Recreation Lands							
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Location	Site Purpose	Protect Status	Public Access	Lot Size	Notes
Ellis Property	Conservation Commission	20 Foster Hill Road	Conservation	Y	Y	5.4	Large amount of wetlands that could potentially be used for a nature study.
Ellis Property	Conservation Commission	14 Foster Hill Road	Conservation	Y	Y	2.15	
Howlett Property	Conservation Commission	20 Wickaboag Valley Road	Conservation	Y	Y	35	Although only a small portion of this property is not wetland, it provides hiking and nature trail study opportunities.
Dunham Tract	Water Dept	28 Ware Point Road					
Dunham Tract	Conservation Commission	31 Ware Point Road	Conservation	Y	Y	2.21	Hiking and nature trails opportunities
Corner of Snow Road/ Wickaboag Valley Road	Conservation Commission	166 Wickaboag Valley Road	Conservation	Y	Y	48	
Old Gas station (Gin Smith Inc.)	Conservation Commission	667 West Main Street at Ware line	Conservation	Y	Y	25	
Magnante/ Greelish property (former)	Conservation Commission	167 Wigwam Road	Conservation		Y	19.22	
Town Cemetery	Cemetery Commission	41 Church Street	Conservation Recreation	Y	Y	16	
Wickaboag Sportsmen's Club Property	Conservation Commission	89 New Braintree Road	Recreation	Limited	N	44.6	Public access via remote road, and used for hiking, scouting, hunting, and nature study.
West Brookfield Elementary School	West Brookfield Elementary School	89 North Main Street	Recreation	Y	Y	20.83	
Town Beach	Recreation Committee	12 Lakeview Ave	Recreation	Y	Y	6.8	Water based recreation opportunities.
Town Sanitary Landfill	Board of Health	74, 84 & 88 Wigwam Road	Utility/ Municipal Use	N/A	Y	47.06	Possible potential use since the landfill is closed and covered.
<b>Total Town-owned Lands</b>						<b>272.27</b>	

## Water Department and Public Works Lands

The Town Water Department maintains 19.1 acres on Leland and Ware Point Roads to protect the Town's Watershed. These holdings are meant to protect the current and future water supply and are protected from future development, but are not open to the public. The Board of Health owns 45 acres of land for the Town Landfill. Since the landfill is closed and capped, the potential exists for use of the site. The Cemetery Commission owns the 16-acre Town Cemetery, which has public access. The Recreation Committee owns the 6.8-acre Town Beach, which is open to the public as a bathing beach.

## State Owned Lands

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns roughly 1,647 acres of land in West Brookfield. These lands are largely owned by the State Department of Fish and Game, which manages approximately 1,428 acres, while 218 acres are managed by the Department of Conservation. The West Brookfield State Forest, located on Birch Hill Road, is comprised of approximately 143 acres and provides community members with hiking and nature study opportunities. Table 4-4 below describes the listing of state-owned lands and its accessibility and protection levels. Between 2011 and 2017, there has been a slight increase in overall state-owned lands. The DFG nearly doubled the amount of lands it manages in Town during this time period, while the amount of DCR-owned lands decreased from approximately 600 acres to 218 acres.

**Table 4-4 State-owned Open Space Lands**

State-owned Open Space Lands						
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Location	Site Purpose	Public Access	Protect Status	Size (GIS Acres)
Coy Hill WMA	Dept. of Fish and Game	466 West Main St.	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	660.44
Richardson WMA	Dept. of Fish and Game	0,25,41,49 George Allen Rd.	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	33.52
Whortleberry Hill WMA	Dept. of Fish and Game	264 and 289, Wickaboag Valley Rd; 147 Madden Rd	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	332.61
Quaboag River WMA	Dept. of Fish and Game	106, 130, 146 Long Hill Rd.	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	401.72
Sucker Brook Flood Control Site	DCR - Division of State Parks and Recreation	226 Shea Rd.	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	69.54
Lamberton Brook Flood Control Site	DCR - Division of State Parks and Recreation	53 Old Warren Road	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	5.81
West Brookfield State Forest	DCR - Division of State Parks and Recreation	134 Birch Hill Road	Recreation and Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	142.96
<b>State-owned Open Space Total Size</b>						<b>1,646.61</b>

## Conservation Restrictions

A conservation restriction (CR) is a permanent deed restriction, recorded with the Registry of Deeds that binds all current and future owners of the property placed under a CR. The conservation restriction (or easement) is a restriction to particular specified uses or from development. The restriction runs with the land and is recorded in a deed instrument. Conservation Restrictions can be placed on a parcel of land for a specified number of years or in perpetuity. This restriction identifies the **property's important ecological features and the public benefit derived from preserving the natural condition of the land.** This tool aims to retain the property in its natural state or in agricultural, farming, or forest use; to permit public recreation; or to restrict development activities. The property owner retains ownership of the land and may sell or pass on the preserved land with all restrictions in place. Any title search of a property will reveal the existence of a CR and all future owners will be bound by it. Conservation restrictions, sometimes called development restrictions, must be granted voluntarily, however, the Conservation Commission and/or Planning Board can encourage this mechanism as a way of maintaining privately owned land in a natural state. When a landowner places a property under a CR, he or she has permanently protected that property and ensured that the CR last **forever, legally known as "in perpetuity."** The restrictions placed on the property through the CR allow the landowner to determine how the property will be used into the future. The CR allows the property owner to retain title, pass the property on to heirs or even sell the property.

A landowner can determine which part(s) of their property would be restricted in the future by the easement. It is quite possible, or even common, to withhold some land (i.e. 1-2 building lots for children from the easement, and yet protect the remainder of the property from development (this is an example of conservation-based development). The details of what rights are restricted and what are permitted, and where these restrictions will apply, are worked out between the landowner and the holder of the easement when drafting the CR. In addition to knowing the property will remain protected against development, the owner can derive tax benefits from the CR. These can include reduction of federal income taxes (if the CR is donated), reduction of estate or inheritance taxes, and possible deduction in real estate taxes. Detailed guidelines on how to apply for a CR and the related requirements are included in Appendix M4.



There are currently six (6) parcels in West Brookfield that contain conservation restrictions, totaling 322 acres of permanently protected conservation land. The majority of land is managed by private owners, however the Lucy Stone Home Site is managed by the State Land Conservation Trust and the East Quabbin Land Trust holds a 43-acre CR at Pynchon’s Grist Mill. The majority of lands in this category provide public access to some degree with the exception of three (3) privately-owned sites, one of which is designated for conservation and recreational purposes. Table 4-5 shows an inventory of permanently protected conservation lands in town. Since the completion of the OSRP, two (2) additional conservation restrictions were granted including the Lucy Stone Home Site and the DeWolf CR.

**Table 4-5 Open Space Lands with Conservation Restriction (CR)**

Open Space Lands with Conservation Restriction (CR)						
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Owner Type	Site Purpose	Public Access	Protect Status	Size (Lot Size)
Lucy Stone Home Site	Massachusetts Land Conservation Trust	Land Trust	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	4.26
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	9.07
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	45.05
Pynchons Grist Mill CR	East Quabbin Land Trust	Land Trust	Conservation	Limited	Perpetuity	42.55
Groeppe CR	Groeppe Kenneth and Genevieve F	Private (for profit)	Conservation	No	Perpetuity	37.71
DeWolf CR	Dewolf NT	Private (for profit)	Conservation	No	Perpetuity	85.28
Taylor CR	Taylor Jane	Private (for profit)	Recreation Conservation	No	Perpetuity	46.35
Fullam CR	Fullam Walter F	Private (for profit)	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	1.18
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	1.53
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	31.86
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	17.31
<b>Total CR Lands</b>						<b>322.2</b>

## Agricultural Preservation Restrictions

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program allows for farmland to be protected from future development. An APR is a specific type of Conservation Restriction that is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. The APR program pays farmers the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction, which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. Established by the Legislature in 1977, this program is the cornerstone of the **Commonwealth's** farmland Protection efforts. This voluntary program which is intended to offer a non-development alternative to farmland owners of "prime" and "state important" agricultural land who are faced with a decision regarding future use and disposition of their farms. Towards this end, the program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farms in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. The main objective of the APR program is to protect productive farmland through the purchase of deed restrictions and revitalize the agricultural industry by making land more affordable to farmers and their operations more financially secure. Detailed guidelines on how to apply for an APR and the related requirements are included in Appendix M1.

**WEST BROOKFIELD 2017 MASTER PLAN**  
**CMRPC**  
**Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission**

**The Agriculture Preservation Restriction (APR) Program**

The Agriculture Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, established by the Legislature in 1977 and administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, is the cornerstone of the State's farmland Protection efforts. This voluntary program which is intended to offer a non-development alternative to farmland owners of "prime" and "state important" agricultural land who are faced with a decision regarding future use and disposition of their farms. Towards this end, the program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farms in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. The main objective of the APR program is to protect productive farmland through the purchase of deed restrictions and revitalize the agricultural industry by making land more affordable to farmers and their operations more financially secure. Specifically the program seeks to:

- Save the best and most productive agricultural land remaining in the Commonwealth;
- Provide an opportunity for farmers to purchase farmland at affordable prices;
- Help farmland owners overcome estate planning and other personal issues such as age, health and retirement;
- Provide working capital for farm operations by releasing equity "locked-up" in land values;
- To develop a positive attitude among farmers, agribusiness, landowners, and urban residents that agriculture in Massachusetts makes an important contribution to the state's economy, food supply, and rural character.

When other program objectives are met, to protect scenic open space and environmentally sensitive lands.

Source: The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

There are presently 5 Agricultural Preservation Restrictions in the Town of West Brookfield, totaling approximately 966 acres. In 2011, there were three (3) APRS in town, totally an estimate of 813 acres (OSRP 2011). Between 2011 and 2017, residents acquired three (3) properties in town for enrollment into the APR program, totaling an additional 153 acres of protected farm land.

These properties include the Walker Farm along New Braintree Road. Table 4-6 shows an inventory of permanently protected agricultural lands in town, all of which are managed by private (for profit) owners. The majority of these properties do not offer public access with the exception of the Kibbe APR which provides limited access.



**Table 4-6 Open Space Lands with Agricultural Preservation Restriction**

Open Space Lands with Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)					
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Owner Type	Public Access	Protect Status	Lot Size
<b>Richardson Farm</b>	Richardson Milton C and Charlotte R	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	58.77
	Richardson Milton C and Charlotte R	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	74.21
	Richardson Milton C and Charlotte R	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	3.00
	Richardson Milton C and Charlotte R	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	6.11
<b>Dorman APR</b>	Dorman Richard C and Dorothy Benedict	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	39.36
<b>Fountain</b>	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	32.56
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	3.49
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	17.55
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	19.67
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	4.44
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	64.44
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	30.81
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	1.00
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	27.46
<b>DeQuattro APR</b>	DeQuattro Pasco N and Sandra L	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	108.09
	DeQuattro Pasco N and Sandra L	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	133.81
<b>Walker Farms APR</b>	Walker Farms LLC	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	51.31
<b>Edwards APR</b>	Edwards George L and Hanna S	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	21.57
<b>DeQuattro APR</b>	DeQuattro Pasco N and Sandra L	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	5.64
	DeQuattro Pasco N and Sandra L	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	17.74
<b>Kibbe APR</b>	Kibbe Corydon W and Nancy N	Private (for profit)	Limited	Perpetuity	17.66
	Kibbe Corydon W and Nancy N	Private (for profit)	Limited	Perpetuity	52.80
	Kibbe Corydon W and Nancy N	Private (for profit)	Limited	Perpetuity	174.30
<b>Total APR Lands</b>					<b>965.8</b>

### Lands Not Protected from Development

Private open lands can be offered various levels of protection. The designation of private parcels as Forest lands (Chapter 61), Farm lands (Chapter 61A), or Private Recreation lands (Chapter 61B) restricts the use of land in exchange for significant reduction in taxes. Lands that are taxed under the exemptions allowed by M.G.L. Chapters 61, 61A, or 61B have extremely limited protection because it can be taken out of the program if the owner sell the property or if the owner changes their mind.

Should the owner decide to sell the property and take it out of restricted status, the Town has the right of first refusal to purchase the land. This right of first refusal lasts up to a year after removal from the Chapter programs. Land may be taken out of Chapter 61, 61A or 61B classification by notifying the Town and paying a withdrawal penalty tax. However, such land may not be sold for, or converted to, residential, commercial or industrial use while taxed under the classification without written notification of the municipality in which it is located. The Town has 120 days to exercise its right of first refusal option to purchase the land. Should this time period pass and/or the town states in writing that it will not act on its option, the land may be developed for alternative use(s), removing it from its "open" status as forest, farm or recreation land.

According to the 2011 OSRP, there were approximately 3,578 acres of total Chapter Lands (or 89 parcels). Between 2013 and 2014, West Brookfield acquired 99 total parcels of Chapter Lands which increased to 101 parcels in 2015, but later declined to 65 properties in 2016. Currently, there are 1,809 acres of land in West Brookfield that are classified as temporarily protected under this tax abatement program (or 64 total parcels), a significant decrease compared to the 2011 Land Inventory. The following section describes each type of Chapter Lands in Town.

### Chapter 61 Forest Lands

Forest Lands require a minimum of ten contiguous acres under a minimum 10-year management plan certified by the State Forester. Once the application has been received and approved, the classification statement functions as a lien upon the land for taxes levied under the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 61.

The landowner must refile every ten years or the land shall be removed from classification by the Town Assessor. A much-reduced property tax is payable once per year during the management period. Currently there are about 996 acres of land classified as Chapter 61 Forest Lands. Of that total, 322 acres are permanently protected from development through a Conservation Restriction held by a Land Trust or private for-profit conservation organization. Table 4-7 describes the inventory of lands in the Chapter 61 Program and the locations of the lands are depicted on the Open Space Inventory Map (see Appendix N34).

The infographic features logos for West Brookfield 2017 Master Plan, CMRPC (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission), and the State of Massachusetts. It includes a photograph of a tree and text explaining that the program provides preferential tax treatment for landowners who maintain their property as open space for timber production, agriculture, or recreation. It details that Chapter 61 is for forestland, Chapter 61A for agricultural land, and Chapter 61B for recreational land. A section titled 'Lowering Taxes' states that forestland is taxed at the same rate as other properties but based on its productive potential for growing trees rather than market value. It also notes that values are set annually by the Farm Land Advisory Committee and that Chapter 61B uses a 25% assessed value for tax calculation.

Source: The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

**Table 4-7 Chapter 61 Forest Lands in West Brookfield**

Chapter 61 Forest Lands in West Brookfield			
Site Location	Site Owner	Lot Size	Protect Status
35 LONG HILL RD	BENOIT RONALD	2.07	N
11 WARFIELD RD	BENOIT RONALD	2.57	N
19 WARFIELD RD	BENOIT RONALD	68.68	N
180 TUCKER ROAD	BENSON GORDON L	120	N
0 OFF WICKABOAG VLY RD	BENSON GORDON L	11.32	N
123 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON GORDON L	10.16	N
148 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON GORDON L	9	N
164 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON GORDON L	37	N
0 OFF WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON ROBERT E	4.22	N
0 OFF WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON ROBERT E	10.25	N
196 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON ROBERT E	36.21	N
114 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON ROBERT E	13.07	N
125 LONG HILL RD	DEWOLF GORDON P JR	92.92	N
199 RAGGED HILL ROAD	GRIFFITHS DANIEL J	83.59	N
159 NORTH MAIN STREET	GROEPPE KENNETH H & GENEVIEVE F	36	N
134 TUCKER ROAD	LUCIER RONALD D	30.95	N
234 WICKABOAG VLY RD	MCREVEY AGNES	8	N
0 OFF WIGWAM ROAD	NYE KENNETH C	16.76	N
379 WICKABOAG VLY RD	PHILLIPS CARL J	42.91	N
386 WICKABOAG VLY RD	PHILLIPS CARL J	13.18	N
52 GEORGE ALLEN ROAD	POST ROAD REALTY, INC	21.34	N
1 BRIDGES ROAD	ROBBINS JEFFREY R	81.12	N
55 PROUTY ROAD	ST CYR CHRISTINE M	95	N
70 COY HILL RD	SULLIVAN EDWARD F LLC	33.36	N
18 BEEMAN ROAD	SULLIVAN EDWARD F LLC	56.45	N
209 RAGGED HILL ROAD	TAYLOR JANE P	3.396	N
213 RAGGED HILL ROAD	TAYLOR JANE P REVOCABLE TRUST	47.713	N
199 TUCKER ROAD	THOMAS-VITRAC DOROTHEA	8.8	N
<b>Total Forest Lands</b>		<b>996.039</b>	

### Chapter 61A Farm Lands

Farm land requires a minimum of five (5) contiguous acres "actively devoted" to agricultural or horticultural use. These classifications include animals, fruits, vegetables, and forest products. To qualify as "actively devoted" a minimum of 500 dollars in gross sales income during the prior two years is required. One must apply to the Town Board of Assessors for consideration, and the status must be renewed every year. A reduced property tax is applied if approved. There are approximately 2,203 acres of land classified under Chapter 61A Farm Lands in West Brookfield. Of that total, approximately 966 acres is permanently protected from development through an Agricultural Preservation Restriction. Table 4-8 describes the

inventory of lands in the Chapter 61A Program and the locations of the lands are depicted on the Open Space Inventory Map (see Appendix N34).

**Table 4-8 Chapter 61A Farm Lands in West Brookfield**

Chapter 61A Farm Lands in West Brookfield			
Site Location	Site Owner	Lot Size	Protect Status
16 PROUTY ROAD	ANDREWES DAVID A	20.42	Limited
19 RICHARDSON RD	ANGILLY KATHLEEN M	9.97	Limited
0 OFF JOHN GILBERT RD	ARSENAULT KEITH R	5.75	Limited
94 JOHN GILBERT RD	ARSENAULT KEITH R	13.813	Limited
86 JOHN GILBERT RD	ARSENAULT KEITH R	33.058	Limited
29 HUNT ROAD	BENEDICT DOROTHY H	33.29	Limited
50 BIRCH HILL ROAD	BROOKS DAVID W	41.23	Limited
163 PIERCE ROAD	BURNHAM CHARLES M	9.99	Limited
286 WIGWAM ROAD	CALVERLEY SUE B	41.55	Limited
125 NORTH MAIN STREET	COY BROOK LAND TRUST	5.97	Limited
141 NORTH MAIN STREET	COY BROOK LAND TRUST INC	105.4	Limited
150 NORTH MAIN STREET	COY BROOK LAND TRUST INC	163.46	Limited
124 NORTH MAIN STREET	COY BROOK LAND TRUST INC	105.45	Limited
82 HUNT ROAD	DEREMIAN MICHAEL R	38	Limited
96 HUNT ROAD	DIMAIO FAMILY IRREVOCABLE TRUST	40.5	Limited
15 PROUTY ROAD	DORMAN JOHN GARY & JOANNE I	34.33	Limited
49 TUCKER ROAD	DORMAN JOHN GARY & JOANNE I	13.21	Limited
6 RICHARDSON RD	DUCHARME RAYMOND	51.19	Limited
17 OLD W BROOKFIELD RD	EDWARDS JANET M	20.26	Limited
99 RAGGED HILL ROAD	ELA DONALD E	28.12	Limited
167 RAGGED HILL ROAD	GRIFFITHS DANIEL J	8.01	Limited
0 OFF OLD W BRK RD	HANSON DAVID G & JOHN E	1.38	Limited
0 OFF WIGWAM ROAD	HANSON DAVID G & JOHN E	5.33	Limited
0 ALONG QUABOAG RIVER	HONEYBEE FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	3.7	Limited
19 FREIGHT HOUSE ROAD	HONEYBEE FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	51.53	Limited
108 EAST MAIN STREET	HONEYBEE FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	31.55	Limited
107 EAST MAIN STREET	HONEYBEE FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	94	Limited
46 FOSTER HILL RD	HONEYBEY FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	27.4	Limited
11 LYON ROAD	JOHNSON LAWRENCE S	17.92	Limited
233 RAGGED HILL ROAD	JOHNSON LAWRENCE S	58.06	Limited
234 RAGGED HILL ROAD	JOHNSON LAWRENCE S	154.4	Limited
39 WOODS ROAD	LAPIN ELISABETH	33.05	Limited
70 MADDEN ROAD	MCREVEY FAMILY TRUST	9.955	Limited
77 KENNEDY ROAD	MORRELL MELISSA	12.738	Limited
89 KENNEDY ROAD	MORRELL TIMOTHY S	148.6	Limited

84 DAVIS RD	PISARSKI MICHAEL E JR	37.95	Limited
213 LONG HILL RD	SLOBODY ROGER	130.69	Limited
37 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.14	Limited
41 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.14	Limited
17 CUTLER ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	1.4	Limited
9 WEST SHORE ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.53	Limited
3 WEST SHORE ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.8	Limited
51 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	1.88	Limited
22 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.48	Limited
54 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	1.5	Limited
104 RAGGED HILL ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	57.26	Limited
187 WICKABOAG VLY RD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	1.07	Limited
179 WICKABOAG VLY RD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	29.8	Limited
112 RAGGED HILL ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	4.79	Limited
55 CUTLER ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	16.2	Limited
54 CUTLER ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	38.87	Limited
90 RAGGED HILL ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	11.86	Limited
79 FOSTER HILL RD	TOMASINO SUSAN	70.46	Limited
64 FOSTER HILL RD	TOMASINO SUSAN	46	Limited
9 GEORGE ALLEN RD	TOMASINO SUSAN N	7	Limited
0 OFF NEW BRAINTREE RD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	14	Limited
349 NEW BRAINTREE RD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	102.62	Limited
OFF MADDEN ROAD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	45.28	Limited
366 NEW BRAINTREE RD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	45.28	Limited
350 NEW BRAINTREE RD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	60.71	Limited
48 MILLER RD	ZIEMBA LEE A	3.92	Limited
<b>Total Farm Lands</b>		<b>2,203.21</b>	

### Chapter 61 B Private Recreation

Private Recreation land must have a minimum of five acres that is left wild and/or maintained for wildlife habitat or used for recreational purposes by the public or a private non-profit group. One must apply to the Town Board of Assessors for consideration and the status must be renewed every year. A reduced property tax results if approved. The amount of Chapter 61B Recreation Lands in town has grown since the completion of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. There are currently 398 acres of lands in West Brookfield that are classified as Chapter 61B Recreation Lands, compared to 148 acres in 2011. Table 4-9 describes the inventory of lands in the Chapter 61A Program and the locations of the lands are depicted on the Open Space Inventory Map (see Appendix N34).



**Table 4-9 61B Recreation Lands in West Brookfield**

Chapter 61B Recreation Lands in West Brookfield			
Site Location	Site Owner	Lot Size	Protect Status
0 OFF WARE ROAD	DUDULA PETER E.	70.6	Limited
32 BOSTON POST ROAD	FOUNTAIN CLIFFORD G	11.4	Limited
9 OLD BOSTON POST RD	FOUNTAIN CLIFFORD G	1.4	Limited
50 BOSTON POST ROAD	FOUNTAIN CLIFFORD G	82	Limited
31 BOSTON POST ROAD	FOUNTAIN CLIFFORD G	46	Limited
58 JOHN GILBERT RD	HIGHVIEW CAMPGROUND INC	91.32	Limited
57 KENNEDY ROAD	KULARSKI THERESA	53	Limited
7 MILLER RD	TECZAR RICHARD J & JANE	10.55	Limited
207 SHEA ROAD	WILLIAMS CARL D	32.19	Limited
<b>Total Recreational Lands</b>		<b>398.46</b>	

## Environmental Challenges

### Hazardous Waste and Brownfield Sites

According to data maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, there is one property in West Brookfield with a reported Oil and/or Hazardous Material Site with Activity and Use Limitations, as updated by Mass GIS in June 2010. The Brookfield Wire Co., at 231 East Main Street had a reported spill on March 7, 2002. The Mass DEP Tier Classified Oil and Hazardous Material Sites data-layer updated in June 2010 showed no sites in West Brookfield.

### Landfills

West Brookfield has one solid waste facility. **This was formerly known as the “Wigwam Road Landfill” and is now referred to as the Wigwam Road Drop-off Center.** The landfill has been closed for several years and is capped.

### Erosion

There are no widespread erosion problems in West Brookfield; however, ongoing and future development poses a risk by exposing soils. Erosion caused by All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV's) on state-owned recreation land is a concern among local residents on state-owned recreation lands, as well as erosion caused by lot clearing for new development. The Earth Removal Committee issues permits for earth removal based upon limits and standards set forth in a local Earth Removal By-Law passed in 2006. This Committee works in close cooperation with the Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission and/or Stormwater Management Committee as needed.

This comprehensive Earth Removal Bylaw limits amounts of topsoil, earth, sand, gravel or rock that can be disturbed on a per acre basis over a predetermined period of time without permitting. **These limits, coupled with Best Management Practices (BMP's) responds to past and present concerns over development or clearing of forests which stresses the land through soil disturbance. Recommended BMP's include such controls as wetting to avoid dust in windy conditions, immediate placement of loose hay, synthetic matting or seeding with quick-growing grass to stabilize banks and exposed soils, and erosion control barriers such as hay bales and/or siltation fences staked in place to avoid downstream sedimentation.**

## Chronic Flooding

The areas in West Brookfield that are at risk of flooding are those areas near water and **wetlands. Development of lands listed as "Flood Plain" is regulated by the Flood Plain Bylaw.** The lands that are most susceptible to being submerged from a storm event are the Quaboag River shorelands. Other key areas in Town that are under a flood threat are the banks of waters with adjacent wetlands such as the Mill Brook, Sucker Brook and Bradish Brook.

Generally, there is very little development in areas that are at risk of flooding because most of these low and wetlands are unsuitable for building. Areas of development in floodplains that may be more likely to be damaged by floodwaters are along the Quaboag River Valley. The Floodplain Bylaw limits building to the footprints of existing structures. New developments have to be related to agriculture or passive recreation.

## Sedimentation

Sedimentation problems in West Brookfield occur primarily during wet weather and storm conditions. The most flood-prone areas in Town are the floodplains along streams and the Quaboag River, which tend to be eroded when waters rise during heavy rainfall or rainfall coupled with snowmelt. Bank erosion also takes place on a less noticeable level along the shorelines of local ponds. Sedimentation contributes to non-point source pollution in the waterway and causes water quality problems by increasing the suspended solids in the water. The best way to prevent sedimentation is to monitor erosion problems in Town, and adhere to **Best Management Practices (BMP's).** Improvements to many pond and lakeside residential properties in recent years have reduced erosion and sedimentation risks but potentially at the expense of shore habitat. The Town has adopted a Storm Water Authority to control activities which contribute to erosion and runoff.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The issues and opportunities in the following section were identified through a review and analysis of priorities identified in previous reports, current data, as well as needs expressed as part of the Master Plan public outreach efforts. The identification of these issues and opportunities is intended to encourage passive and active recreational opportunities and promote protection of existing open space resources.

### Summary of Public Outreach and Community Events

CMRPC facilitated a breakout group reviewing **strengths and challenges of West Brookfield's** Open Space resources. In general, participants appreciated the extensive open spaces in the town. There were, however, some conflicting opinions over use and access. Much of the open land is private hands and not protected. Additionally, much of the publicly accessible open space is scattered across town, limiting passive and active uses. Many private land holders were concerned about spill-over from abutting public space. Hunting and hiking were noted as particularly troubling encroachments from public space to private. Access was another consistent theme from the breakout conversations. Participants cited a lack of adequate infrastructure for alternative transit modes between open space destinations. Sidewalks in **particular were singled out as either incomplete or inadequate for residents' needs. Similarly,** participants voiced a need for more/improved biking options to and from open space destinations. While most of the infrastructure was identified as adequate for car travel, parking at destinations was noted as either missing or in need of improvement. Participants in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> event identified the following opportunities for capitalizing on their existing open space inventory.

- Solar on landfill
- Indian Trail
- Corset Factory - demolition
- Boat launch - Route 67 and 9 on Quaboag
- Advertise recreational

### Unprotected Unique and Natural Lands

Table 4-10 below describes six (6) unique or natural lands in West Brookfield that are presently unprotected and should be considered for protection. These lands were identified **in both of the Town's 2002 and 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plans**, as well as the 2004 Community Development Plan (CDP). The inventory categorizes the conservation, recreation and significant vacant lands in Town and identifies the name, location, lot area, owner, and includes available details potential uses or conditions. This expansion should be consistent **with the Town's policies towards open space acquisition and community needs.** Each of these key areas are identified and shown on the Open Space Opportunities map (see Appendix N35).

**Table 4-10 Locally Significant Unprotected Unique/Natural Lands**

Locally Significant Unprotected Unique/Natural Lands		
Name	Location	Potential Use and Condition
<b>Ragged Hill</b>	Northwest corner of Town	Nature trails, vistas, hiking, horseback riding are but a few of the potential future uses of the area.
<b>Mill Brook Valley Floodplain</b>	Headwaters are located in the Town of New Braintree in a marsh off the Ware River.	The floodplain potential for passive and active recreation includes the following: playgrounds, field sports, nature study, fishing, hiking, outdoor laboratory study areas, wildlife, and trails for horses and bicycles.
<b>Sucker Brook Drainage Area</b>	Originating in New Braintree, the brook flows south ending at Mill Brook.	Potential exists for its remaining in a natural state as a wildlife protection area. Hiking trails and nature study would be a feasible contribution to enjoy the natural beauty.
<b>Quaboag River</b>	The south bank of the Quaboag River	The south bank will provide opportunities for water resource protection.
<b>Land, within the right of way, at the intersection of rural roadways</b>	Ragged Hill and Wickaboag Valley Road	The land at the intersections of these roads will provide natural open areas.
	The 4 corners of Long Hill Road	
<b>Route 9</b>	Route 9 corridor from Coy Hill Road to the Ware Town line.	This stretch of Route 9 is a very scenic roadway.
<b>Athletic Field across Town Beach</b>	5 Lakeview Avenue	Municipal acquisition of this privately-owned athletic field would provide additional recreational opportunities for all residents, especially youth. The field ~1 mile from the Elementary School, across from the Town Beach, and adjacent to the proposed Old Baypath Indian Trail
<b>Quaboag WMA Trail Network</b>	Southeast corner of Town	Potential exists to connect the Richardson WMA Trail to the proposed Quaboag River Water Trail. Both trails located in or adjacent to the Quaboag WMA, a publicly accessible site.

## Lake Wickaboag

### Development Density

The Five-Year Stormwater Management Plan for West Brookfield, from 1999, identified that **the increased density around Lake Wickaboag has impacted the Lake's water quality.** The 2010 census recorded more than 800 housing units in the area immediately surrounding Lake Wickaboag, though only a small portion of these were recorded as occupied. This difference is explained by the high number of summer residences around the lake. About 4% of the area around the lake is Neighborhood Residential which required a minimum lot size of 45,000 square feet and 175 feet of frontage. Build out analysis conducted as part of this master planning process suggests that more than 250 acres of the land to the west of Lake Wickaboag has development potential; growth in this area could have serious negative impacts on water quality, from septic and run-off into the lake watershed.

### Pollution

The 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan noted that Lake Wickaboag has been classified by the State as eutrophic, the advanced stage of a water body's transformation into a swamp or marsh. High nutrient levels in the lake have likely been caused by nutrient loading from **surrounding development and exacerbated by the lake's shallow depths and long retention time.** There is a current proposal to dredge a portion of the pond to control current sedimentation levels at the northern end of the pond. This plan has been completed by the town and is awaiting funding opportunities.

Another area of concern noted in both the 2011 OSRP and in public comment is the capped landfills along Wigwam Road. This site is located approximately 1,000 ft. from the aquifer that feeds both of the community water supply wells and approximately one mile from Lake Wickaboag. The 2011 plan encouraged the town to monitor this site periodically to ensure the safety of the town's current water supply. The town should continue to pursue this goal.

### Recreation and Use

**Lake Wickaboag provides much of West Brookfield's recreation opportunities.** Lake Wickaboag is heavily used for boating, fishing and swimming by both the town residents and surrounding communities.

The **Town Beach is West Brookfield's primary water based recreation site and the Recreation Committee** conducts swimming lessons during the summer. There is a public boat launching area on the Lake. There is also a small town-owned beach on the east side of Lake Wickaboag. Though water quality of the lake has improved in the past decade it continues to be monitored and improvements in storm water drainage and septic systems around the lake are encouraged. If these pollution problems get worse, the Town has indicated that it will limit the available use of its primary recreation destination.

Participants in the community outreach events also expressed concern about the current regulations around motorized boating, especially concerning non-resident use. Participants felt enforcement was not as robust as they would like it, saying that too many non-residents were utilizing the lake during the summer months.



The town relies on a combination of agencies to enforce use regulations at the lake. According to rules posted by the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association on their website, **the “West Brookfield Police, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the Lake Wickaboag Harbormaster all have the authority to enforce all lake and beach rules.”**<sup>2</sup> The Town should **take active measures to verify resident’s claim of over-use** by non-residents. Such measures could include requesting the Harbor Master, town police, LWPA or some combination thereof, to monitor the number of out-of-state boaters

## Brookhaven Pond

Brookhaven Pond is an approximately 34 acre pond located on the north side of Route 9 in the western portion of the town. The area is comprised largely of small single family homes and cottages. More the 60 acres of land have been identified as potentially developable around Brookhaven pond. This area is currently zoned Rural Residential. The minimum lot size in this district is 90,000 square feet, with 225 feet of frontage. These dimensional requirements limit the **development potential of the area. This being said, the area’s proximity to Route 9, and scenic nature of the area increases the potential desirability of the available land.** With all new development comes increased potential for runoff and nutrient loading subsequent to septic system use and stormwater runoff.

## Current and Future Demand

Responses to community outreach activities indicated that demand is high among residents **for passive and active recreational activities in West Brookfield’s open spaces.** Survey responses showed that 85% of participants utilized the Town Beach at Lake Wickaboag and 86% utilized recreational opportunities at Rock House Reserve. More than half of participants **engaged in some kind of recreational activity at the town’s major water bodies.** Regarding future needs, respondents cited cycling, walking, hiking trails and kayaking facilities among the top needs. In sum, residents indicated a strong preference for more and more accessible recreational opportunities in town. This strongly suggests that demand for these opportunities will remain high in the immediate future.

## Trail Network

Among the issues most commonly cited by residents is the scatter-shot nature of the existing publicly accessible parcels. Improving connections for walking and biking between these parcels was a key goal for many residents. The Conservation Commission has been highly active in identifying priority parcels for town purchase and preservation. The Town should continue to work with the Commission and other organizations to expand the existing walking paths and hiking opportunities in Town to accommodate both leisurely and more advanced hiker and bikers, as well as to prevent overcrowding during peak season. Map 4-11 shows existing and potential trail connections.

<sup>2</sup> Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association website: <http://www.lakewickaboag.com/index/#/new-page-3/>



## Private Athletic Field across Town Beach

Across the street from the Town Beach is a privately-owned athletic field located at 5 Lake View Avenue. Due to its location and close proximity to nearby amenities and resources, municipal acquisition of this approximately 2-acre field would provide additional recreational opportunities for residents, particularly youth. The field is about 1 mile from the West Brookfield Elementary School, and is adjacent to Lake Wickaboag as well as the proposed Old Baypath Indian Trail. According to the Town's Assessors Records, the site was sold for \$250,000 in 1991 and its current value is \$57,800.

West Brookfield should explore the possibility of and consider a change in ownership of the privately-owned athletic field to the West Brookfield Department of Public Works. The parcel is depicted on the Open Space Opportunities map (see Appendix N35) and displays linkages to nearby amenities and recreational opportunities.

**Privately owned recreational field**



## Recreational Opportunities for Youth

The Community Forums and surveys conducted as part of the 2011 OSRP and 2017 Master Plan indicate that there is a strong desire for additional recreation opportunities for younger residents. Some additional suggestions that resulted from the public forums and surveys were additional ballfields, a public swimming location, additional hiking trails, and a trail map for recreation purposes. An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Inventory Assessment of the West Brookfield Elementary School (WBES) as part of the 2011 OSRP revealed the following findings:

- There are two main access issues at the outdoor recreational facilities. The first is access to the baseball diamonds which are located down a slope from the parking areas. The second issue regards viewing bleachers which do not accommodate individuals with disabilities. Viewing areas for the upper soccer field can be easily made accessible, viewing areas for the second and third soccer fields will require extensive new paving and some regarding.
- Proposed improvements to remove architectural barriers include a ramp down to the baseball diamonds, paved areas adjacent to bleachers for viewers with disabilities +C42, and additional paved walkways to allow access to additional areas.

# GOALS AND ACTIONS – OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

1. *Create a permanently standing Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee to steer the development of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update*
  - a. Employ a full-time planner to maintain day-to-day operations and communications
  - b. Continue to work with the Conservation Commission and Stormwater Authority to prioritize remaining and ongoing action items identified in the 2011 OSRP
  - c. Facilitate agreements with developers to preserve open space and provide recreational facilities
  - d. Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas
  
2. *Identify priority open space parcels for permanent protection and/or future acquisition in order to establish a wider, more connected open space network*
  - a. Promote the preservation of important land resources
  - b. Coordinate the permanent protection and acquisition of the areas identified in the 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan as unprotected **“Unique or Natural Lands”**
  - c. Encourage the use of Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B to maintain lands identified as priority conservation parcels
  - d. Identify key privately-owned open space parcels (including those with limited public access) and seek change in ownership to allow for increased recreational opportunities for residents
  - e. Purchase lands that are withdrawn from Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B through the process of first right of refusal, then place a permanent restriction on them to maintain their existing use
  - f. Acquire a change in ownership of the Town-owned lands along Route 9 to the Conservation Commission
  
3. ***Promote the preservation of West Brookfield’s surface and groundwater as an important source for wildlife and recreational use***
  - a. Take actions to improve the water quality for recreational activities on Lake Wickaboag and Brookhaven Pond
  - b. Take active measures to verify residents’ claim of over-use by non-residents
  - c. Collect data about watershed quality on an annual basis
  - d. Identify areas of contamination and pollution loads

- e. Increase resident understanding of current water quality issues at Lake Wickaboag and their effects on recreational opportunities
  - f. Mitigate non-point source pollution runoff into rivers and lakes
  - g. Continue to monitor septic systems failures near well sites and within known aquifer areas, and in homes upgradient of Lake Brookhaven, Lake Wickaboag and tributaries to these lakes.
  - h. Continue to monitor bacteria and algae problems evident in Lake Wickaboag and provide viable solutions.
4. *Actively pursue funding through grants, state matching funds, or other programs for land purchase, resource preservation, and rehabilitation of existing facilities*
- a. Identify key priority recreation areas in need of upgrade, repair, or maintenance
  - b. Seek application of the Community Preservation Act to facilitate protection of conservation lands
  - c. Seek application of the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant to allow the development of a new public outdoor recreation facility or park
  - d. Seek application of the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grant to provide additional passive recreational opportunities
  - e. Continue to apply for the 604(b) Water Quality Management Grant to preserve the quality of the lake and the surrounding areas
5. *Enhance recreational opportunities and open space resources by encouraging multiple uses and by creating linkages between open space and recreational properties*
- a. **Enhance West Brookfield's natural environment** by taking advantage of local and regional linkages of open space in the creation of greenways
  - b. Create a strategic prioritization plan for preserving certain key parcels within the Route 9/67 corridor
  - c. Provide additional passive and active recreational opportunities for all residents
    - i. Increase opportunities for passive recreation such as community gardens, walking and biking trails throughout town, and activities at the Town Beach. **Create Devil's Elbow trail.**
    - ii. Increase opportunities for active recreation for youth through additional ballfields, additional hiking and biking opportunities on selected trails, a public swimming pool, playgrounds, and summer recreational programs
    - iii. Work with public and private landowners to identify a potential, designated area for off-road, dirt bike activities for residents



6. *Increase educational awareness and understanding of State-aid programs and local regulations and bylaws amongst community members*
  - a. Develop an education campaign or program to build awareness of the pollutants affecting Lake Wickaboag and best practices
    - i. Continue to instruct the public on non-pollutive land and water practices
  - b. Educate the public about the adopted scenic roads bylaw and the environmental impacts on local open space resources
  - c. Increase public understanding of the Community Preservation Act in regards to land acquisition through tax title takings

# Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources





# INTRODUCTION



Natural and cultural resource management is critical to the protection, restoration, and promotion of scenic landscapes and historical treasures. The landscape in West Brookfield is a reflection of **the community's rural status and agrarian history**, largely characterized by a wide array of scenic landscapes including numerous drumlins, farmlands, water resources, and the Quaboag River Valley. The Town also

contains sites of cultural and historical importance, and its residents, including volunteers, have actively sought to highlight and protect them. Throughout the years, the picturesque Town Common has more or less retained its place as the cultural heart of the town. Located in the Town Center Historic District, **West Brookfield's** Common serves as the main location for community activities and leisure enjoyment. The Common hosts many of the most important cultural events in town including the Asparagus Festival, Flower Heritage Festival, and White Christmas. A clear consensus exists that preserving and enhancing these resources will contribute to maintaining the character of West Brookfield and the overall quality of life. However, especially for structures and land uses along the Route 9/67 corridor, the Town Center, and the General Zoning District, adequate regulations to ensure protection and enforcement of these core values do not currently exist. Central to the development of this chapter is preserving the Town's character and rich agricultural history while protecting its natural and cultural resources.

## Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Residents of West Brookfield have been actively engaged in the planning for the protection and preservation of vital land resources for many years now. Some of the past town planning efforts include:

### Community Development Plan (2004)

This report was prepared by the Community Development Planning Committee to guide the **Town's future growth. Assistance was provided to the Committee under Executive Order 418**, which supplies guidance and funding for the preparation of Community Development Plans (CDP). The four (4) elements addressed by the CDP included open space and resource protection, housing, economic development, and transportation. The 2004 West Brookfield CDP identified the preservation of **West Brookfield's rural character, open spaces** and environmental quality as goal towards natural resource protection. The CDP also identified five (5) objectives to meet this goal, including

- Protect the health of lakes and brooks in Town
- **Protect the Town's water supplies**
- Preserve the Quaboag River Valley landscape between Route 9 and the River

- Protect scenic views
- Create greenway trails both within town and connecting with greenways in surrounding towns

### Reconnaissance Report, Heritage Landscape Inventory (2008)

This report identified and prioritized the landscapes that embody the community’s character and its history. The report was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and its regional partners, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), including members of the Town’s Historical Commission. Recommendations include the potential for Smart Growth Zoning adoption, Local Historic District designation, and pursuit of additional protective measures on important natural and cultural areas through Conservation Restrictions and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions. The 2008 Reconnaissance Report identified three (3) primary goals for preservation of **West Brookfield’s heritage landscapes**, including:

- Adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA)
- Adoption of a Demolition Delay Bylaw
- Establish a Local Historic District (LHD) for the West Brookfield Center Historic District, and include the Western Railroad Depot Area

### Open Space and Recreation Plan (2011)

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (**OSRP**) provides an overview and analysis of the Town’s significant natural and scenic resources, inventory of conservation and recreation lands, and concrete steps to improve open space and recreation opportunities. This plan was approved by the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) in 2011 and requires an Update in 2018. Recommended objectives include water resource and land protection, preservation of the rural character, increased outreach and education, and developing connections between existing networks and already protected lands. The 2011 OSRP identified nine (9) goals for the protection and promotion of open space and recreational resources, including:

- Promote the preservation of **West Brookfield’s important water resources**
- Promote the preservation of the important land resources in West Brookfield
- Provide recreational opportunities for all West Brookfield residents
- Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas of West Brookfield
- Promote opportunities for the linkage of **West Brookfield’s open space**
- Increase educational awareness regarding resources
- Use regulations to balance development with the preservation of open space
- Promote preservation of **West Brookfield’s community character**
- Promote the protection of Agricultural Lands within West Brookfield

## Commissions and Active Groups

### Historical Commission

The Historical Commission is made up of a 7 member board advocating for preservation, promotion, and development of local historical assets. The group identifies priority sites for preservation, promotes public education of local history, and develops National and State Register of Historic Places nominations for approval. Most recently in 2016, the Historical Commission coordinated the completion of Phase 2 conservation of 32 gravestones in the Old Indian Cemetery. Other activities include: tours of historic sites, participation in the annual Asparagus and Flower Heritage Festivals, development of promotional materials, and hosting auctions of locally historic items. The Commission Meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the Historical Commission Office in Town Hall.

### Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is comprised of a 7-member board tasked with the protection **and promotion of the Town's natural and watershed resources through review of permits, site visits, and meetings** regarding the enforcement of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act. The Conservation Commission also reviews Forest Cutting Plans in order to notify local Board members about forest management activities. Currently the Commission manages an estimated 251 acres of permanently protected open space lands in Town. Commission meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month.

### Agricultural Commission

The Agricultural Commission is a 7-member group that encourages the pursuit of agriculture and the protection of farmland in town. The Commission functions as facilitators for sustaining the rural essence of the community while promoting agriculture and agricultural-based economic opportunities in the Town.

### Cultural (Grants) Commission

The Cultural (Grants) Commission is a 7-member board that promotes cultural and local heritage activities in the community, primarily serving youth and seniors. The Commission also distributes grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Coalition and works with other relevant groups to plan for the Asparagus and Flower Heritage Festivals.

### White Christmas Committee

The White Christmas Committee consists of a 4-member board tasked with organizing the annual White Christmas celebration. The event includes a tree lighting on the Town Common, a concert in the Town Hall, carolers strolling around town, craft shows, and horse drawn hayrides around the common. The Committee also coordinates with residents in the area and nearby businesses and churches to participate in the celebration by providing refreshments and free raffles, or decorating their homes and buildings with white lights. The daylong event typically begins at 11:00 AM and ends around 8:00 PM with the Christmas Concert. The Committee usually meets in the fall prior to December to plan for the daylong celebration.



## Asparagus & Flower Heritage Festival Committee

The Asparagus & Flower Heritage Festival Committee consists of a 5-member group that organizes and publicizes annual festivals in town. The Committee's most significant event is the Annual Asparagus & Flower Heritage Festival, co-sponsored by the West Brookfield Historical Commission and the Quaboag Historical Society. Held each May on the Town Common, the event is aimed to celebrate local heritage. The event typically includes more than 100 vendors, non-profit organizations, and exhibitors. Events included the Frog Jumping Contest, **kids' games, Face Painting, Clowning for Kidz, Crafts by Country Bank and Spencer Bank**, a Story Walk by the Library and equipment from the Fire Department. The Committee meets between September and June every Monday night in the Town Hall.

## Common Committee

The Common Committee consists of a 4-member board tasked with overseeing and coordinating events on the Town Common. Numerous activities and town events are held on the Common throughout the year including the Asparagus Festival, Congregational Church Tag Sale, White Christmas, and weekly summer band concerts. The group also helps coordinate **the local farmer's market**, and oversees the maintenance of trees and the Rice Memorial Fountain on the Common. The Committee meets on the last Wednesday of every month.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Brookfield's **unique landscape** history is reflective of its rural location and heritage. **The Town's** distance from major metropolitan areas has allowed the community to preserve its rural assets and maintain a small town charm with its sparsely developed hillsides. West Brookfield is characterized by a wide variety of scenic landscapes including six (6) major hills, farmland, Lake Wickaboag and its tributaries, Brookhaven Lake, and the meandering Quaboag River Valley.



The marshland associated with the Quaboag River is expansive and spans across an estimated 280 acres within the town limits. Several areas with large rock outcrops include Rock House Reservation, Coy Hill, and Ragged Hill. Each of these areas has geologic features relating to glacial activity as evidenced by significant glacial erratics or scoured outcroppings. These natural features provide scenic outlooks over forest and agricultural lands, as well as extensive wildlife habitats such as those within the Quaboag Wildlife Management Area and the Coy Hill Wildlife Management Area.

West Brookfield has various bylaws in place that **protect the town's** natural and cultural resources including a Town Common Overlay District, Scenic Roads Act, Stormwater Bylaw, and a Flood Plain Zoning Bylaw, which limits development in the designated Flood Plain Zone to agriculture and recreation. West Brookfield passed a revised zoning bylaw in 2007 that encourages Open Space Residential Development and requires site plan review for all development requiring special permits. During the same year, the Town adopted the Right To

Farm Bylaw, promoting the pursuit of agriculture and agriculture-based economic opportunities, and protecting farmlands throughout the community. Farms are defined in the bylaw as **“any parcel or contiguous parcels of land, or water bodies used for the primary purpose of commercial agriculture, or accessory thereto.”** The law allows local farming operations to exist without conflict with abutters and town agencies, thereby establishing the West Brookfield as a farm-friendly community. The combination of these natural lands and protective measures are vital to the rural character that West Brookfield residents are seeking to maintain and enhance. The following section outlines the existing conditions of the town’s natural resources.

## Topography, Geology, Soils

The topography of West Brookfield is defined by a central river valley and the surrounding ridges and hills. The Quaboag River Valley stretches approximately 2.7 miles across town, and the Mill Brook Valley meets the Quaboag River Valley near Lake Wickaboag. The confluence of



river valleys creates the low area where human habitation has generally concentrated in Town. The central low areas are surrounded by ridges, including six (6) major hills: Long Hill, Foster Hill, Wigwam Hill, Whortleberry Hill, Ragged Hill, and Coy Hill. The six (6) major hills are spread throughout town creating an overall undulating topography. Ragged Hill has the highest elevation at 1,206 feet, followed by Coy Hill at 1050 feet. Long Hill reaches 989

feet and Whortleberry Hill is 985 feet. The Quaboag River has the lowest elevation point with an altitude of 590 to 600 feet. This flat slope is characteristic of the central river valley areas that branch out through the town. Some of the steepest slopes in the town are located where the land rises sharply from the valleys and surrounding hills, particularly in the north and west sections of town.

**The origins of West Brookfield’s landscape features may be explained based on their glacial history.** The bedrock underlying West Brookfield was formed during the Paleozoic Era. The landscape was further transformed by glacial erosion and deposition during the Pleistocene Epoch. The giant mass of ice modified the underlying bedrock, shifting and transporting the fragmented material. These glacial deposits form the base of the landscape recognized today. The outcroppings of rock on some ridges and hilltops reflect areas where the ice sheet met high points in the bedrock. However each of the six major hills in town are not bedrock at all, but rather drumlins, or elongated mounds of glacial till. The more gently sloped low areas around Lake Wickaboag consist of material deposited by glacial meltwater containing mostly sand and gravel. Once the glacier fully melted, the Quaboag River formed postglacial alluvial deposits southwest of Lake Wickaboag, and organic material has accumulated in low areas, which has created swamp deposits.

The vast majority of soils in West Brookfield were deposited during periods of glaciation, with a few areas downstream of Lake Wickaboag containing riverine deposits. The predominant glacial till soils located above the valley floors are comprised of fine sandy loams which are **“very” to “extremely” stony.**

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the soils found in West Brookfield can be classified into five General Soil Mapping Units, including Paxton-Woodbridge-Ridgebury, Canton-Montauk-Scituate, Merrimac-Hinkley-Windsor, Brookfield-Brimfield and Freetown-Swansea-Saco. Typical of many rural New England towns, the vast majority of early to recent modern development in West Brookfield has occurred in the valleys where the land is flat and the soils are comprised of permeable sand and gravel.

Farmland continues to be an important resource for many community members in Town, and residents who responded to the Master Plan Community Survey have **cited West Brookfield’s rural character** as a key attribute to maintain. The western end of town surrounding the Salem Cross Inn and Cutler Road, as well as Foster Hill, are the largest contiguous areas of active agriculture. There are currently seven (7) farms and orchards in town with **“for-sale” products**. According to the Central Mass Grown, a nonprofit organization aimed at promoting local farm products and community education, there are 36 growers and producers in West Brookfield. Several members, including Ragged Hill Orchard, Honey Orchard, and Red River Farm and Landscape, are founding members of the Central Mass Grown initiative.

**Table 5-1 West Brookfield Chapter Lands Summary**

<b>West Brookfield Chapter Lands Summary</b>	
<b>Chapter Land</b>	<b>Acres (Lot Size)</b>
Chapter 61 (Forestry)	996.04
Chapter 61A (Agriculture/Horticulture)	2,203
Chapter 61B (Recreation)	398.46
<b>Total Chapter Lands</b>	<b>3,597.71</b>

**In 2015, the Assessor’s office reported over 950 animals** in town, including beef cows (311), chickens (277), horses (137), swine (60), goats (54), turkeys (36), dairy cows (31), waterfowl (30), and sheep (25). To date, there are nearly 3,600 acres of land in West Brookfield that are classified as temporarily protected under the Chapter 61 Program, a tax abatement program that restricts the use of forestry (Chapter 61), agricultural/horticultural (Chapter 61A), and recreational lands (Chapter 61B) in exchange for a reduction in property taxes. Currently, there are 2,203 acres of agricultural/horticultural land and of those, approximately 966 acres have an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), which permanently protects these lands from development. In addition, there are 322 acres of land with a Conservation Restriction (CR). Table 5-1 describes the inventory of enrolled in the Chapter 61 Program. For more detailed information on Chapter Lands in West Brookfield, see the Open Space and Recreation chapter.

**Vegetation**

The vast majority of land in town today has vegetated as a direct result of limited urban development. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, much of the town had been cleared for pastureland and **current forestry consists of second growth hardwood species**. West Brookfield’s various wetland areas are also host to a diversity of plant species. The vegetation in West Brookfield is typical of central hardwoods region of the Eastern U.S. Forests, which generally include a variety of trees and shrub species depending upon elevation and soil characteristics. The seven (7) general types of trees most commonly found in West Brookfield include:

- Maple (*Acer spp.*)
- Oak (*Quercus spp.*)



- American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)
- Hickory (*Carya spp.*)
- Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
- Black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)
- White Ash (*Fraxinus Americana*)

Additionally, there are seven (7) types of plant species commonly found in town, including:

- Blackberries/raspberries (*Rubus spp.*)
- Grapes (*Vitus spp.*)
- Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)
- Blueberries (*Vaccinium spp.*)
- Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans*)
- Sumac (*Rhus spp.*)
- Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)

In 2010, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (“**MassWildlife**”) through the **Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)** and **The Nature Conservancy’s** Massachusetts Program developed *BioMap2* as a planning tool to assist municipalities with conservation efforts and protection of biodiversity. *BioMap2* includes a combination of reports, documented community findings, and spatial data related to wildlife species and habitats. Table 5-2 identifies endangered plant species observed in West Brookfield and documented in the MassWildlife program.

**Table 5-2 Endangered Species Observations in West Brookfield**

Endangered Species Observations in West Brookfield				
Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	MESA Status	Most Recent Observation
Vascular Plant	Ranunculus pennsylvanicus	Bristly Buttercup	SC	2009
Vascular Plant	Scirpus longii	Long's Bulrush	T	2000
Vascular Plant	Carex polymorpha	Variable Sedge	E	2008

*(E= Endangered; T= Threatened; SC= Special Concern; \*= Includes those listed in the 2011 OSRP)*  
*Source: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), MassWildlife, 2017*

### Forestry

Forest management activities occur periodically on private ownerships. Forest Cutting Plans are submitted to the Conservation Commission to notify local Board members about forest management activities. West Brookfield does not have a comprehensive plan for the planting of public shade trees, therefor replanting occurs intermittently at highly visible locations. Public shade trees are located on the Town Common, Town right-of-ways, Town parks, and in the Town cemeteries.





The Tree Warden and Highway Department maintain the shade trees. Typically if shade trees become damaged, the Tree Warden will post a hearing about the trimming or removal, and coordinate with the Highway Department to address the hazard. There are currently no issues related to forest practices on specific parcels in town, including no overall plan for shade tree planting, monitoring or maintenance of trees.

## Water Resources

West Brookfield is located within the Chicopee River Watershed, which empties into the Chicopee River, the **largest tributary to the Connecticut River**. **West Brookfield's major water resources** include the Town Beach, Lake Wickaboag (also referred to as Wickaboag Pond), Brookhaven Lake, Quaboag River, and the primary tributaries including Mill Brook and Sucker Brook. The following section **describes the town's water resources**.

### Town Beach

Town Beach is a popular summertime destination for many residents. Owned by West Brookfield, Town Beach is approximately a 7-acre site located on the southern shore of Lake Wickaboag on Lakeview Avenue. The beach offers a boat ramp, swimming and canoeing opportunities during the open season, and is located across the street from a privately owned athletic field. The beach allows swimming with a lifeguard present during the daytime in the summer.



The area contains limited parking and is intended for use by residents (permanent and temporary) with the appropriate permits. Cars parked at the beach require a window sticker **which is available at the Town Hall Selectmen's office and at the Town Hall Police Department office**.

### Lake Wickaboag

Lake Wickaboag, also referred to as Wickaboag Pond, **is the centerpiece of West Brookfield's natural and cultural resources**. Lake Wickaboag is relatively small and shallow size, covering 315 acres in surface area with a drainage area of approximately 4.5 square miles and an average depth of 7 feet and maximum depth is 11 feet. Sucker Brook and Mill Brook are the **lake's major tributaries**, fed by drainage from the Wickaboag Valley. Sucker Brook carries water from New Braintree then flows into Mill Brook, Lake Wickaboag, and ultimately the Quaboag River. Due to the local drainage, the water is often warm during the summer and brown in color. Located upstream is the Sucker Brook Flood Control Area, owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Over the years, there have been concerns regarding sediment accumulation and excess nutrients entering the lake. The Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association (LWPA) manages the lake and actively works to improve water quality for lake residents while ensuring the health and safety of all users. Recent plans include a dredging project, which has been shovel ready for some time. The Association and the town are actively seeking funding for this project.





## Quaboag River

The Quaboag River is the most significant waterway in West Brookfield, traversing 2.7 miles through the heart of the community in an east-west direction. Its drainage area is approximately 128 square miles at the Warren-West Brookfield town line. The maximum and minimum records of flow are 12,800 cubic feet per second (cfs) and 6.6 cfs respectively. The Quaboag River is a component of the larger, *Three Rivers* system in the west. The Quaboag River is fed by Quaboag Pond and Dunn Brook in Brookfield, and converges with the Ware and Swift Rivers to form the Chicopee River. The eastern end of the Quaboag River Valley is wide and contains approximately 280 acres of swamp. The river boasts canoeing and water sports opportunities. Over the years, the town has undertaken significant work on river trails. Additionally, community outreach efforts undertaken as part of the 2011 OSRP and this plan have identified continued community interest in establishing kayak and canoe landings along the river.

## Brookhaven Lake

Brookhaven Lake is the Town's "secondary" lake, which is much smaller in size compared to Lake Wickaboag, at approximately 44 acres in surface area with a drainage area of approximately 1.3 square miles. The site is Located off Route 9 and Pierce Road, and it is managed by the Brookhaven Lake Association. Brookhaven Lake is susceptible to pollution due to its proximity to densely developed neighborhoods and nutrient loading subsequent to septic system use and stormwater runoff. As a result, the Lake Association has been engaged in a water quality restoration program. More than 60 acres of land have been identified as potentially developable around Brookhaven pond. This area is currently zoned Rural Residential. **The area's proximity to Route 9 increases the potential** for development and its inherent impacts. With development comes increased potential for runoff and nutrient loading subsequent to septic system use and stormwater runoff.

## Aquifer Recharge Areas

There are three significant aquifers located throughout the town center in the low-lying sandy deposits. Both Mill Brook and Sucker Brook flow over aquifers. The third and most extensive aquifer lies in an east-northeast/west-southwest section of town, intersecting with the southern end of Lake Wickaboag. Approximately half of the Sucker Brook aquifer is considered high yield (flow > 300 gallons per minute) and the other half is considered medium yield (flow 100 - 300 gpm). All of the Mill Brook aquifer is considered medium yield. Approximately a third of the Lake Wickaboag Aquifer is high yield, while the remainder is medium yield. Areas along Mill and Sucker Brooks are significant to the quality of groundwater recharge to the aquifer, therefore development along these areas should continue to be carefully considered in regards to groundwater impact.

## Floodplains

Most floodplains in West Brookfield are associated with local waterways, water bodies and wetlands. The eastern section of the Quaboag River Valley is the most substantial area subject to flooding in town, most of which is within the 100-year flood plain.



Other areas are associated with the larger tributaries feeding the Quaboag River and Lake Wickaboag. Development within the Quaboag River floodplain is relatively limited because of its proximity to the protected Quaboag Wildlife Management Area (WMA) located in the southeastern end of town. The lands abutting Mill and Sucker Brooks are protected open space and subjected to potential flooding, however there is little to no potential for development along these stretches of land.

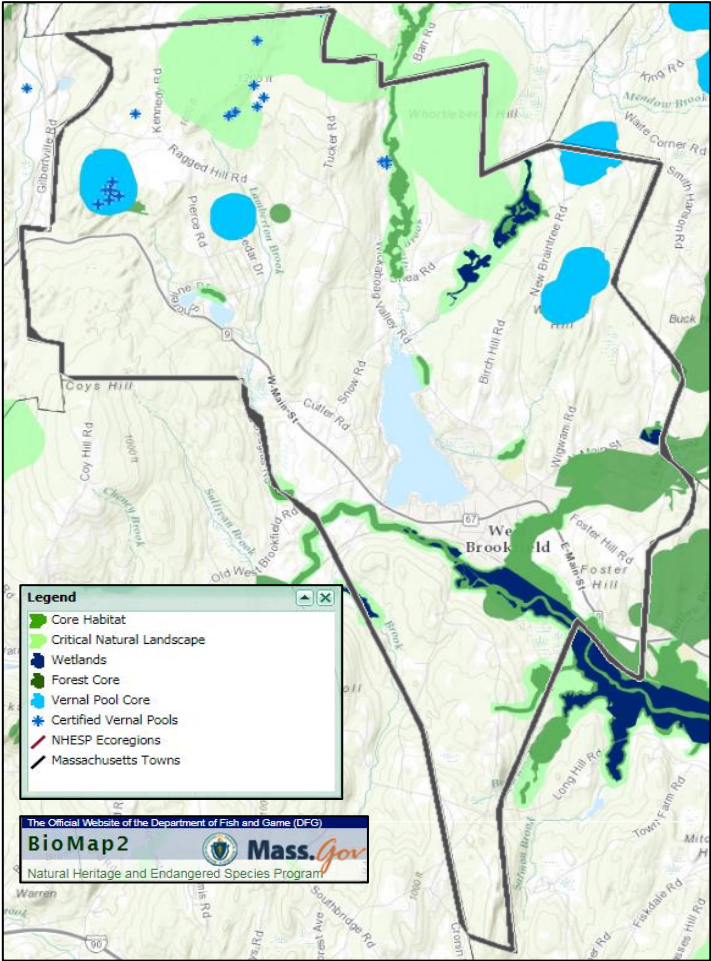
## Wetlands

Wetlands provide necessary water storage capabilities, prevent rapid runoff during storms, and provide valuable wildlife habitat and scenic beauty. Wetlands in West Brookfield cover approximately 520 acres, located in low-lying areas near streams that feed Lake Wickaboag and the Quaboag River, and at the base of hills. These wetlands vary in size from less than one acre to large and expansive, such as the wetland located in the eastern Quaboag River Valley approximately 280 acres in size. Some wetlands have also formed in depressions located away from streambeds and associated with intermittent streams in areas with poorly drained glacial till soils. **West Brookfield's wetlands are shown on Map 5-3, below.** Development infringes upon wetland areas in a few places, particularly in the large wetland area in the eastern end of the Quaboag River Valley.

## Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are small, seasonal wetlands that provide unique wildlife habitat, primarily amphibians and invertebrate animals that use them to breed. There are currently four (4) Vernal Pool Cores in town, located nearby Rock House Reservation, Lamberton Brook, Whortleberry Hill, and north of Sucker Brook along the West/North Brookfield town line. These Vernal Pool Cores depict the top 5% most interconnected clusters of potential vernal pools in town. Each cluster of pools is buffered to create vernal pool habitat areas that includes the pools themselves and the surrounding habitat to allow for successful breeding, dispersal, overwintering, foraging, and migration. *BioMap2* also identified Critical Natural Landscapes, which are those with unique, more resistant landscapes with the ability to support ecological processes and/or disturbances, and a wide array of species and habitats over long periods of time.

Map 5-3 Vernal Pools



*BioMap2* reported 18 Certified Vernal Pools found in the Town of West Brookfield, located nearby Rock House Reservation, Ragged Hill, and Mill Brook. As shown on Map 5-3, some of these Certified Vernal Pools overlap with Critical Natural Landscapes and Vernal Pool Cores. According to MassWildlife, a targeted approach towards vernal pool clusters is more effective than targeting individual pools because it maximizes the resistance and resilience of vernal pool habitats and their resident species in the context of climate change.

## Fisheries and Wildlife

The diverse habitat in West Brookfield supports a variety of wildlife and fish species. Virtually all of the species commonly found in West Brookfield are permanent or occasional residents in local forests, marshes, and wetlands. The local waterways and ponds are home to many types of fish and aquatic life found in the rivers, brooks, and ponds of the region. According to MassWildlife, there are five (5) significant wildlife habitat areas in West Brookfield that **have been identified as having “Species of Conservation Concern” including those nearby Foster Hill, Quaboag River Valley, Sucker Brook, Lamberton Brook, and the Rock House Reservation off Route 9.** MassWildlife considers these areas crucial to the long-term viability of rare, common species and natural communities.

Table 5-4 identifies endangered species observed in town and documented in **MassWildlife’s** Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

**Table 5-4 Endangered Species Observations in West Brookfield**

Endangered Species Observations in West Brookfield				
Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	MESA Status	Most Recent Observation
Mammal	<i>Sorex palustris</i>	Water Shrew*	SC	1999
Bird	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	American Bittern*	E	2007
Bird	<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>	Sedge Wren*	E	2007
Bird	<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	Least Bittern	E	2007
Bird	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	Golden-winged Warbler*	E	1983
Reptile	<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Eastern Box Turtle*	SC	2010
Reptile	<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>	Wood Turtle	SC	2015
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Hemaris gracilis</i>	Slender Clearwing Sphinx	SC	2010
Mussel	<i>Alasmidonta varicosa</i>	Brook Floater (Swollen Wedgemussel)*	E	Historic

(E= Endangered; T= Threatened; SC= Special Concern; \*= Includes those listed in the 2011 OSRP)  
Source: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), MassWildlife, 2017

There are a number of species that make their homes in local forests and woodlands. These areas support many small mammals such as mice, chipmunks, squirrels, and muskrats. More secluded forests are home to larger wildlife such as fox, porcupine and deer, even seen frequently outside of their natural habitats, with an increase in bear, bobcat, fisher and moose sightings as well. In addition, many types of birds also inhabit these woodlands including blue jays, robins, sparrows, orioles, owls, woodpeckers, hawks, starlings, juncos, finches, phoebes, and crows. Waterways, water bodies, and other wet areas in Town tend to provide suitable habitats for fish, amphibians, and birds that enjoy the water. The Quaboag River and feeding brooks support a fish population that includes bass, trout, and pickerel. Additionally, wetland areas support wildlife such as otter, muskrat, reptiles, and various species of waterfowl. To date, there are 12 species of fish or wildlife that are considered endangered, threatened, or of special concern in West Brookfield. Since the reporting of the **Town's 2011 OSRP, one (1) species of wildlife has been removed from the listing (four-toed salamander or *Hemidactylium scutatu*) and six (6) additional species have been documented.**

## Wildlife Management Areas

MassWildlife owns and manages more than 200,000 acres of land across the state, often referred to as Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and Wildlife Conservation Easements (WCE). **All WMAs and WCE's are** publicly accessible and allow hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor recreation activities. There are currently five (5) WMAs in West Brookfield, including the West Brookfield WMA, Quaboag WMA, Whortleberry WMA, Coy Hill WMA, and Richardson WMA. The following describes each area in detail.

### West Brookfield WMA

The West Brookfield WMA is a 320-acre property comprised of a former farm and the Camp Wickaboag site. In 2012, the East Quabbin Land Trust worked with the McRevey Family Trust to facilitate permanent conservation of the area. The area has frontage on Ragged Hill Road and Madden Road, and is publicly accessible via Wickaboag Valley Road where a parking area is located on the easterly side.

Additionally, the property crosses the Old Indian Baypath Trail along Whortleberry Hill, and extends northerly as a footpath on the Madden Road extension. Mill Brook, the main tributary to Wickaboag Pond, flows 1.3 miles through the site. Surrounding Mill Brook to the east and the west are agricultural fields and orchards, including mature mixed hardwood, white pine and hemlock forest groves located on the hillsides. The brook is also bordered through the heart of the valley by abroad floodplain and riparian shrub swamp, formerly a pond that operated **Worcester County's first sawmill. The area's unique landscape and terrain provide** habitats of managed hayfields, wet meadows, old orchards, mature upland forests, and brushy field habitats. Many wildlife species exist in the area including aquatic furbearers, deer, turkey, grouse, woodcock, migratory waterfowl, and many non-game species. The property is open to the public for hunting, fishing, bird watching, hiking, cross-country skiing, and other non-motorized outdoor recreation activities.





## Quaboag WMA

The Quaboag WMA is a substantial area of protected land characterized by large open agricultural fields, hardwood ridges, and open marshes. The property covers 1,323 acres and extends into the Towns of Brookfield, East Brookfield, and Warren. The Quaboag River flows through the area, offering visitors with fishing opportunities for warm water species. In addition to the numerous beaver complexes on site, the Quaboag River offers the WMA with waterfowl, marshland bird, and aquatic mammal viewing opportunities. American Bitterns, Raptors, and Bald Eagles have been spotted in the impoundment areas of the river and the open fields. **The area's diverse** and expansive habitat also provides abundant hunting opportunities for many wildlife species. During the open pheasant season, the WMA is stocked with **Ring-necked Pheasants and all hunters are required to wear a "hunter orange" hat**, except while night-hunting Raccoons or Opossums, or while hunting waterfowl from within a blind or boat. Hunting activity on pheasants is restricted to before sunrise or after sunset during the open season, and between 9 PM and 3 AM for the hunting of Raccoons or Opossums.

## Whortleberry Hill WMA

The Whortleberry Hill WMA is a 324-acre property characterized by hardwood ridges, open fields, and reclaimed fields with Mill Brook flowing through the property. Located along the West Brookfield and New Braintree town line, the WMA is managed for overgrown fields and active agriculture on the leased fields, as well as open space. Visitors can enjoy raptor and songbird sighting in the open fields, while the hardwood ridges offer hunting opportunities for White-tailed Deer, Wild Turkey, and Gray Squirrel. River edge cover and fields also provide predator hunting and American Woodcock hunting opportunities. During the open pheasant season, the Whortleberry Hill WMA is stocked with Ring-necked Pheasants and a "hunter orange" hat is required wear for hunters.

## Coy Hill WMA

The Coy Hill WMA encompasses a combination of rolling hills with rocky outcrops, mature hardwood ridges, mature white pine conifer stands, and a power line right of way that runs through the site. Located along the West Brookfield and Warren town line, the 866-acre site is publicly accessible via Coy Hill Road and Route 9, and parking is available on both **Route 9 and Coy Hill Road, although limited on Route 9. The Coy Hill WMA's diverse habitat** and terrain provide hunting opportunities for White-tailed Deer, Bobcat, Eastern Coyote, Raccoon, and Gray Squirrel. This area supports many species of wildlife along with scenic overlooks to the Ware River Valley from the rocky ledge areas.

## Richardson WMA

The Richardson WMA encompasses 370 acres of hills and marsh with some moderate to steep slopes, located along Foster Hill and George Allen Road. Access is gained by parking lots **located off Devil's Elbow Road and Foster Hill Road. The area's vegetation** consists of mixed hardwood and conifer forest interspersed with agricultural and brushy fields, as well as some shrub swamp habitat. The diverse habitat provides for various wildlife including stocked pheasant, grouse, woodcock, deer, cottontail rabbit, turkey, gray squirrel, aquatic fur-bearers, raccoon, waterfowl and numerous nongame species.



## Historic and Cultural Resources Inventory

The Town of West Brookfield is defined by its rich history and sense of community. There are a wide variety of culturally and historically significant locations in town, including two (2) historic districts in the Town Center and on Wickaboag Valley Road. West Brookfield contains numerous sites of significance to Native Americans and early Euro-American history. Lake Wickaboag was the site of a Quaboag Tribe settlement and the rock outcroppings located at the Rock House Reservation were once used as shelter during the winter season. The Council Bluff located east of the Lake Wickaboag was also used by Native Americans as a transient camp. The Old Indian Bay Path Trail (later converted to Madden Road) runs just north of the lake and was heavily traveled on by members of the Quaboag Tribe. In addition to these locations, there are a variety colonial sites that were largely established during the displacement of Native Americans, including the original Quaboag Plantation site and the associated Gilbert's Fort.

Other landmarks display the legacy and cultural significance of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century residents of West Brookfield. For example, the birthplace of famous suffragist Lucy Stone is located southwest of Brookhaven Lake. The remains of the Foster Homestead is located south of Foster Hill, once the home of Judge Jedediah Foster and the location where he drafted the Massachusetts Constitution. The West Brookfield Historical Commission has actively sought conservation these historic features on an ongoing basis, including the establishment of a walking trail following the Old Indian Bay Path.

**Table 5-5 West Brookfield Historic and Cultural Resources Inventory**

West Brookfield Historic and Cultural Resources Inventory		
Property Name	Street	Year
West Brookfield Center Historic District	S/N Main, Winter, Maple, School, Church, Foster Hill, Pleasant, Central, Cottage, Milk Sts.	1990
Quaboag Park and Common	Church, School, Myrick, N/S Main Sts.	1977
Wickaboag Valley Road Historic Area	Wickaboag Valley, Snow, Gilbert, Shea, Ragged Hill, Tucker, Tyler Rds.	1996
West Brookfield Center Railroad District	Front Street Area	2002
Wickaboag Valley Historic District	Wickaboag Valley, Snow, Millstone, Shea, Ragged Hill, and Tyler Rds.	2000
West Brookfield Center Historic District	Central, Milk, Mechanic, Sherman, Front and Ware St., Long Hill, Old Long Hill Rds.	2006
Old Indian Cemetery	50 Cottage St	2006
Ware Street Residential Area		
Chamberlain, Gov. Daniel House	12 Birch Hill Rd	c 1825
Wallace, J. House	84 Birch Hill Rd	r 1800
Hathaway, Oliver - Makepiece, Royal Knight House	31 Boston Post Rd	r 1840
	1 Bridges Rd	r 1780
Dillon - Edson Block	10 Central St	1893
Kendrick, Oliver P. Store	11 Central St	r 1860

### West Brookfield Historic and Cultural Resources Inventory

Property Name	Street	Year
	12 Central St	r 1920
West Brookfield Post Office, Old	15 Central St	r 1860
Parratt, George A. House	16 Central St	r 1865
Cooke, Oliver S. House	19 Central St	r 1850
Fullam - Sawyer House	20 Central St	r 1870
Hastings, N. House	23 Central St	r 1875
Pepper - Gleason House	25 Central St	r 1850
Allen, Seth F. House	26 Central St	r 1865
Lincoln - Harrington House	28 Central St	r 1850

*Source: Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), MA Historic Commission, 2017*

To date, there are 343 locations, structures, and/or points in West Brookfield that are enlisted in the Massachusetts Registry of Historic Places. Of that total, 276 locations, structures, and/or landmarks are listed in both the State and National Registry of Historic Places. Due to its extensive size, Table 5-5 lists a portion of these historically significant structures and properties. For a complete listing of all documented structures and points (see APPENDIX L) See Map 5-6 for the landmarks documented in West Brookfield's Historic Inventory. **The following details the town's Historic Districts.**

#### West Brookfield Center Historic District

The West Brookfield Center Historic District is located around the Town Common and captures a picturesque collection of historic homes, railroad structures, and civic and institutional buildings. The district covers all or portions of several streets including: South/ North Main Street, Winter Street, Maple Street, School Street, Church Street, Foster Hill Rd, Pleasant Street, Central Street, Cottage Street, Mechanic Street, Sherman Street, Milk Street, Front Street, Ware Street, Long Hill Road, Old Long Hill Road, Railroad Avenue, and Freight House Road. Originally listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990, the area was expanded in 2006 to include the "Railroad District" located on Front and Ware Streets alongside the Quaboag River. This expansion included portions of Mechanic, Sherman, Milk and Front Streets, Long Hill Road, Railroad Avenue and Freight House Road.

The West Brookfield Town Center has historically served as the hub of economic and civic engagement in the community. To date, there are a total of 252 properties within the West Brookfield Center Historic District. Several local landmarks are within this area such as Town Hall, the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library on Main Street, three (3) churches, and a collection of railroad buildings and structures including two former passenger depots (1847 and 1884), a former freight house (1847), a single set of railroad tracks, and a railroad overpass bridge. The churches located within this district include the Sacred Heart Church on West Main Street, the Whitefield United Methodist Church on West Main Street and the Congregational Church on North Main Street. The former Brookfield Classical Female Seminary on North Main

Street and the last remaining factory in town, the former Quaboag Corset Factory on Pleasant Street is also located within the district boundaries.

The district character is substantially residential, adorned with middle- and working-class homes on small lawns and streetscape trees. The majority of the buildings date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the area consists of all architectural styles, though most are reminiscent of the Greek Revival and Federal styles. The area closest to the railroad tracks is mainly industrial and **“unspoiled” consisting of limited landscaping** and street trees. Most structures in this area are simplistic though the most stylish buildings are the two former railroad passenger stations.

### Wickaboag Valley Historic District

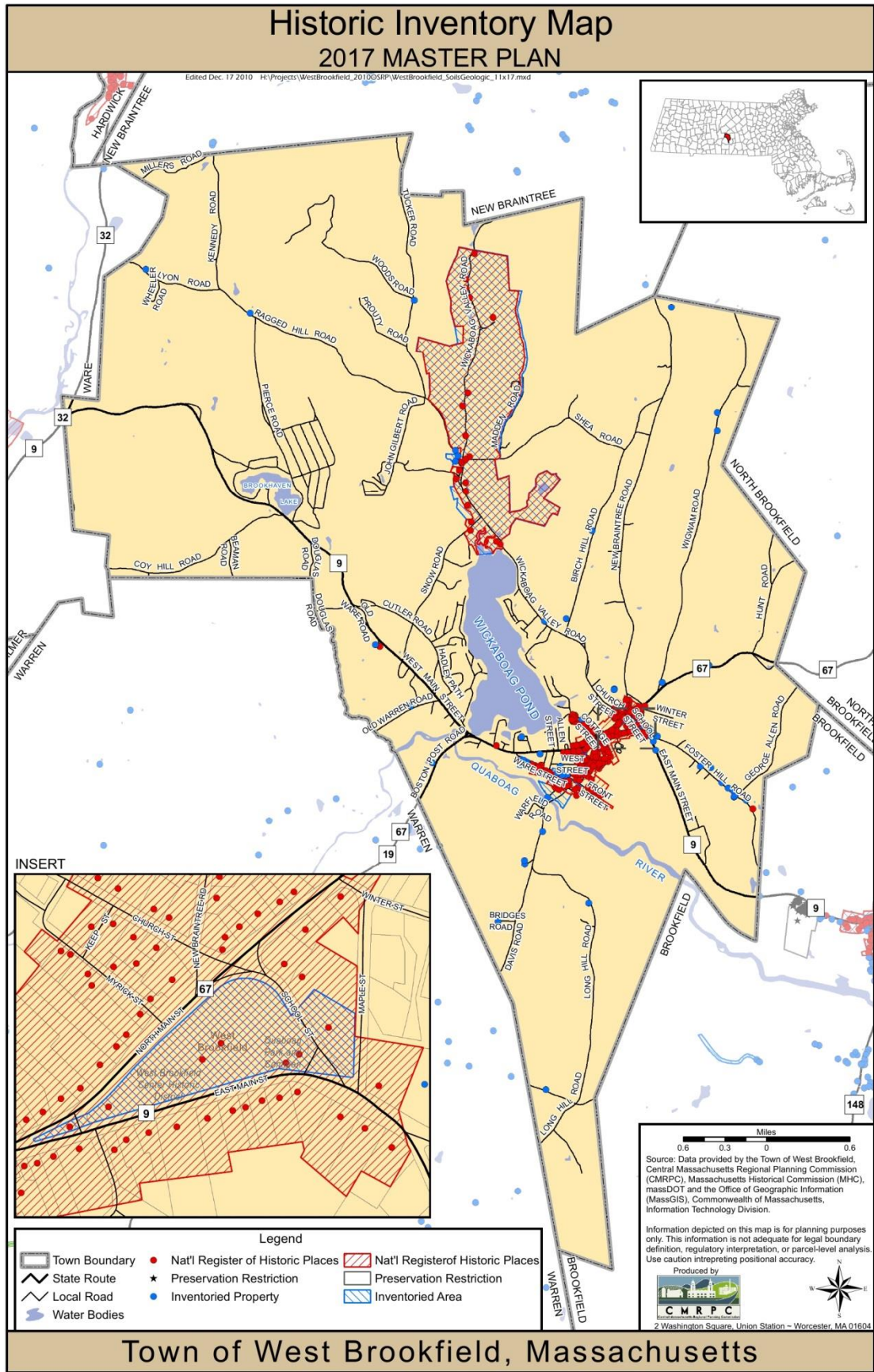
The Wickaboag Valley Historic District is located in the north-central section of the town just above Lake Wickaboag, and extends northerly towards the New Braintree town line. While the Center Historic District is primarily residential in character, the properties within the Wickaboag Valley Historic District by contrast reflect **the town’s early agricultural and rural** history. The Wickaboag Valley District covers all or portions of several streets including: Wickaboag Valley Road, Snow Road, Gilbert Road, Millstone Road, Shea Road, Ragged Hill Road, Tucker Road, and Tyler Road. The narrow district stretches over two (2) miles from the northern end of Lake Wickaboag northward along Wickaboag Valley Road, nearly to the New Braintree town line. The area is traversed north-south on the east side of the road by two branches of Sucker Brook, which flow together and empty into Lake Wickaboag. Mill Brook runs parallel to the road for almost the entire length of the district. The eastern branch flows from the northeast to meet Mill Brook near the southern boundary of the district, just east of Wickaboag Valley Road.

The amount of undeveloped land in the district has changed very little since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Currently there is limited agricultural activity in the area, although the district is distinctly rural with its display of scattered homes, a few farm outbuildings, open fields, and woods. The most scenic feature of the Wickaboag District is the long, open view down the valley created by a combination of streams, undeveloped marshy land, and fresh meadows that surround them. Buildings in the historic district are primarily from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the most common building type are dwelling houses.

To date, there are 55 properties within the Wickaboag Valley Historic District, 14 of which are historic dwellings, some with barns or other outbuildings. Three (3) properties within the district operate as small working farms, including the Mirick-Johnson Farm on Snow Road, Coleman W. Gilbert Farm on Wickaboag Valley Road, and Daniel Sampson Farm on Wickaboag Valley Road. These farms still retain their barns and other outbuildings (i.e. several sheds and silos) that create agricultural complexes. Most barns in the area are modest in size, though rarely ever larger than the main home. The Wickaboag Valley Historic District remains as the largest swath of contiguous former farmland in town that still preserves its agricultural landscape.

Other areas of formerly scenic farmland have largely been built on by suburban residential developments however the Wickaboag Valley is regarded by many for its rich history and exceptional display of rural character.

Map 5-6 Historic Inventory Map (Appendix N36)





## Cultural Destinations

West Brookfield contains a rich diversity of cultural landscapes and destinations. These are evidence through the preserved agricultural lands on Foster Hill, rock outcroppings, the scenic Town Common, and industrial core. These heritage landscapes reflect the strong history and character of West Brookfield, creating a sense of community that resonates with many residents. The following **describes the Town’s most significant** cultural destinations.

### Town Common



The Town Common is the central location for community activities and leisure enjoyment. The Common was deeded to the Town in 1791 and **continues to be the center’s major source of** open space and one of the most important scenic and historic resources in the community. West Brookfield adopted a Town Common Overlay District in 1987 as **a means to “protect the historic center of the Town of West Brookfield” and “retain the residential character of the Town Common area and to enhance the quality of life for residents therein.”**

Also referred to as Quaboag Park, the Common encompasses a wide area of open space that accentuates the rural, small town character many residents value. **West Brookfield’s scenic 6-acre Town Common is landscaped with mature trees and sweeping lawns, including several public monuments, the Rice Memorial Fountain, and the Rice Drinking Fountain.** The Common is located within the central downtown commercial area and is within walking distance of the Old Indian Cemetery and other locations of historical significance. Not only is the Common the **main feature of the town center’s historic landscape, it is an integral part of everyday life.** Numerous activities and events are held on the Common throughout the year including the Asparagus Festival and Flower Heritage Festivals, Annual Congregational Church tag sale, **summer concerts, Farmer’s Market during the summer and fall months,** the Annual Harvest Festival, and White Christmas celebration.

### Salem Cross Inn

The Salem Cross Inn, formerly known as the White Homestead, is a restored 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse located on Ware Road, Route 9, in the western part of town. The Salem Cross Inn is widely cherished by residents and visitors alike as an architectural and environmental hallmark of rural colonial history. Dating back to 1707, the farmhouse is one of the last remaining structures from the early days of the second settlement of Brookfield. Situated on approximately 600 acres of gardens and agricultural land, the Salem Cross Inn currently

**operates as a “farm-to-table” restaurant and tavern,** and hosts various special functions. The family-run restaurant collaborates with seven (7) local farms including Salem Cross Farm (onsite), Hunt Road Berry Farm (West Brookfield), Howe’s Farm & Garden (New Braintree), and Breezeland Orchards (Warren), to purchase the freshest ingredients. The property is surrounded by acres of rolling meadows and woodlots bounded by fieldstone walls, intersecting with old cart roads. The Salem Cross Inn was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.





## Old Indian Cemetery

The Old Indian Cemetery, also referred to as the “Old Indian Burial Ground,” is regarded as historical landmark by many residents. Located less than a mile from Town Hall, the Old Indian Cemetery is surrounded by stone walls and accessible via a walk-in entrance on Cottage Street. Despite its name, there are no documented Native Americans buried on the site. The small cemetery dates back to 1770 and is the resting place for soldiers of the French and Indian Wars and soldiers of the Revolutionary War. The cemetery occupies well-drained, nearly level topography on a lakeside terrace within 1,000 feet of Wickaboag Pond to the northwest of the cemetery. Just to the north of the cemetery is a cluster of small cottages, primarily used by guests visiting Wickaboag Pond in the summer months. Built in the 1940s, **these quaint cottages are often dubbed “The Emerald Isle”** by community members. The Quaboag River lies approximately 2,000 to 3,000 feet south of the cemetery. The cemetery has been largely unaffected by development around its edges, which has allowed the nearly 250-year old burial ground to retain its original landscape features, including its original size, setting, views, topography, and layout. The Old Indian Cemetery was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.

## Foster Hill

Foster Hill is the site of the region’s first settlement in 1665. Foster Hill’s unique history carries both regional and state significance due to its ties with the Quaboag Plantation and **King Philip’s War**. Originally known as the Quaboag Plantation, Foster Hill was the central settlement for what is now known as East and West Brookfield, Brookfield, North Brookfield and Warren. Foster Hill remained the primary settlement until it was burned during **King Phillip’s War** in 1675. The property contains five (5) marked historic sites, including the Jedediah Foster Homesite, Whitefield Rock, Indian Rock, First Meeting House site, and Fortified Tavern. Owned by the Quaboag Historical Society, the Jedediah Foster Homesite is open to the public and contains an interpretive kiosk for visitors. Although it is not under any form of permanent protection, the Homesite was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2013. There are 148 acres of nearby orchards protected through an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) holding. Today Foster Hill is largely unaffected by residential development, retaining much of its historic agricultural character.

## Pynchon’s Grist Mill Preserve



Pynchon’s Grist Mill Preserve is a 42-acre priority conservation site located off Wickaboag Valley Road within the Wickaboag Valley Historic District. The East Quabbin Land Trust purchased **Pynchon’s Grist Mill Preserve** in 2013 and West Brookfield holds a conservation restriction on the land, which allows for public recreation, forest management, and wildlife habitat improvements. Built in 1669, **Pynchon’s Grist Mill** was the first grist mill in the Quaboag Plantation developed four years after the arrival of the first settlers. Sucker Brook is the Mill’s most prominent natural feature, also serving as a major tributary to Lake Wickaboag. The wetland complex associated with Sucker Brook is an important natural feature that mitigates flooding and provides critical wildlife habitat. A portion of the area is identified by BioMap2 as Core Habitat and a larger area that includes the whole wetland complex is identified as a Critical Natural Landscape.

**Pynchon’s Grist Mill parcel** also intersects the Old Bay Path Indian Trail route and the nearby network of informal trails provides community members with recreational opportunities. Although the mill site and associated pond have experienced significant land modifications since the early 18th century, **the remnants still reflect the area’s industrial history.**

## Rock House Reservation



Located off Route 9, Rock House Reservation is a 135-acre tract with a spectacular geologic formation at its center. The massive, cave-like rock shelter was once used by Native Americans as a winter camp. Today, the reservation is open to hiking, picnicking, cross country skiing, hunting (seasonally), and horseback riding and mountain biking in certain areas. Visitors also have access to an interpretive center, a butterfly garden, and scenic

vistas. The most popular trail on the property circles Carter Pond, a 2.5-acre spring-fed pond **constructed in the 1930’s by Arthur Carter. Carter dammed a spring-fed stream** to create the pond and constructed a cabin overlooking the pond. There are portions of Rock House Reservation with significant outcroppings that are under Conservation Restriction as a result of the Open Space Residential Design By-Law adopted in 2006. Publicly accessible and open daily, this parcel of forest and wetland is one of 96 properties owned and maintained by the Trustees of Reservations.

## Lucy Stone Home Site

The Lucy Stone Home site is the birthplace of suffragist and local resident Lucy Stone, located southwest of Brookhaven Lake, less than half a mile up Coy Hill Road. Lucy Stone was born in a farmhouse on Coy Hill Road on August 13, 1818 in West Brookfield. As the first **Massachusetts woman to graduate college, and an organizer of the first Women’s Rights Convention, Lucy Stone’s legacy is a hallmark of West Brookfield’s history.** A stone marker and large informational sign is posted on the property. From the West Brookfield library heading west on Route 9, the Home Site is located 2.8 miles up Coy Hill Road.

## Ye Olde Tavern

Formerly the West Brookfield House, the Ye Olde Tavern is symbolic of colonial life in Massachusetts. Located within the Town Center Historic District, the Ye Old Tavern is regarded by residents and visitors as an informal dining destination with a quaint New England charm. The Tavern was built in 1760 as a stop along Old Bay Path (Route 9), an improved native route that ran from Brookfield to Springfield. As one of the oldest operating taverns in the country, the Tavern has served several historical figures including George Washington, James Adams, Jerome Bonaparte and Elizabeth Patterson. In 2014, the Tavern underwent a major renovation, returning to its original décor and installing a code-compliant sprinkler system, ADA-compliant handicap access, and other system upgrades. After 257 years in business, the Ye Olde Tavern continues to extend hospitality to patrons, serving food and hosting various themed functions including Trivia Tuesday, Customer Appreciation Pig Roast, wine and beer tasting, Sangria Sundays, and Paint Night. The Tavern **was voted “Business of the Year” by the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce in 2011.**

# ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Maintaining the rural character of the town while ensuring that it is a scenic and livable community, however, can work to increase growth pressures. The issues and opportunities in the following section were identified through a review and analysis of priorities identified in previous reports, current data, as well as needs expressed as part of the Master Plan public outreach efforts. The identification of these issues and opportunities is intended to help preserve cultural resources and protect land, while encouraging connectivity and conservation.

## Community Preservation Act

Codified as General Laws chapter 44B, the Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a valuable tool for communities that want to protect their open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA funds are generated through two (2) sources: a voter-approved surcharge of up to 3% on annual real estate taxes, and an annual disbursement from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund administered by the Department of Revenue, which distributes funds each November to communities that have adopted CPA. At least 10% of the annual revenues must be used for each of the three core areas: open space, historic resource, and affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be used for any combination of the above uses and for recreational uses. Municipalities must adopt CPA by ballot referendum. Upon adoption of the Act, the community creates a local Community Preservation Coalition (CPC) to make recommendations on CPA projects to the town's legislative body (for West Brookfield this would be Town Meeting).

**Community Preservation Act (CPA)**

**Overview**

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA also helps strengthen the state and local economies by expanding housing opportunities and construction jobs for the Commonwealth's workforce, and by supporting the tourism industry through preservation of the Commonwealth's historic and natural resources. CPA was signed into law by Governor Paul Cellucci and Lieutenant Governor Jane Swift on September 14, 2000.

**Where does CPA funding come from?**

CPA allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing and outdoor recreation. Community preservation monies are raised locally through the imposition of a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against real property, and municipalities must adopt CPA by ballot referendum. The CPA statute also creates a statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund, administered by the Department of Revenue (DOR), which provides distributions each year to communities that have adopted CPA. Until CPA was enacted, there was no steady funding source for preserving and improving a community's character and quality of life. The Community Preservation Act gives a community the funds needed to control its future.

Source: Community Preservation Coalition

### Example Using West Brookfield Tax Rate

A home is assessed at \$380,000. After subtracting the first \$100,000 in residential property value (assuming the community has adopted this optional and very popular CPA exemption), **the homeowner's net value to be surcharged equals \$280,000.** After applying this sample municipality's tax rate of **\$16.06 per \$1,000**, the amount subject to the CPA surcharge would be about \$4,500. With a 1.5% CPA surcharge applied, the CPA surcharge for this homeowner **would be approximately \$67 per year.** This \$67 would be transferred to the community's Community Preservation fund by the City or Town Accountant or Tax Collector.



Towns that have adopted CPA find it to be a valuable funding source for many heritage landscape projects. Although often difficult to adopt during tough economic times, the high number and unique types of CPA projects statewide makes this tool worthy of consideration. These projects include completing a Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) inventory, National Register nominations, cemetery preservation, open space acquisition and preservation, and restoration of public buildings. As of May 2017, six (6) communities in the CMRPC region have adopted Community Preservation Act, including Sturbridge, West Boylston, Northborough, Upton, Grafton, and Mendon. Hundreds of projects in the aforementioned towns have been funded since 2001 using funds allocated from CPA. Examples of projects include the restoration of a roof on Old Town Hall in Grafton, refurbishing old tennis courts in Mendon, restoring and preserving permanent town records that date back to 1733 in Sturbridge, and historic cemetery preservation in West Boylston. A full list of completed projects utilizing CPA funds in Massachusetts can be viewed using the Community Preservation Projects Database on the Community Preservation Coalition website.

## Demolition Delay Bylaw

Many of the buildings and landmarks **within the town's Historic Districts have largely** retained their historic character. The historic circulation patterns within these areas create a unique sense of community, while providing a walkable and attractive streetscape that is favored by many. However, as charming and widely cherished as these areas are, this does not ensure that they will remain preserved and protected from future development and growth pressures. Over the years, several buildings in the West Brookfield Center Historic District have experienced additions and renovations that are not historically compatible with the area. Additionally, modern infill along the Main Street commercial area has not always been **complimentary of the area's historic essence.**

Demolition delay ordinances or bylaws are tools for communities to protect historic buildings and structures. Enacted by a majority vote of Town Meeting, a demolition delay ordinance or bylaw provides a review procedure requiring a delay in the demolition of historically significant buildings. This process provides a time period in which towns can consider alternatives to demolition of historic buildings and structures. During this process, the Local Historical Commission collaborates with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to develop a bylaw that would **fit the town's needs.** The Local Historical Commission should also work with other local groups to coordinate public education outreach and widely publicize the advantages of a demolition delay bylaw to the community. Typically, demolition delay bylaws apply to structures that were built over 50 years ago. The most common delay of demolition is six (6) months, although a lot of communities have discovered that a 1-year delay is more effective.

**WEST BROOKFIELD 2017 MASTER PLAN**  
TODAY'S PLAN FOR TOMORROW'S WEST BROOKFIELD

**CMRPC**  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

**NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

### Demolition Delay Bylaw

**Overview**

Demolition delay ordinances or bylaws are tools for communities to protect historic buildings that do not stand in local historic districts. A demolition delay ordinance or bylaw provides a review procedure requiring a delay in the demolition of historically significant buildings.

Typically, an application for a demolition permit for a historic property will trigger the operation of a demolition delay procedure. The local building commissioner notifies the local historical commission that a property owner applied for a demolition permit. Subsequently, the local historical commission determines whether the historic property is significant and should be preserved. The demolition delay ordinance or bylaw enables the local historical commission to delay the demolition permit to be granted for a set period of time, usually up to six months, while alternatives to demolition are explored and negotiated.

The effectiveness of the delay period depends on the ability of the local historical commission to negotiate with property owners. Many property owners may not be aware of the economic benefits associated with preserving historic properties through development projects, or with federal rehabilitation tax incentives. Options for development projects may include developing adaptive re-uses for the building, locating buyers willing to rehabilitate, preserve or adapt the property, or, as a last resort, moving the building to a new location. When it seems highly unlikely that delaying a demolition for six months will produce a viable preservation alternative, the delay period can provide a leverage tool for the local historical commission. In such situations, local historical commissions may agree to release the delay period in exchange for design review and approval of the new construction.

Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission

The Demolition Delay Bylaw is a tool that can help protect the thousands of historic structures within the West Brookfield Center Historic District and the Wickaboag Valley Historic District from demolition. In order to **ensure adequate protection of the community's historic** assets, the Town should explore the adoption of a Demolition Delay Bylaw that will allow time for the consideration of alternative to demolition.

## Local Historic Districts

National Register Districts and Local Historic Districts are both effective tools for helping with historic preservation in communities, but there are distinct differences between the two types of districts. A National Register District is a part of the National Register of Historic Places, which is a list of the individual buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts deemed important in American history, culture, architecture, or archaeology. A National Register District is a federal designation and provides national recognition that the area is significant to the history of the community, state, or nation. A property listed in the National Register of Historic Places does not limit the way the owner handles their property, as long as there is no state or federal involvement in a project and no pertinent local or regional regulations.

Local Historic Districts also recognize the historical importance of a property to a community, but these districts are much more effective at preventing changes than National Register Districts. If a property owner wishes to make changes to exterior architectural features visible to public view, then a locally appointed Historic District Commission must review the proposed changes. A public hearing is held by the Historic District Commission in order to determine whether the changes are appropriate. To assist property owners in Local Historic Districts, many Historic District Commissions choose to prepare Historic District Design Guidelines.

**WEST BROOKFIELD 2017 MASTER PLAN**  
TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

**CMRPC**  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

**MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

### Local Historic District (LHD)

**Overview**

A local historic district (LHD) is the strongest method of protecting historic village centers, neighborhoods, and downtowns from needless demolitions and insensitive alterations. A LHD is established through a local bylaw or ordinance. In a LHD, before any exterior architectural feature that is visible from a public way is altered, the plans to carry out that alteration must first be approved by a local historic district commission. Over 100 Massachusetts cities and towns have already established one or more local historic districts in their communities.

**Benefits of Local Historic Districts**

Local historic districts have 3 major purposes as stated in Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40C:

- to preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the Commonwealth and its cities and towns;
- to maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places;
- to encourage new designs compatible with existing buildings in the district.

There are many benefits associated with local historic districts:

- Local Historic Districts can be credited with saving the character of many areas in Massachusetts.
- Local Historic Districts provide protection from demolitions and inappropriate remodeling.
- Local Historic Districts provide a visual sense of the past.
- Local Historic Districts create pride in the community.
- Local Historic Districts provide schoolchildren with educational opportunities.

Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission

There are numerous advantages to establishing a Local Historic District. Residents of West Brookfield **take pride in the town's historic character and dedication to preservation.** By establishing a Local Historic District, West Brookfield can continue to preserve meaningful buildings and sites, and protect them from needless demolition or inappropriate remodeling without adequate review. An LHD also encourages design that is creative and new but stays consistent in size and dimensions with other buildings in the surrounding neighborhood. Moreover, when a Local Historic District is created, certain proposed changes are exempt from review, including review of interior and external features (i.e. HVAC units, storm doors, storm windows, paint color, and temporary structures). According to a study by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, property values within Local Historic Districts remain the same or increase at a faster rate than those in similar, non-LHD designated areas.



Not only does this tool offer protection from adverse effects by projects at the State-level, but it also allows owners of municipal or private non-profit properties to apply for 50% matching state grants through the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund. Additionally, communities that prove their commitment to historic preservation by adopting a Local Historic District Bylaw become eligible to apply for Certified Local Government (CLG) status which is granted by the National Park Service (NPS) through the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Communities with CLG status are eligible for state funding, technical assistance, **and additional preservation opportunities. At least 10% of the MHC's yearly federal funding allocation is distributed to CLG communities through Survey and Planning matching grants.**

Municipalities that adopt Local Historic Districts acknowledge the importance of the **community's** architectural history. Towns that do not establish Local Historic Districts remain highly vulnerable to demolitions, inappropriate alterations, or new developments which **detract from the town's existing architectural character and aesthetic.** It is recommended that the Town take steps towards creation of a West Brookfield Center Local Historic District using the materials and boundaries of the 2006 National Register District designation as a starting guide for reengagement.

## Lake Wickaboag



Many residents of West Brookfield cite the abundance of and accessibility to water resources as a major contributor to the overall quality of life. Historically, the Lake has operated as a central resource for the Town; a destination for both recreational users and athletes, and a vital environmental resource for the entire Quaboag Hills region. Of the residents who completed the Master Plan Survey, 74% of respondents listed water bodies as the most

important natural feature in town, followed by forests (49%) and farms (49%) and scenic views (48%). Additionally, 68% reported that they use local water sources primarily for the view(s), compared to 52% who use the water bodies for swimming purposes. However over the years, residents have expressed concerns about the water quality of Lake Wickaboag and its tributaries, which is experiencing issues of sedimentation and excess phosphorous, also becoming shallow in some key areas. Phosphorus levels, algal blooms, and weeds, including the nuisance invasive weed milfoil, in the shallow water are an ongoing problem which in turn depletes the Lake of oxygen.

Beginning in 1975 with the Lycott Environmental Eutrophic Study of Lake Wickaboag, the Town Board of Selection and Board of Health have long been in support of the management of the weed and algae issues occurring at the Lake. The investigation into the impacts of development and septic systems has been ongoing, and the Board of Health has been aggressively enforcing septic Title V requirements around the Lake and other water bodies. **For the past 20 years, the Town's active boards and volunteers have also successfully completed several stormwater and drainage improvement projects around Lake Wickaboag to decrease the amount of water pollutants.**

In 2010, the Town of West Brookfield in conjunction with the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association (LWPA) launched the Lake Wickaboag North Cove Dredging Project to assess the conditions of the northern end where Mill Brook enters the Lake. The Project included the removal of over 300,000 cubic yards of sediment from 50 to 75 acres in the north end of the Lake via hydraulic dredging to increase the water depth to at least four (4) to eight (8) feet. The Project also called for the development of two (2) varied depth basins to improve water flow and create preferred habitat for fish species. In addition to these tasks, the North Cove Dredging Project aimed to remove invasive species, reduce Algae blooms, reverse eutrophic conditions, improve boating and recreation conditions, and improve fish stock and sporting opportunities.

Community members have largely encouraged the continuation of these investigations and studies to ensure that water pollution is avoided or limited. Given the expressed concerns by residents about the health of the Lake and its tributaries, investigation of the impacts of development and septic systems should also be continued in regards to private wells and the smaller community wells located in West Brookfield to ensure that pollution of these wells is prevented or reduced. Although there have been numerous studies and management efforts **into improving the Lake's water quality**, currently, there is not enough information on the quantities and non-point sources of pollution within the watersheds. While initiatives such as the North Cove Dredging Project provide short term solutions by reopening parts of the lake to recreational activities, the longterm effects are still prevalent.

Given the **Town's previous** successes with grant funds, board members and volunteers should coordinate with local and regional partners to explore additional funding opportunities for a comprehensive watershed analysis. The North Cove Dredging Project has faced some challenges due to the parameters of the project along with increasing costs. One particular funding opportunity related to the Lake's issues is the Massachusetts 604(b) Water Quality Management Grant. The 604(b) grant comes from Section 604(b) of the federal Clean Water Act for water quality assessment and planning. The grant opportunity allows applicants to identify water quality issues and provide preliminary designs for best management practices to address these issues. Specifically, the grant provides funding towards:

***“watershed or subwatershed based nonpoint source assessment and planning projects leading to the: 1) determination of the nature, extent and causes of water quality problems; 2) assessment of impacts and determination of pollutant loads reductions necessary to meet water quality standards; 3) development of green infrastructure projects that manage wet weather to maintain or restore natural hydrology; 4) development of assessments, preliminary designs and implementation plans that will address water quality impairments in impaired watersheds, and 5) development of regional storm-water utilities in regulated and non-regulated communities”*** (MassGov, 2015).

The LWPA should continue to work with the Board of Selectmen, Stormwater Authority, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, and other relevant groups to pursue the 604(b) Water Quality Management Grant funds to continue these investigations and complete a comprehensive watershed analysis, particularly those at Mill and Sucker Brooks, in order to identify measures that prevent sediment from entering the water system entirely.

## Scenic Landscapes

Many residents cherish the abundance of rural, scenic amenities throughout West Brookfield. Residents who completed the Master Plan Survey expressed virtually unanimous support for continued protection of **the community's** water resources, historic features, farmlands, forests, wildlife habitats, and scenic areas.

The Town of West Brookfield adopted the Scenic Road Act at Town Meeting in 1973 as a tool to retain and protect the scenic character and unique, historical charm of designated roadways. The **designated “Scenic Roads” provide for added review and protection regarding** tree removal along, or improvements to these roads. Currently the town has 15 designated Scenic Roads which are adjacent to open space resources and feature sites of recreational, cultural, and natural interest (see Map 5-7: Scenic Roads). Scenic Roads in town include: Coy Hill Road, Devil’s Elbow Road, Holmes Road, Foster Hill Road, Tucker Road, Pierce Road, Lyons Road, Kennedy Road, Davis Road, Richardson Road, Wigwam Road, Ragged Hill Road, Beaman Road, New Braintree Road, and John Gilbert Road. Some of the easily located views are those at:

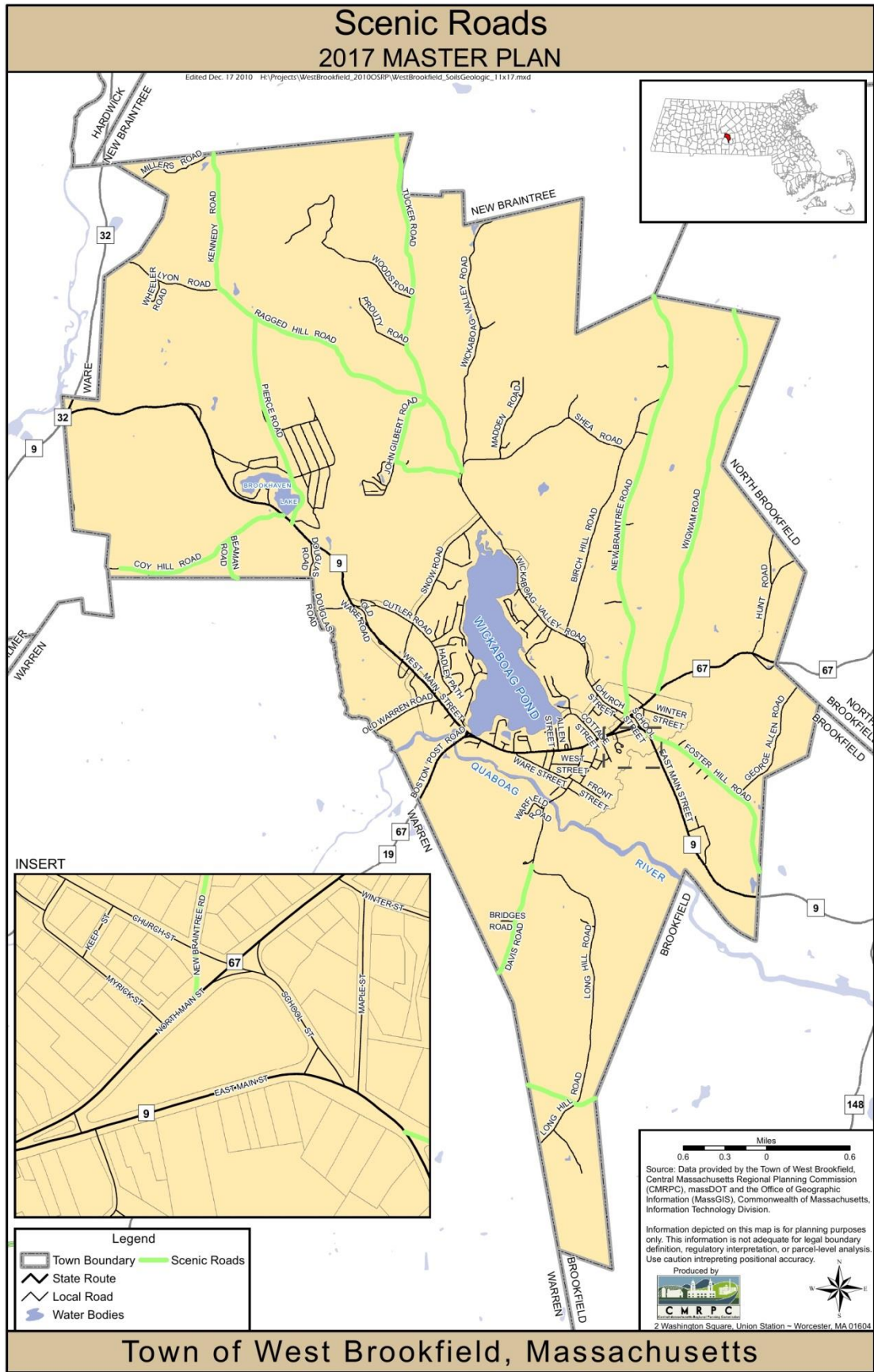
- The end of Richardson Road near the top of Long Hill,
- Long Hill Road between #200 and #216 to the east overlooking Brookfield, East Brookfield and Spencer,
- Mile 77 on Route 9 near the Brookfield line overlooking the Quaboag River valley,
- The end of Ragged Hill Road overlooking the Ware River valley, and
- The view from the ledge at the end of the walking trail at the Rock House Reservation

The Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw is a preservation planning tool that protects the picturesque qualities of mountains, hills, and rolling terrain through by additional design criteria requirements for new construction within these scenic landscapes. A Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw can be adapted into a Scenic Overlay District or address specific portions of a viewshed. The Bylaw is typically administered through site plan review and the development application process. Scenic landscapes along Route 9 and Route 67 are very crucial to the rural character of West Brookfield. Most of these roadside landscapes are preserved by permanently protected lands and by existing uses, although there are short stretches of these major roads that can be affected by future development. Areas of open space along river banks and lake shorelines provide access to scenic views and help to mitigate some of the problems associated with nutrient runoff and pollution that occur in conjunction with residential and industrial development. It is recommended that the Town explore adoption of the Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw and identify priority areas for application. The Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw is tool that can help preserve the scenic quality of the area between Route 9 and the Quaboag River, and the areas with rural, scenic value near the Salem Cross Inn and at Foster Hill.





Map 5-7 Scenic Roads (Appendix N37)



# GOALS AND ACTIONS – NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

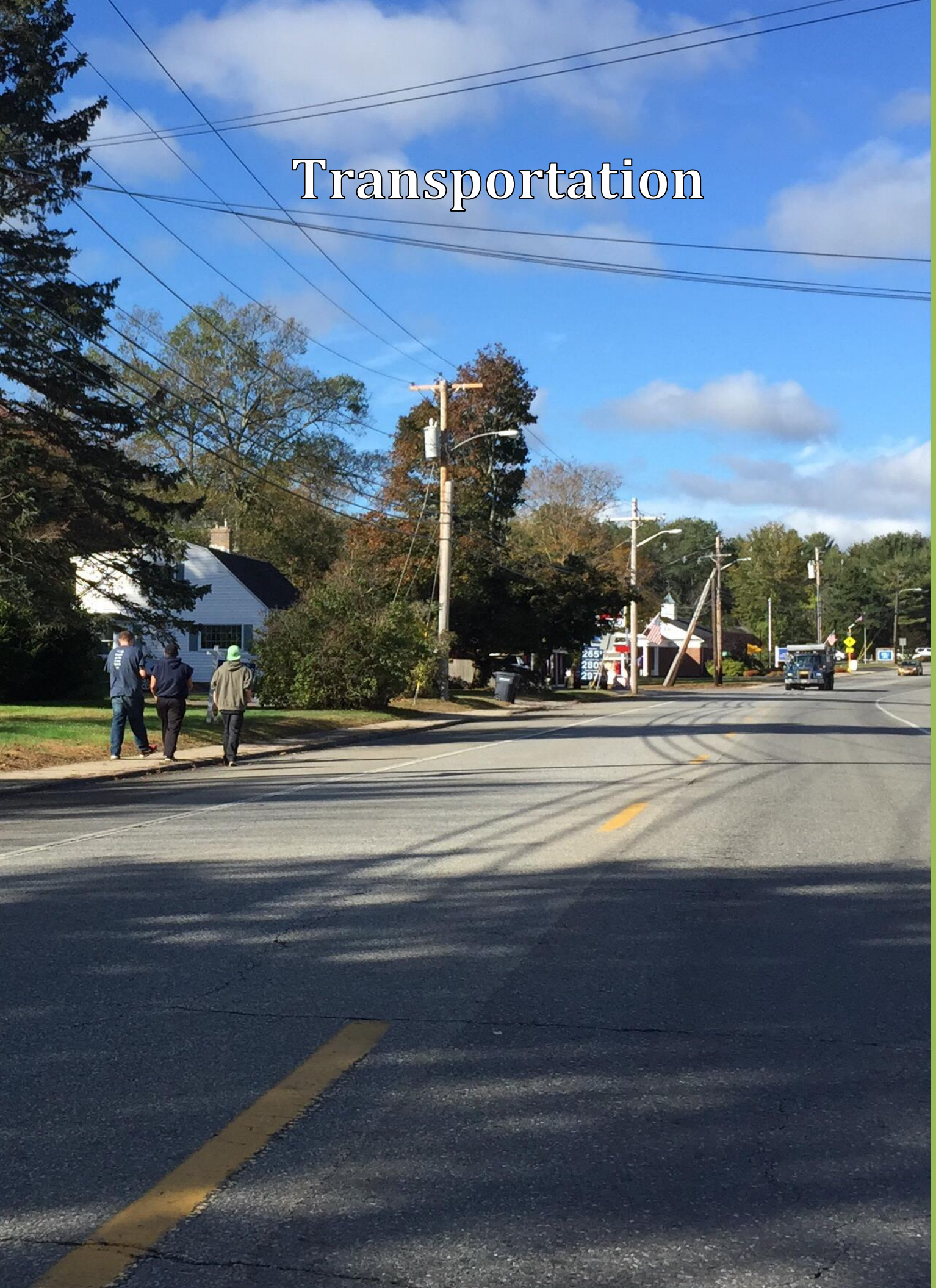
The identified priorities and next steps are intended to help maintain cultural and agricultural resources in their natural state, retain community character, and encourage greater use of resources for farming, conservation, and agricultural-based economic development opportunities. These goals reflect the natural, cultural, and historic preservation recommendations identified in previous plans, such as the 2007 Reconnaissance Report and 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The promotion of these tools and other preservation best practices will help maintain the small town feel and rural essence widely cherished by community members and visitors alike. Appropriate interpretation and stewardship of these resources is an essential component to their protection. The following section outlines goals for the protection of Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources in West Brookfield.

1. *Continue to promote communication, outreach, and advocacy for the protection of natural and historic resources in town*
  - a. Assemble a project team to update the 2007 West Brookfield Reconnaissance Report
  - b. Continue to inventory, map, and prioritize key unprotected open spaces
  - c. Create a permanent standing Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee to steer the development of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update.
  - d. Continue to pursue adoption and implementation of key recommendations in Open Space and Recreation Plan
  - e. Identify and prioritize additional historic sites to be included in the National Historic Registry
  - f. Continue to promote local history and culture at special town events
2. *Establish common protective regulatory tools in key areas of town in order to preserve the community's rich cultural and historical heritage*
  - a. Seek a cultural district designation in the Town Center area to provide **funding and awareness to the area's importance.**
  - b. Build local awareness of Local Historic District (LHD) benefits and initiate public process to establish a Local Historic District in an appropriate area in town
  - c. Adopt a Demolition Delay Ordinance or Bylaw to ensure protection of significant historic structures that are not presently located within historic districts in West Brookfield
    - i. Collaborate and coordinate with local property owners to increase understanding of economic benefits
  - d. Ensure zoning districts protect historic structures in terms of use and design



3. *Pursue state-funded programs for land purchase and natural resource conservation*
  - a. Begin a multi-phased process towards seeking the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), including a public education campaign on land acquisition through tax title takings
  - b. Encourage more property owners to pursue Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) and Conservation Restrictions (CR)
4. *Increase collaboration with neighboring communities and conservation groups to closely monitor and protect water resources as sub-regional assets*
  - a. Consider options for volunteer-based programs including water quality monitoring and reporting, to allow for greater resident involvement and understanding of vital resources
  - b. Identify areas of contamination and pollution loads
  - c. Increase education and outreach efforts to promote the protection of Lake Wickaboag and Brookhaven Lake
    - i. Coordination between ConCom, Historical Commission, and student groups or youth residents to develop a best practices education campaign for residents and visitors
  - d. Provide guidance for towns to integrate care of water resources into the goals and policies of all relevant plan documents.

# Transportation





# INTRODUCTION

West Brookfield is surrounded by the towns of Brookfield, North Brookfield, New Braintree, Hardwick, Ware, and Warren with access to several state-numbered routes. Route 9 provides east-west access and Route 67 provides north-south access through town. Routes within a close proximity of West Brookfield include Route 32, Route 148, Route 49, and Interstate 90. The closest interchange to I-90 is located in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, which is approximately a 12-mile drive from **West Brookfield's** town center. West Brookfield is not currently served by any fixed-route transit but has minimal flexible paratransit and non-fixed route access through the Quaboag Connector. Due to its limited transit service and rural nature, the dominant mode of transportation is the automobile. West Brookfield is located in the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) planning region and is also a member of the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) for transportation planning purposes.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Road Network

The Local Road Network is among the most expensive and important investments towns can make in transportation. According to the Master Plan Community Survey, 61% of West Brookfield residents drive alone or carpool to work and 90% of **West Brookfield's** residents rely on the roadway network to help travel to work. Not only do residents rely on the road network for transportation around town but commercial and industrial uses also rely on the road network for the transportation of goods and services.

*The Road Inventory File (RIF) is the official state data base of public and private roadways in Massachusetts. The RIF contains information on ownership, classification, and layout among others. This information is used to help determine the amount of local aid dollars each town receives.*

The ownership, or jurisdiction, of a road is important to know as it determines the entity responsible for maintaining that road. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Road Inventory File (RIF) is the most complete digital information on roadway ownership for all communities in Massachusetts. The official source of road ownership is the Town Clerk, who is responsible for sending updated information to MassDOT for any inclusions or exclusions when a new roadway is accepted as a town road.

## West Brookfield Road Jurisdictions

**Table 6-1 West Brookfield Road Jurisdictions**

Jurisdiction	Mileage	Percentage
Unaccepted (private)	12.8	17.95%
MassDOT	3.4	5.08%
Town	50.6	75.71%
NULL	0.026	0.03%

As shown in Table 6-1, according to the MassDOT RIF, there are a total of 66.8 miles of roadway in West Brookfield. Of those roads, 50.6 miles are owned by the town, 3.4 miles are owned by MassDOT, 12.8 miles are unaccepted or privately owned and 0.026 miles have no recorded jurisdiction. Several times during public events, residents of private/unaccepted roads mentioned the burden of paying town taxes but also paying to maintain and plow their roads.

Roads are classified into different functional classification groups based on the service they provide. According to the Federal Highway Administration, roads can be classified into a hierarchy of four categories:

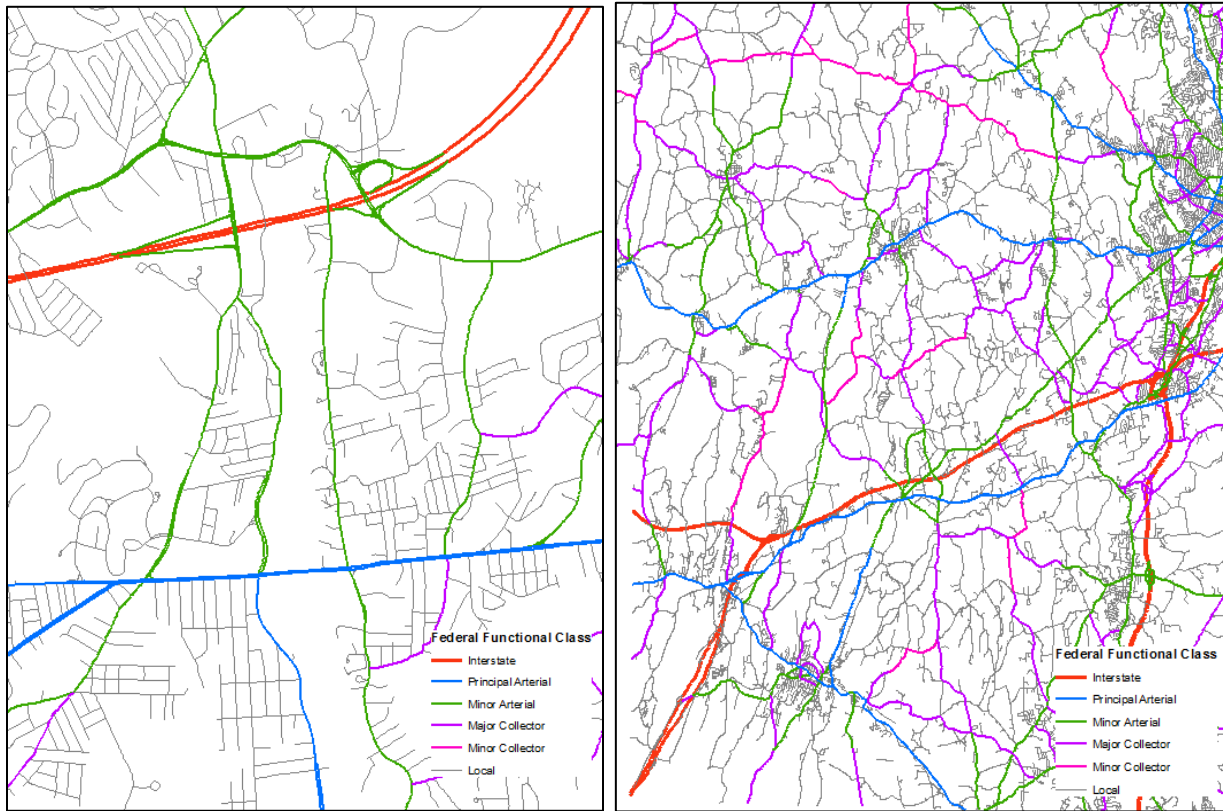
1. *Principal Arterials*
2. *Minor Arterials*
3. *Collectors (Major, Minor)*
4. *Local Roads*

Roads higher in the hierarchy, such as Principal Arterials or Minor Arterials, are designed to provide greater mobility and typically have higher design speeds. In contrast, roads lower in the hierarchy, such as Local Roads, provide local access and typically have lower design speeds. In West Brookfield, 7.0 miles of roads are classified as Principal Arterials, 1.6 miles are classified as Minor Arterials, 6.8 miles are classified as Major Collectors and 51.2 miles are classified as Local Roads.

The diagrams below (Map 6-2) illustrate that higher level roads such as Interstates and Principal Arterials are used for traveling longer distances. Meanwhile, Minor Arterials, Collectors and Local Roads are used to access locations connected by the Interstates and Principal Arterials.



Map 6-2 Road Classifications



## Narrative of the Road Network

### Route 9

The major east-west route connecting West Brookfield to Worcester in the east and Amherst in the west is Massachusetts State Route 9. As shown in Table 6-6, the majority of vehicles traveling to and from West Brookfield utilize Route 9, making significant cross-town connections as well as serving as a connector to surrounding communities.

The entire length of Route 9 in West Brookfield is a two lane bi-directional roadway. The roadway starting from the Brookfield town line and traveling west until the intersection with Foster Hill Road and Route 9 is owned and maintained by MassDOT, with a 32-foot road width and 3-5 foot shoulders of each side of the road. This section of road is sparsely populated with **some agricultural and light industrial uses. From Foster Hill Road to O'Day Lane**, Route 9 is owned and maintained by the Town of West Brookfield and has varying widths.

This section of Route 9 runs through the center of West Brookfield and has dense residential **and commercial uses. From O'Day Lane to Old Warren Road**, Route 9 is owned and maintained by MassDOT, and has an average width of 50 feet with 10-foot shoulders on each side. This section abuts Lake Wickaboag at points, as well as various residential and commercial uses. From Old Warren Road to the Ware Town Line, Route 9 has an average width of 30 feet and 0-5-foot shoulders on each side, with some residential and agricultural uses. This route has a

significant number of access points along it to improve congestion and safety. The CMRPC Access Management toolkit is strongly recommended as a way to help manage future access points while still providing efficient movement.

## Route 67

Massachusetts State Route 67 is the major north-south road connecting West Brookfield to Route 122 and Barre in the north, and U.S. Route 20 and Palmer to the south and other destinations south via Interstate-84. As shown in Table 6-6, Route 67 carries the second highest amount of vehicles traveling to and from West Brookfield making it a significant outside and cross-town connection. **From the North Brookfield town line to O'Day Lane**, Route 67 is owned and maintained by the Town of West Brookfield with an average width of 30 feet and shoulder widths ranging from 1 foot to 5 feet. This section is predominantly agricultural from the North Brookfield town line to Wigwam Road and has dense residential commercial **uses from Wigwam Road to O'Day Lane. From O'Day Lane to the Warren** town line, Route 67 is owned and maintained by MassDOT and has an average width of 40 feet with 10-foot **shoulders on each side. This section has some residential and commercial uses from O'Day Lane to Quaboag Street and is rural on Quaboag Street to the Warren town line.**

## Snow Road

Snow Road is a north-south road connecting Route 9 to Wickaboag Valley Road and is owned entirely by West Brookfield. Snow Road is rural with a few houses and several residential streets and neighborhoods off it. Snow Road provides the primary connection to the west side of Lake Wickaboag.

## Wickaboag Valley Road/ Church Street

Church Street runs from North Main Street to Lake Street where it turns into Wickaboag Valley Road and continues onto the New Braintree Town Line. Church Street is predominately a narrow, residential road. Wickaboag Valley Road is a residential road abutting Lake Wickaboag and intersecting with Snow Road north of Lake Wickaboag. North of Snow Road Wickaboag Valley Road is a rural road extending north to the New Braintree town line.

## Network Conditions

Federal-aid eligible roads are those that are eligible to receive federal funding. Funds are allocated from the federal government to state governments, which are to be distributed for roadway improvement projects through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Functional classification combined with urban/rural designation determines if a roadway qualifies for use of these funds. Eligibility includes all interstates, urban/rural arterials, urban collectors, and rural major collectors. Rural minor collectors and local roads are excluded from this group, **which make up the majority of West Brookfield's** roads. CMRPC regularly monitors the condition of Federal-aid eligible roads, including associated sidewalks and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramps, and conducts traffic counts in West Brookfield. A pavement condition survey conducted by CMRPC categorizes road segments into repair bands based on an Overall Condition Ranking (OCI).

An OCI is determined by the condition of the road and determines what types of repairs are needed. The road conditions are ranked as following:

- Very Poor
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

Similar to pavement segments, sidewalks conditions are also given rankings. Sidewalk segments are ranked as following:

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

Additionally, the condition of sidewalk ramps falls into four categories:

- Compliant
- Historic: A ramp that is non-compliant but is easily upgradeable or likely would have been compliant if built today
- Non-compliant: Does not meet accessibility requirements and is not easily upgradeable
- No ramp

In 2017, CMRPC surveyed the town’s pavement condition, sidewalk and ADA ramp location and condition along Federal-aid eligible roads. The findings show that there are 15.55 miles of Federal-aid eligible roads in West Brookfield. See Appendix N43 for the location and extent of these roads. The pavement condition **survey found that 2.46 miles were in “Excellent” condition, 9.10 miles were in “Good” condition, 1.66 miles were in “Fair” condition, 1.10 miles were in “Poor” condition, and 1.12 miles were in “Very Poor” condition.** The OCI for the West Brookfield Federal-aid eligible road network is 77.12, placing all of the roads **surveyed in the “Good” category**, as compared to the regional average of 71.19. However, this number includes about 2.28 miles of MassDOT owned and maintained roads. When the MassDOT roads are removed the OCI drops to 75.59, but remains **in the “Good” category.** This result implies that the Federal-aid eligible roads in the town of West Brookfield will require constant funding to maintain their condition. Without this funding, the condition of the roads will deteriorate and cost significantly more to repair in the future. During the pavement condition survey, 78 ADA ramp locations and 3.46 miles of sidewalk along Federal-aid eligible road were inventoried along town owned and maintained road ways. Figure 6-3 displays observed conditions at the time of the survey. From left to right, the images represent examples of roads in Excellent, Good, and Very Poor condition, as found in the Town of West Brookfield.

**Figure 6-3 Pavement Survey**



**Table 6-4 ADA Ramp and Sidewalk Conditions**

ADA Ramp Conditions		Sidewalk Conditions	
Condition	Number of Locations	Condition	Miles
Compliant	36	Excellent	2.81
Historic	26	Good	0.07
Non-Compliant	8	Fair	0.58
No Ramp	8	Poor	0

This data indicates that the majority of the West Brookfield pedestrian network along Federal-aid eligible roadways is accessible to all residents. The map in Appendix N47 shows the location of the inventoried sidewalk network.

## Bridges

**Table 6-5 Bridges**

Town	Feature Intersected	Facility Carried	Year Built	Year Reconstructed	Structurally Deficient	Bridge Inspection Date
West Brookfield	Water Quaboag River	Route 67/Route 19	1959		No	4/10/2015
West Brookfield	Water Unknown Body	Long Hill Road	1850	1900	Unknown	No Current Inspection
West Brookfield	Water Mill Brook	Shea Road	1938		No	1/29/2002
West Brookfield	Water Mill Brook	Wickaboag Valley Road	1938		Unknown	No Current Inspection
West Brookfield	Water Quaboag River	Long Hill Road	1983		No	8/3/2016
West Brookfield	Water Suker	Wickaboag Valley	1935		Yes	9/25/2015



	Brook	Road				
West Brookfield	Water Coys Brook	Foster Hill Road	1950	1985	Yes	12/17/2015
West Brookfield	Water Mill Brook	Tyler Road	1939	1956	No	10/1/2015
West Brookfield	Water Coys Brook	Route 9 (Brookfield Road)	1901	1987	No	10/1/2015
West Brookfield	Water Wickaboag LK OTLT	Route 9 (Ware Road)	1959		No	8/3/2016
West Brookfield	RR CSX	Long Hill Road	2012		No	12/6/2016
West Brookfield	Water Lamberton Brook	Route 9 (Ware Road)	1940		Unknown	No Current Inspection
West Brookfield	RR CSX	Route 67/Route 19	1959	2012	No	7/11/2016

The MassDOT Bridge Inspection Management System (BIMS) bridge database features information of MassDOT and municipality-owned bridges with spans greater than 20 feet. Inspections are completed bi-annually. Information on MassDOT and municipality-owned bridges with spans between 10 and 20 feet, and culverts with spans of 4 to 10 feet, are not available at this time, but data collection efforts are underway.

There are thirteen bridges included in the MassDOT BIMS database in West Brookfield, two of which span railroad tracks. Five of the thirteen bridges are owned by MassDOT, and the remaining eight bridges are municipally-owned. Table 6-5 shows all the bridges included in the MassDOT BIMS database in the Town of West Brookfield.

## Traffic Volumes

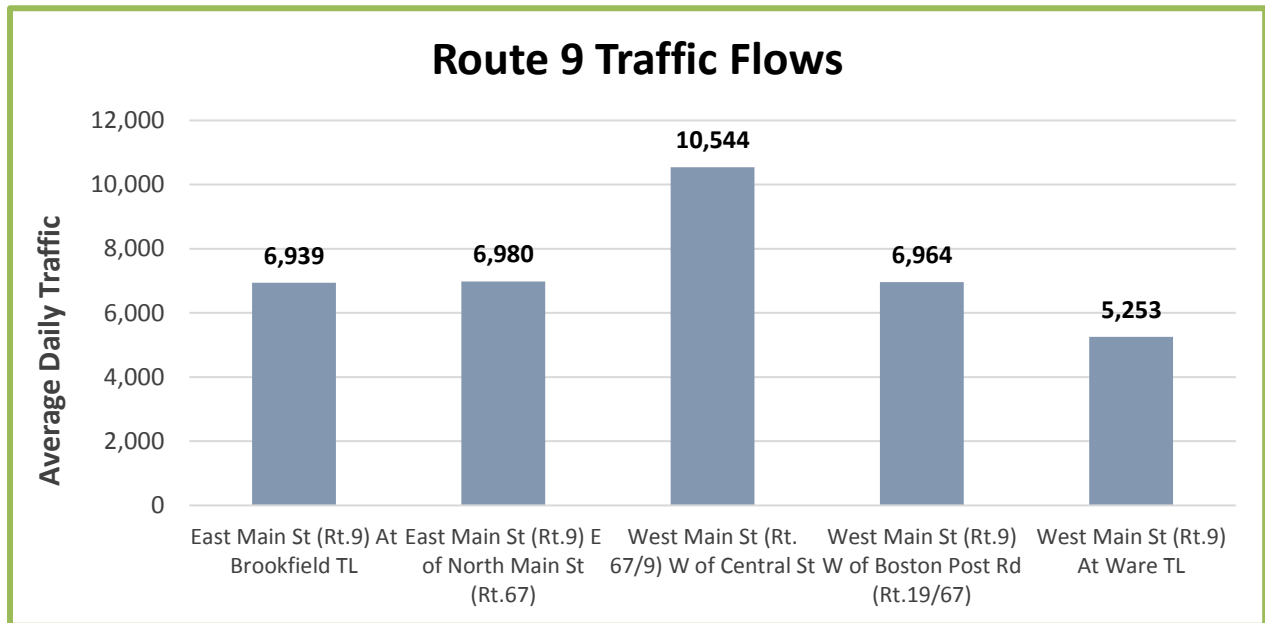
**Table 6-6 Traffic Volume**

Route	Location	Source	Year	Volume/day
Boston Post Rd (Rt19/67)	At Warren TL	CMRPC	2016	5,214
Church St	N of North Main St (Rt67)	CMRPC	2012	1,561
East Main St (Rt9)	At Brookfield TL	CMRPC	2013	6,939
East Main St (Rt9)	E of North Main St (Rt67)	CMRPC	2016	6,980
East Main St (Rt9)	E of School St	CMRPC	2012	7,363
Foster Hill Rd	E of East Main St (Rt9)	CMRPC	2007	362
Gilbertville Rd (Rt32)	At Ware TL	CMRPC	2016	2,583
New Braintree Rd	At New Braintree TL	CMRPC	2013	846
New Braintree Rd	N of Church St	CMRPC	2016	1,389
North Main St (Rt67)	At North Brookfield TL	CMRPC	2016	2,713
North Main St (Rt67)	W of School St	CMRPC	2016	4,358
Pierce Rd	N of West Main St (Rt9)	CMRPC	2010	750
School St	Btwn Route 9 & Route 67	CMRPC	2012	1,741
West Main St (Rt67/9)	W of Central St	CMRPC	2016	10,544
West Main St (Rt9)	At Ware TL	CMRPC	2016	5,253
West Main St (Rt9)	W of Boston Post Rd (Rt19/67)	CMRPC	2016	6,964

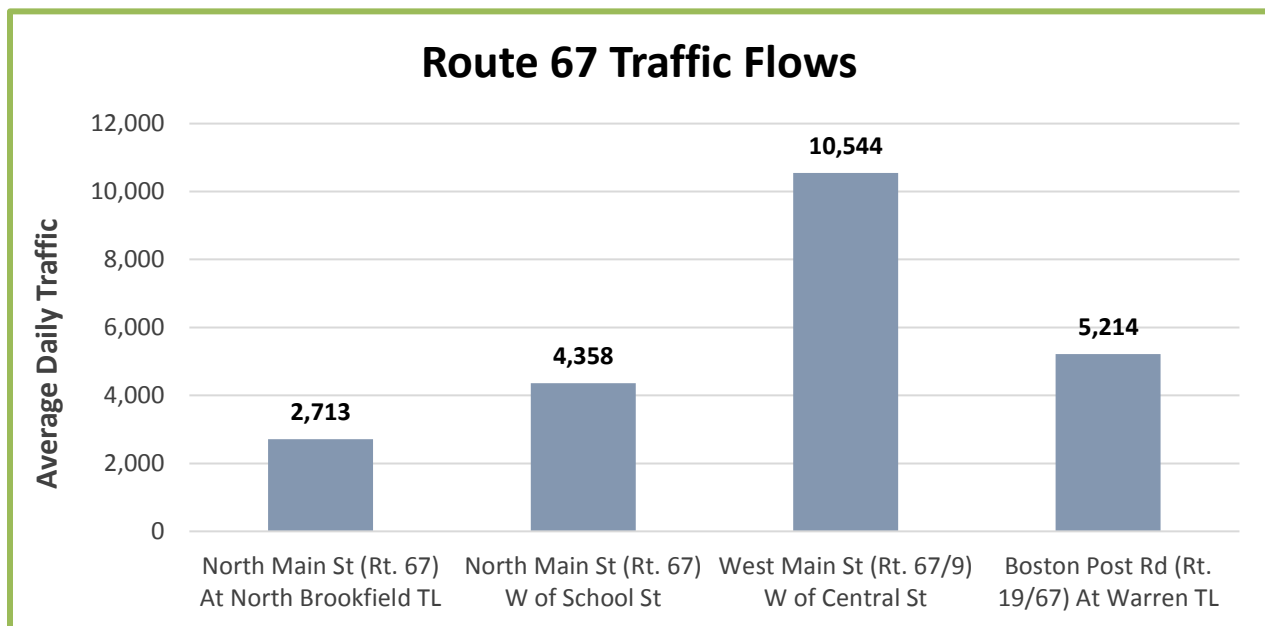
The previous chart lists the most up-to-date traffic counting data available for the town.

The most heavily traveled roads in town are MA Route 9 and Route 67. This is due to the cross-town and inter-town connections they provide to residents and non-residents. Furthermore, the intersection of North Main Street (Route 67), East Main Street (Route 9), West Main Street (Route 9), and East Main Street (Route 67) converge and along this stretch of road until the roads split the highest traffic volumes in West Brookfield exist. The following charts show the observed traffic flows along these roads at key points.

**Figure 6-7 Route 9 Traffic Flows**



**Figure 6-8 Route 67 Traffic Flows**



## Freight Rail and Trucking

CSX is a railroad serving a national market, operating freight and intermodal trains predominantly on the eastern seaboard. The railroad line traverses through West Brookfield south of West Main Street, adjacent to the Quaboag River.

There are no freight facilities in West Brookfield. However, there are several small freight facilities in nearby towns. As part of the CMRPC Regional Traffic Counting program, axle classification data is collected, which indicates the amount of heavy vehicle flows on the regions roadways. The following chart indicates the amount and percentage of vehicles at each location that were considered ‘heavy vehicles’ which are vehicles that have six or more tires touching the road.

**Table 6-9 Heavy Vehicles Volume**

Street	Location	Heavy Volume	Heavy Percent	Year
Route 67 (North Main Street)	South of School Street	256	5.87	2016
Route 9 (West Main Street)	At Ware Town Line	353	6.71	2016
Route 9/67 (West Main Street)	West of Central Street	741	7.02	2016
Route 19/67 (Boston Post Road)	At Warren Town Line	389	7.46	2016
New Braintree Road	North of Route 67 (North Main Street)	110	7.91	2016
Route 9 (East Main Street)	East of Route 67 (North Main Street)	668	9.57	2016
Route 32 (Gilbertville Road)	At Ware Town Line	264	10.22	2016

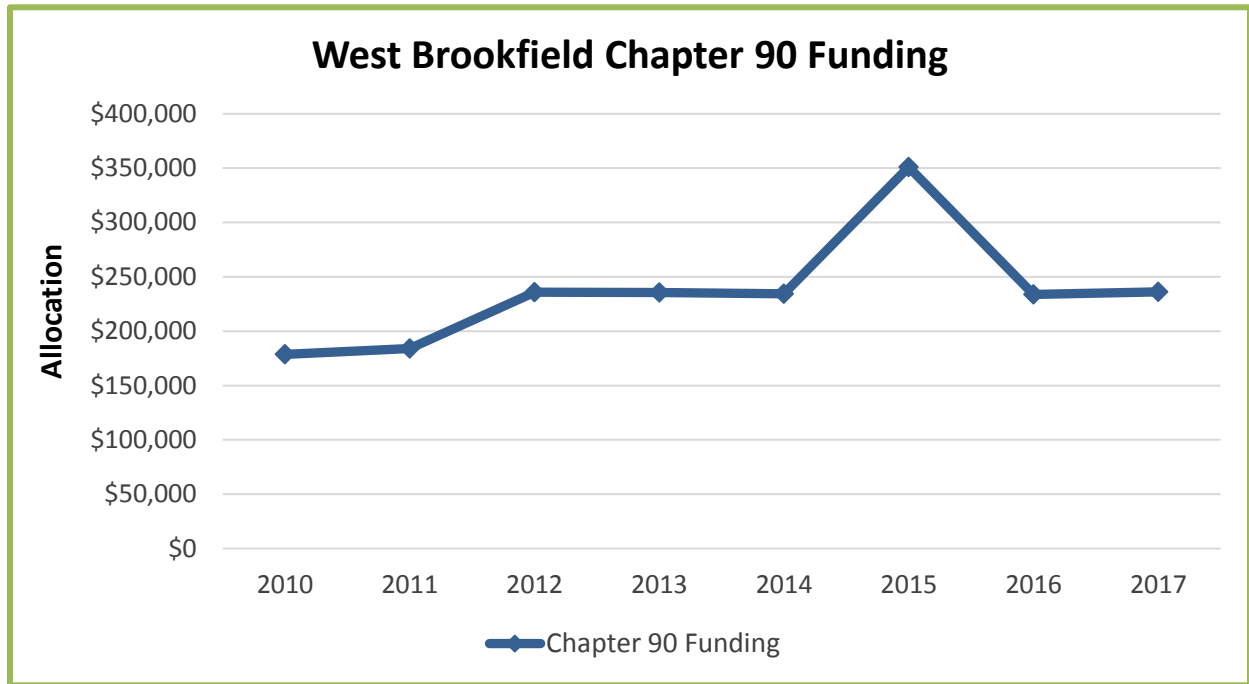
## Road Network Funding

The Massachusetts Chapter 90 Program is a State funding program directed by MassDOT that **reimburses towns for “maintaining, repairing, improving and constructing town and county ways and bridges which qualify under the State Aid Highways Guidelines adopted by the Public Works Commission”**. The funds may be used for construction and preservation work to extend the life of capital facilities, bikeways, salt sheds, road building equipment, and garages for the storage of road building equipment. Chapter 90 funds are allocated annually and based on a formula developed by the Legislative Rural Caucus of the Transportation Committee. This formula uses three weighted categories to determine the percentage of the total allocation each town will receive. The categories include: Roadway mileage (58.33%), Population (20.83%) and Employment (20.83%).

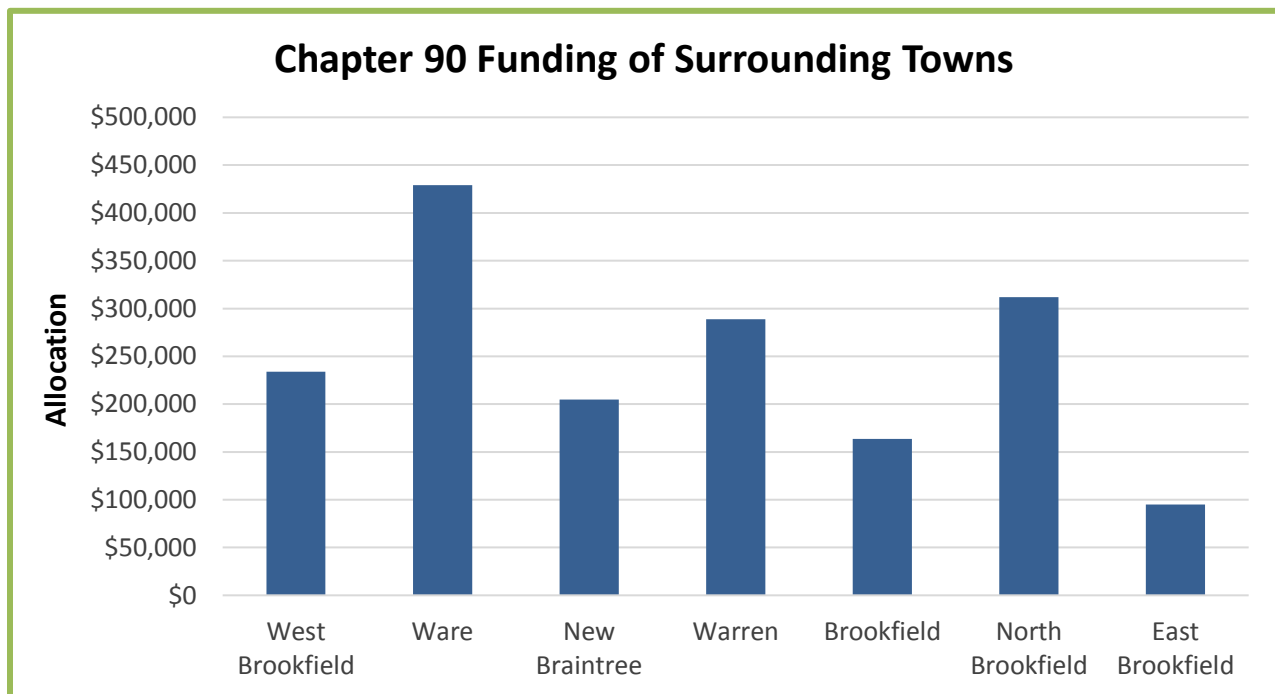
Based on this formula, with a population of 3,701, employment figure of 962, and a road network of 50 miles, West Brookfield received \$236,200 of Chapter 90 funds in 2017. Figure 6-10 shows West Brookfield Chapter 90 apportionments of past years (the spike in 2015 represents extra funding provided as a result of extreme winter conditions).

If a new road is accepted by the town, the road mileage portion of the calculation will increase, and with it, potentially, increasing the **town's** Chapter 90 funding. For this to happen, any time a new road is accepted by the town the MassDOT RIF must be updated.

**Figure 6-10 West Brookfield Chapter 90 Funding**



**Figure 6-11 Chapter 90 Funding**

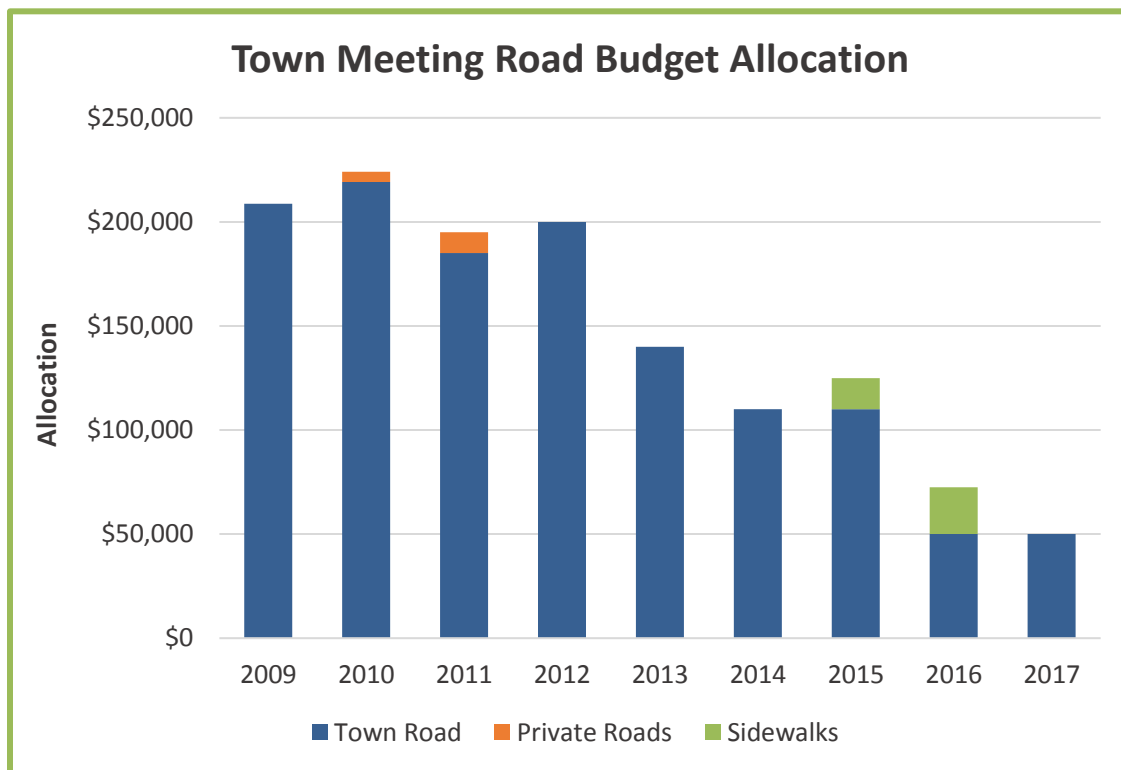




In addition to the funding received from the state the Town of West Brookfield allocates additional funds for road repairs, sidewalk repairs and in the past the repair of private roads through town meetings.

The following chart (Figure 6-12) shows the current and historic funding levels through this process. In the 2014 West Brookfield annual report it was noted that past studies had identified and recommended the need for approximately \$2.5 million to fund road repairs and maintenance with the current funding levels it is likely that this number has grown if not stayed the same.

**Figure 6-12 Town Meeting Road Budget Allocation**



## Journey to Work

Journey to Work data is collected by the United States Census Bureau. The most recently collected commuting flow data available is the 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for 2009 to 2013. Only destination municipalities with ten or more employees were selected. Similar information was collected through the Master Plan Community Survey and during the Master Plan community events.

The majority of West Brookfield residents work outside of West Brookfield, with 73% working in another town. Many employment centers are located 30 minutes or more from West Brookfield, requiring significant commuting time for workers. An estimated 82% of West Brookfield residents drive alone to work, while 5% carpool and 13% travel by another mode including walking and biking.

The Master Plan Community Survey demonstrated that of the residents that work, 23% travel more than 30 miles to work while 21% travel 21-30 miles to work.

With such a high percentage of residents commuting long distances to similar locations, an increase in the number of residents commuting by carpool or utilizing transit is a possibility. When asked about the types of transportation options West Brookfield should explore, 39% of respondents answered with local and/or regional public transportation, and 12% responded park-and-ride lots, with additional comments supporting municipal lots, transit access, and increased senior transit access.

**Figure 6-13 Journey to Work**

Destination Municipality	Workers in Commuting Flow	Estimated Drive Time
<b>West Brookfield town</b>	480	NA
<b>Worcester city</b>	225	43 min
<b>Ware town</b>	104	11 min
<b>Sturbridge town</b>	90	21 min
<b>Spencer town</b>	88	16 min
<b>Warren town</b>	78	5 min
<b>Palmer Town city</b>	60	22 min
<b>Southbridge Town city</b>	54	27 min
<b>Auburn town</b>	51	35 min
<b>North Brookfield town</b>	51	7 min
<b>Hadley town</b>	49	45 min
<b>Webster town</b>	44	41 min
<b>Northborough town</b>	36	52 min
<b>Leicester town</b>	33	24 min
<b>Providence city</b>	28	1 h 20 min
<b>Westborough town</b>	27	54 min
<b>Framingham town</b>	25	1 h
<b>Natick town</b>	24	1 h
<b>Rutland town</b>	21	29 min
<b>Belchertown town</b>	20	26 min
<b>Aggregate of other Hampden County</b>	86	
<b>Aggregate of Norfolk County</b>	16	
<b>Aggregate of other Middlesex County</b>	21	
<b>Aggregate of other Worcester County</b>	65	
<b>Aggregate of Franklin County</b>	1	
<b>Aggregate of other Hampshire County</b>	10	
<b>Aggregate of CT and NY towns</b>	28	

## Transportation Safety

MassDOT compiles crash data from local police department reports that are collected by the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) Crash Records section. CMRPC obtains crash data from MassDOT and utilizes Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to analyze accident locations and categorize the locations into automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian crash clusters.

MassDOT utilizes two criteria to compare crashes; (1) Equivalent Property Damage Only (EPDO) and (2) Crash Clusters. EPDO is an index that scores a crash location based on the end result of the crash using a point system. The point system is structured as following: Property damage = 1 point, Injury = 5 points, and Fatality = 10 points. Crash clusters are a result of consolidating nearby crash locations and creating an imaginary buffer of a 25 meter radius around the crashes. MassDOT produces a list of the top 200 crash clusters in Massachusetts, based on the most recent three-year data set. There are no intersections in West Brookfield on the Statewide Top 200 Crash Clusters list.

Table 6-14 below lists the location of automobile crash clusters in West Brookfield between 2012 through 2014. Only those locations with more than one accident and an EPDO rating greater than five in the three-year span are listed.

**Table 6-14 Automobile Crash Clusters 2012-2014**

Automobile Crash Clusters (2012-2014) w/EPDO >5				
Total Crashes	EPDO	Street 1	Street 2	Intersection Control
3	7	East Main Street	Maple Street	Stop Sign
3	7	East Main Street	West Main Street	Yield Sign

Table 6-15 below summarizes automobile accidents in West Brookfield between the years of 2008 and 2014. Between 2012 and 2014, of the 93 automobile crashes reported with available results, 62 (66%) were property damage only crashes, and 32 (34%) involved persons with injuries. There were 2 (2%) automobile crashes with fatalities. Figure x contains information regarding the location of automobile crash clusters and individual automobile crash locations from 2012 to 2014.



**Table 6-15 Automobile Crash Summary 2008-2014**

Automobile Crash Summary (2008-2014)				
Year	Total Crashes	Property Damage Only Crashes	Crashes with Injuries	Fatal Crashes
2009	32 (31 reported)	21	10	0
2010	20	12	8	0
2011	13 (12 reported)	10	2	0
2012	4	4	4	0
2013	15 (14 reported)	7	7	2
2014	9	8	1	0

Regarding bicycle and pedestrian safety, there have been no reported bicycle crashes, and one reported pedestrian crash in West Brookfield since 2011. However, the reported pedestrian crash did involve a fatality. CMRPC bicycle and pedestrian crash location databases contain information from 2005 to 2014.

## Public Transportation

In Massachusetts, there are fifteen Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) that provide public transportation services to its member communities. West Brookfield is a member community of the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) and receives paratransit services to eligible residents. Residents who are 60 years of age or older, or persons with a disability, are eligible for WRTA paratransit service.

In West Brookfield, paratransit services are operated by SCM Elderbus, through a contract with the WRTA. In-town transportation is available Monday through Friday and out-of-town transportation for medical appointments is provided three days a week. In Fiscal Year 2017 (July 2016 to June 2017), SCM Elderbus provided a total of 535 passenger trips to West Brookfield customers, ranking 15<sup>th</sup> out of the 22 communities that SCM Elderbus serves. For context, neighboring Brookfield had 1,069 passenger trips, and East Brookfield had 572 passenger trips in FY 2017.

As noted previously, West Brookfield had been identified as an area to monitor for future fixed-route transit service as part of the WRTAs Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA) plan. In the CSA, West Brookfield was one of five areas within the WRTA service area highlighted as an area with potential for high transit demand that is currently not served by WRTA fixed-route service. While there are no present plans to provide fixed-route transit service to West Brookfield, WRTA planning staff has noted to monitor the area as part of its long-range planning efforts.



WRTA fixed-route service is not available in West Brookfield directly, but Route 33 currently provides service to Brookfield Center from Worcester with two roundtrips in the morning, and two in the evening. The route terminates at the intersection of River and Central Streets, in the Brookfield common area. From the West Brookfield Town Offices, access to the WRTA fixed-route service is about a five minute drive (2.9 miles) or nearly an hour walk for those who do not have access to a vehicle.



Additional public transportation services are available through neighboring Ware; the Quaboag Connector, and the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA). The Quaboag Connector is a new transportation service operated by the Town of Ware that launched in 2017, and provides service to eight communities (including West Brookfield) in the Quaboag region. The van service is open to anyone from the towns served during its operating hours, though trips related to employment and education take first priority. The Quaboag Connector service operates on a reservation system, and trips are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Requests for other purposes are placed on a waiting list and scheduled based on availability.

The PVTA operates the Ware Shuttle, which is a fixed-community shuttle service that runs Monday to Friday. The Ware Shuttle provides service to various destinations in the center of Ware and provides service to Palmer, where it connects with other PVTA services. From the West Brookfield Town Offices, access to the PVTA Ware Shuttle is about an 11 minute drive (6.7 miles). Private inter-city bus and rail transportation providers such as Peter Pan, Greyhound, and Amtrak, are not available directly in West Brookfield. The closest access to such services is located in Worcester or Springfield.

## Regional Plans

The current regional and local plans and studies influencing the transportation in West Brookfield are as followed:

### Regional Transportation Plan

Mobility2040 is the current Long Range Regional Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the CMMPO region with the purpose to “identify the multi-modal transportation needs of the region, the resources available to address the needs, and the initiatives and project investments planned for the next 25 years.” For example, Mobility2040 identifies 2.1 miles of Route 9 in West Brookfield as a major infrastructure project to improve safety for all users of the road. A project that Mobility2040 lists in the five year band of 2026 to 2030 is the resurfacing of Route 9 from Ware Town Line to Pierce Road. Currently this project is at 25% design and will cost an estimated \$12,591,000.

### WRTA Comprehensive Service Analysis

In 2015, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority was tasked by the Massachusetts State Legislature to prepare a Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA).

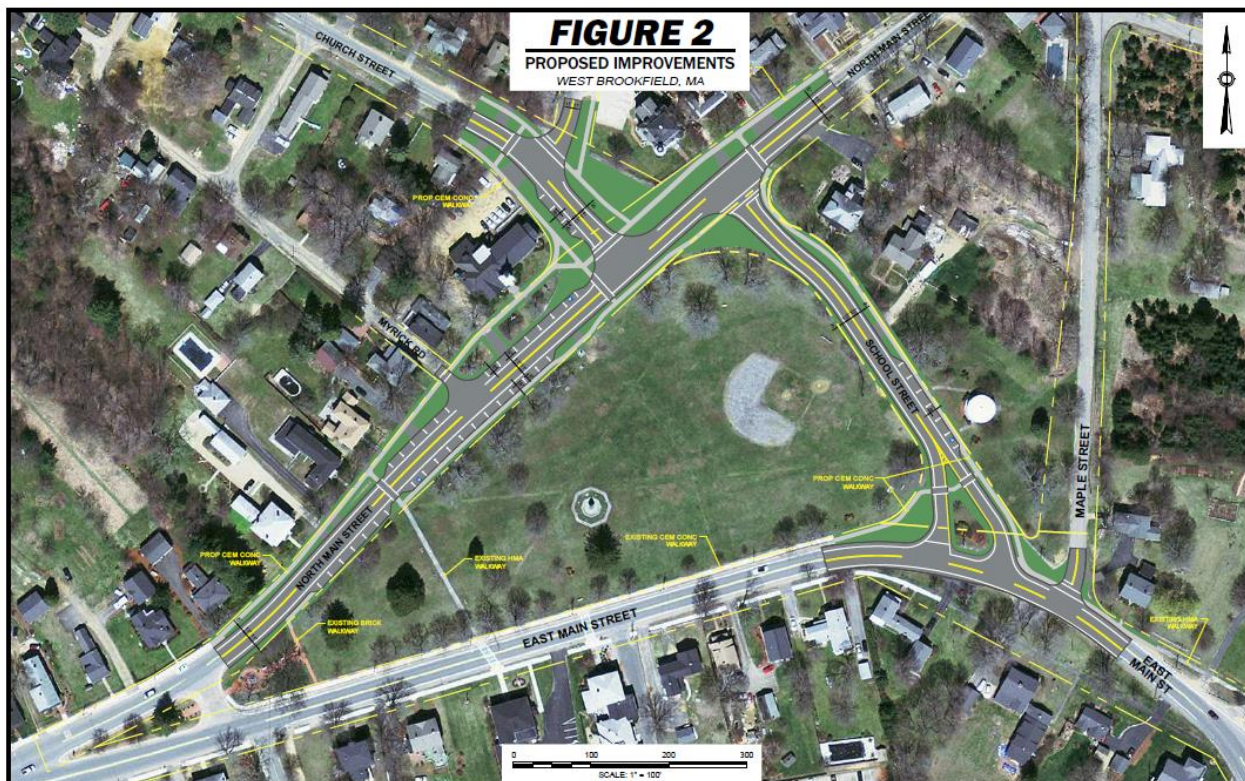
The plan served as an opportunity to analyze the entire fixed-route network with the goals to improve local transit service operations, identify potential new transit service markets and meet the identified needs for transit service in the WRTA service area. In the CSA, West Brookfield was identified as one of five areas in the region with a potential for high transit demand that is currently not served by WRTA fixed-route service. Due to the presence of Priority Development Areas (PDAs), numerous small employers and a higher than average percentage of households without a vehicle, West Brookfield was included as an area to monitor for future fixed-route transit service dependent on the availability of funding.

### CMMPO Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a federally mandated requirement for all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The TIP is a prioritized listing of all **transportation investments in an MPO’s metropolitan planning area for the next** five federal fiscal years. Potential TIP projects are scored and selected by CMMPO staff and Advisory Committee before being endorsed by the CMMPO.

- Current TIP Projects- Under Construction
  - Wickaboag Valley Rd bridge replacement over Sucker Brook - \$1,488,000
  - Reconstruction of Route 9, Route 67 intersection at School St - \$1,624,000
- FY2018-TIP
  - Sidewalk & wheelchair construction on Route 9 - from Foster Hill Rd to Ridge Rd - \$940,000
- FY2020 -TIP
  - Foster Hill Rd bridge replacement over Coys Brook - \$1,815,000

**Map 6-16 Proposed Improvements (Appendix N49)**



## MassWorks Grant

MassWorks grants provide funding for public infrastructure to municipalities that support economic development and job creation. West Brookfield received a \$1,000,000 MassWorks grant for infrastructure improvements in November of 2016. This grant provided funding for projects on Cottage Street, Lakeview Avenue, and Lake Street in order to address safety concerns along these heavily traveled roadways that connect West Brookfield Center and the Town Beach. Improvements will increase pedestrian safety, accessibility with traffic calming measures, new sidewalks, and intersection improvements to popular recreation destinations. The MassWorks grant of \$114,000 is to be used for project design and engineering costs.

**Figure 6-17 MassWorks Grant – back casting**

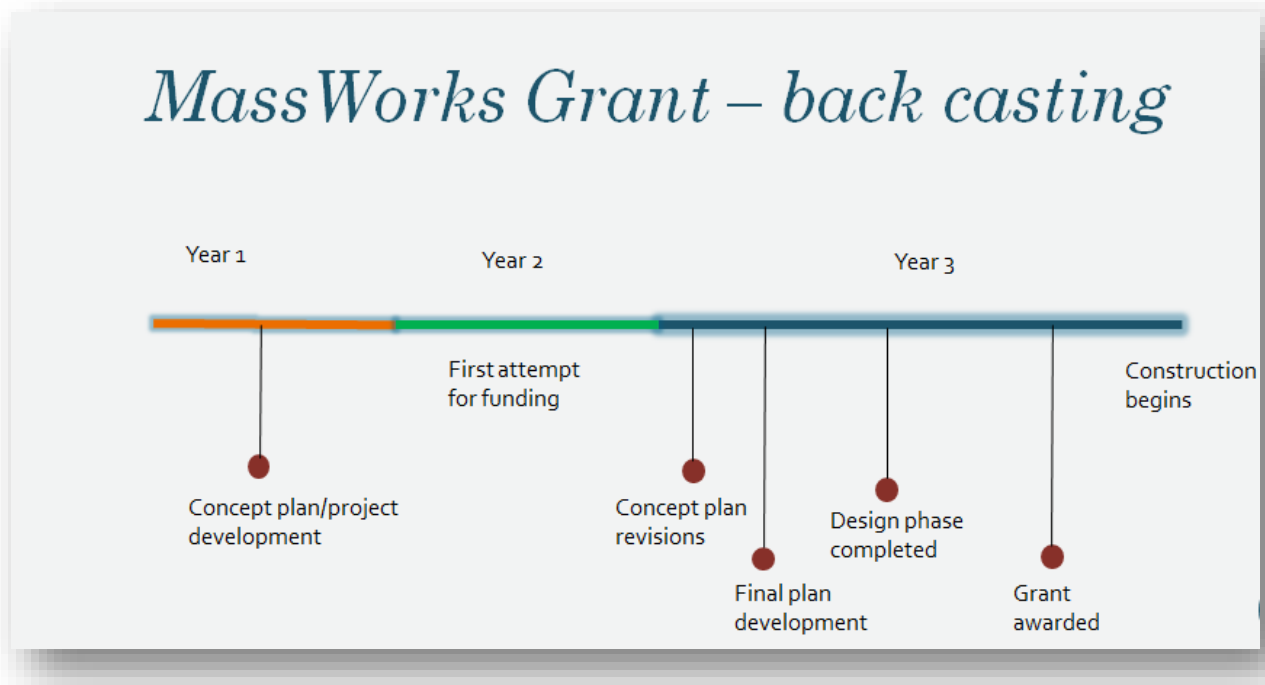


Figure 6-17 depicts a conceptual timeline for the funding process of the current MassWorks Grant funding the improvements along Cottage Street, Lakeview Ave, and Lake Street. This was a multiyear process stretching beyond the two years shown below. Several attempts had been made for various projects around town, however none had been accepted. Efforts switched to the current project location. After one unsuccessful attempt, changes were made to the proposal and the project design was accepted. Between development of the original plan and the award of the grant, approximately six months of work are required. This is in order to gain town acceptance and begin initial site work so that when funding is received, work can begin immediately.

## Plans and Goals of Surrounding Towns

In addition to understanding how regional planning efforts will impact the Town of West Brookfield, it is also necessary to understand how planning efforts in surrounding towns have an impact on transportation. The following list identifies key themes found in the most recent surrounding town plans:

### Town of Ware - 2016 Master Plan

- Challenges for population without personal vehicles
- Inadequate public transit
- Potential for Ware to become a major regional transportation hub
- Major improvements are planned for Main Street, making the street more accessible and safer for cyclists and pedestrians

### Town of New Braintree - 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan

- Preserving the rural character of New Braintree
- Protecting the scenic qualities of Route 67 and the Ware River Valley
- Preserving historic resources and scenic roads in the town
- Developing tools to manage town growth

### Town of Warren - 2006 Master Plan

- The establishment of a public transportation system
- Maintenance of roads and sidewalks
- Safety concerns at dangerous intersections
- Future Massachusetts Turnpike interchange in Warren

### Town of Brookfield - 2011 Master Plan

- Focus on investing in existing infrastructure
- Improving opportunity for regional and public transportation
- Promoting increased safety on streets
- Protecting the rural and historic character of the town

### Town of North Brookfield - 2007 Master Plan

- Emphasizes the necessary provision of efficient, safe, and well-maintained circulation

### Town of East Brookfield - 2008 Master Plan

- Encouraging non-motorized modes of transportation
- Implementing methods to improve safety
- Promoting regional mass transit options
- Maintaining the town's rural character



# ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Summary of Public Outreach and Community Events

As part of the planning process, an extensive public participation effort was conducted. These efforts included a community wide survey, three community events, as well as outreach through town events and social media. Through these outreach efforts, residents of West Brookfield were able to voice their needs and concerns about transportation in town. Among the many responses, several themes stood out, which include:

- The need to maintain the current infrastructure
- The need to increase safety and the availability of pedestrian and bicycle facilities around town, particularly in the Town Center area
- The availability of parking at key locations and times
- The potential expansion of transit access through the WRTA or the PVTA

## Road Network

### Road Condition and Funding

Results of the Master Plan Community Survey showed that 46% of respondents believe that town roads are in “Adequate” condition; 20% of town roads are in “Good” condition; and 34% are in “Poor” condition. With a limited road maintenance budget of \$236,200 provided entirely through the Chapter 90 program, West Brookfield may struggle to maintain the condition of its road network in the future. It will be an important step for West Brookfield to designate local funding for road maintenance and utilize a maintenance plan. To help ensure an efficient maintenance program, the utilization of a roadway condition survey and maintenance plan is highly recommended.

The Department of Public Works maintains a list of planned road and street re-construction through 2023, and this list could be expanded to include planned maintenance work. An expansion of the DPW list will help the public understand how funding is being spent and the potential need for additional funding. To assist with this effort, a town-wide pavement survey could help determine which roads are in the greatest need of repair. It is recommended that the Town of West Brookfield work with CMRPC or an alternative consultant to establish a survey program of all town maintained streets that will help inform the current road maintenance list. Two bridges owned by the Town of West Brookfield are in Structurally Deficient condition, meaning the structure of the bridge was rated to be in poor condition at the time of inspection. Three town-owned bridges have not yet been inspected. This poses a potentially large burden on the Town to repair or replace these bridges if they are deemed unsafe.

## Pedestrian Network

The Master Plan Community Survey and community events raised concerns about the sidewalk networks condition and connectivity, which is located predominantly in the downtown area.

Two major projects have affected the sidewalk network in 2017: a TIP project around the Town Common as well as a MassWorks project on Lake Street which repaired many of deficient sidewalks and ramps. This work will create a starting point for any sidewalk repair or expansion efforts to emanate from concentrating in the downtown area where these types of facilities will be used.

The map in Appendix N47 shows identified areas that should be considered for network repair or expansion. While the Master Plan Community Survey demonstrates public support for the expansion of the pedestrian network, funding these types of projects with town money is not currently supported. To help fund projects focused on pedestrian safety, the Town of West Brookfield should utilize available funding programs such as the MassDOT Complete Streets Program.

## Bicycle Network

West Brookfield does not currently have a formal bicycle network. According to results from the Master Plan Community Survey, a majority of residents do not ride bicycles in town for numerous reasons. The expansion of the bicycle network should be included during the regular construction and maintenance of roads in West Brookfield. With 34% of Master Plan Community Survey respondents indicating that dedicated bike lanes should be explored, this is a strategy that could adequately address the existing issues regarding the bicycle network.

## Transit and Commuting

The need for increased transit and commuting options has been identified as an area of need through the master planning process. West Brookfield has been identified as an area of need in the WRTA CSA. The Town should work to identify residential and commercial areas that would benefit from and support transit service, as well as work with the WRTA to potentially expand service. Alternative options that will benefit residents who travel farther distances to work should also be considered, such as the creation of park-and-ride or carpool lots.

**WEST BROOKFIELD 2017 MASTER PLAN**  
**CMRPC** Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission  
**massDOT** Massachusetts Department of Transportation

**Complete Streets**

**What is a Complete Street?**  
 "A Complete Street is one that provides safe and accessible options for all travel modes – walking, biking, transit and vehicles – for people of all ages and abilities.  
 Complete Streets improvements may be large scale such as corridor wide improvements or focused on the needs of a single mode."  
 MassDOT

**Background**

- Prioritization work is funded by MassDOT
- Opportunity for \$400,000 in state funding, annually; once prioritization plan is complete
- Holistic review of needs, safety, and gaps
- Context-sensitive, not one-size fits all
- Improve access between homes, schools, work, recreation, and retail destinations
- Develop a connected, integrated network to serve all users – autos, bikes, pedestrians

**Eligible Projects can include:**

- Traffic and intersection improvements
- Bicycle facilities and roadway lane improvements
- Pedestrian facilities, sidewalk improvements
- Transit facilities for bus stop shelters or railroad crossing improvements

...and many more

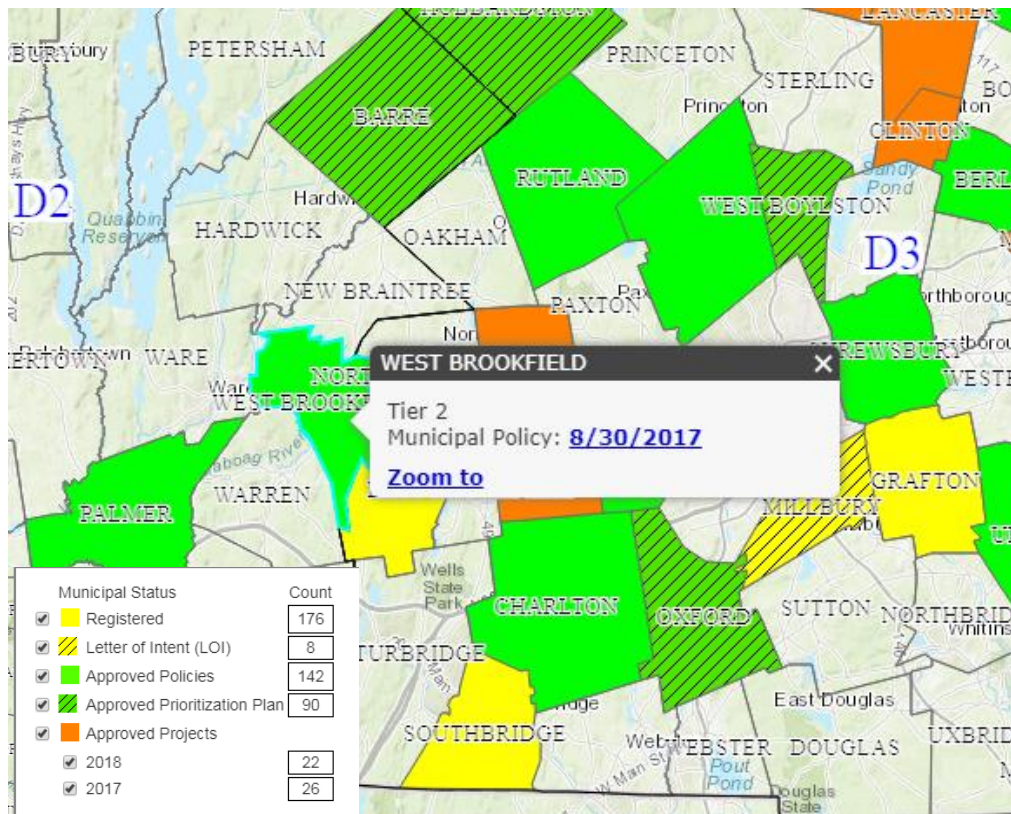
Source: MassDOT and CMRPC

## Complete Streets

Complete Streets is a planning approach that helps communities take into account every mode of transportation for all users, so that pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and automobiles are all considered. This approach allows for different types of accommodations depending on the needs of the users and the context of the roadway so that unnecessary and costly features are not provided where they are not needed. MassDOT created the Complete Streets Funding Program in February 2016 as a mechanism to provide technical assistance and project funding to communities for local roadway improvements. Through the program, communities are eligible for technical assistance once a Complete Streets policy is adopted by the municipality (Tier 1), then the community must complete a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (Tier 2) in order to be eligible for project construction funding (Tier 3). The current funding process functions the same as the Chapter 90 Program were a community enters into a contract with a consultant or works **in-house to complete Tier’s 1 and 2 and is** reimbursed for expenditures by MassDOT. At Tier 3 the community must complete several forms and once a project has been accepted by MassDOT any costs up to \$400,000 maybe covered. See Appendix M8 for more information about Complete Streets.

The West Brookfield Board of Selectmen endorsed the Town’s Complete Streets Policy in August 2017. As of October 2017, West Brookfield has yet to complete the Complete Streets Project Prioritization Plan (Tier 2) in the funding program.

**Map 6-18 Complete Streets Status District 3**



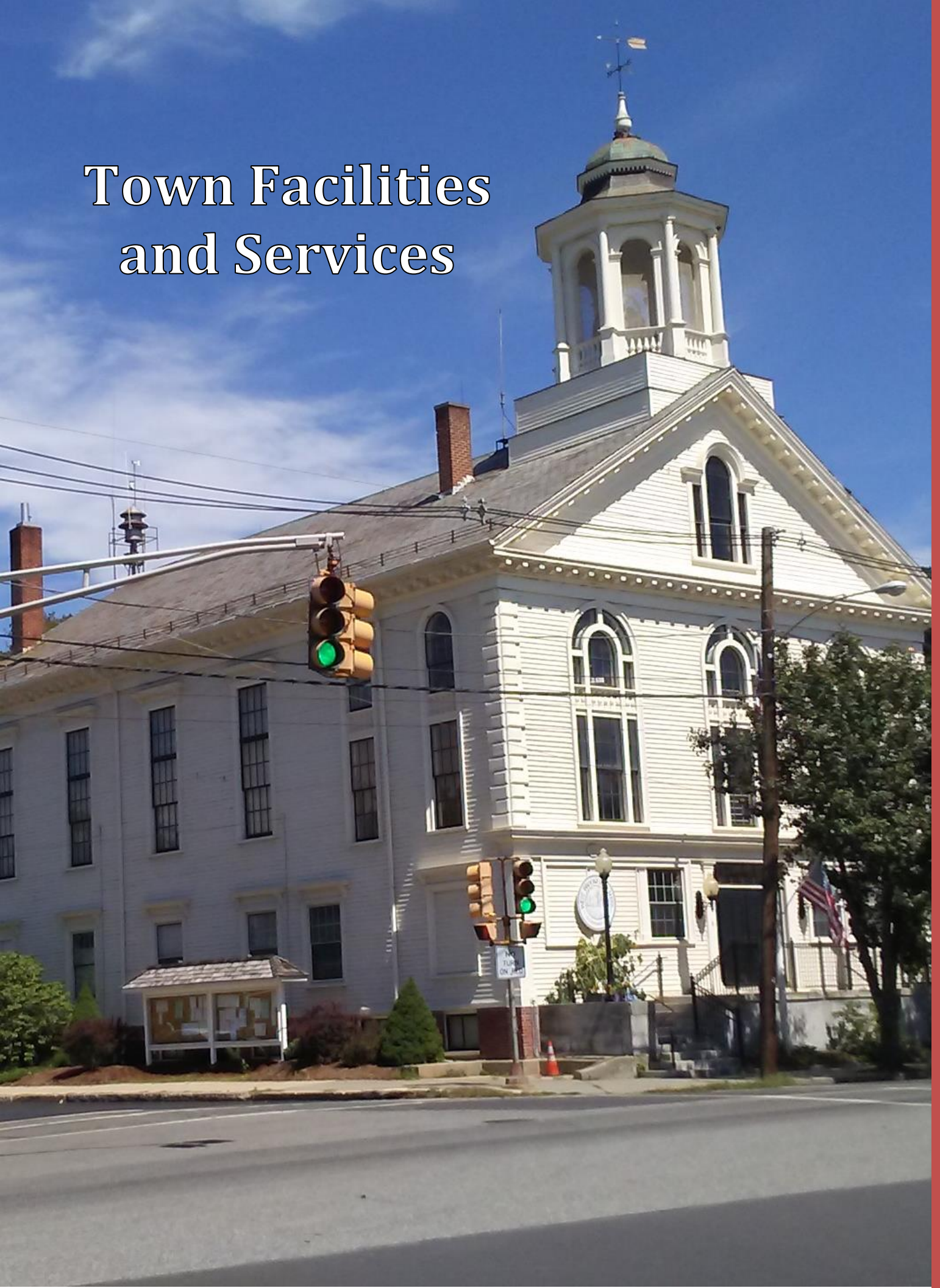
# GOALS AND ACTIONS – TRANSPORTATION

1. *Maintain and enhance **the condition of West Brookfield's** transportation network*
  - a. Establish a Road Survey program to help determine road maintenance and funding needs
    - i. Work with CMRPC or another consultant to establish a road survey program
    - ii. Work with CMRPC or another consultant to expand road maintenance tracking system
  - b. Establish a sidewalk and ADA ramp survey program to help determine maintenance and funding needs.
    - i. Work with CMRPC or another consultant to establish a sidewalk/ADA ramp survey program
    - ii. Work with CMRPC or another consult to establish a sidewalk/ADA ramp maintenance tracking system
  - c. Establish a bridge maintenance or replacement plan to help determine funding needs
    - i. Work with a consultant to establish a bridge capital plan
2. *Increase access to different forms of transportation*
  - a. Increase the access of residents to carpooling and other transit options
    - i. Study ways to assist carpooling commuters and identify key travel patterns and needs
    - ii. Study partnerships with organizations to provide car pool lots
    - iii. Work with WRTA to study and promote transit to West Brookfield
    - iv. Work with PVRTA to study and promote transit to West Brookfield
  - b. Expand the existing pedestrian network
    - i. Construct new sidewalks and ADA ramps that will expand the pedestrian network
  - c. Enhance the parking experience of residents and visitors in key locations
    - i. Conduct a parking inventory and study to determine parking needs and options for increasing availability
    - ii. Create an special event parking program to streamline use of town resources and to ensure that visitors have a positive experience
3. *Pursue available funding through the State or other sources*
  - a. Pursue funding from multiple sources for improvements to roads
    - i. Study the accuracy of the Road Inventory File to ensure that West Brookfield gets its full Chapter 90 funding
    - ii. Continue to work with CMRPC to pursue TIP funded projects
    - iii. Continue to pursue Route 9 Major Infrastructure project identified in Mobility2040
    - iv. Work with CMRPC or another consultant to identify funding opportunities to repair or replace town owned bridges



- b. Pursue funding from multiple sources for improvements to sidewalks and ramps
  - i. Continue to pursue MassDOT Complete Streets funding by enacting a Tier I policy
  - ii. Pursue the establishment of an approved Tier II prioritization plan
  - iii. Pursue and receive Tier III project funding

# Town Facilities and Services

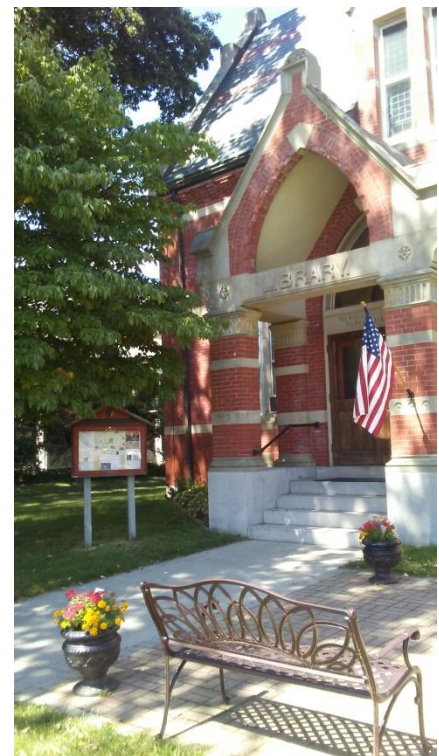




## INTRODUCTION – TOWN FACILITIES

Town facilities and services are the most visible representation of any local government, and arguably the most important. Respondents to the Master Plan survey agree, with 98% saying that local services are important or very important to their quality of life, and 97% in concurrence about local facilities.

Town facilities overall appear to be adequate for the short term in function, scope, condition, and efficiency for a community of West Brookfield's size and budget. Based on survey results, the library and elementary school are particularly well-liked, and both remain quite functional despite their age. Four facilities are marginally functional and will require replacement or substantial renovation in the short-to-medium term to maintain adequate services: the Fire Station, the Police Station, the Highway Department's salt shed, and the highway garage. The Fire Station, attached to the rear of Town Hall, is in fair condition and is marginally large enough for efficient fire response operations. Parking is shared with the Town Hall, which can be challenging for on-call firefighters. The police station is located within the Town Hall in a space that has been acknowledged as inadequate in both size (only 700 square feet) and configuration. The Town Hall/Police/Fire complex is the Town's Emergency Operations Center, but limited backup electrical power is available only from a small gas generator without a fire-safe housing. The public survey shows strong support (62%) for improvement or replacement of police and fire facilities but past efforts have failed because of high costs. On Front Street, the Highway Department's salt shed is in poor condition and requires replacement or reconstruction to maintain function. The older section of the adjacent highway garage is likewise in poor condition and building systems are obsolete and inefficient.



## General Government Facilities

### Town Hall

West Brookfield's historic Town Hall was built in the 1850s and continues to serve as the primary home of local government. Core municipal offices including the Board of Selectmen/Executive Secretary, Town Clerk, Assessor, Tax Collector and Treasurer are located here. The Police and Fire stations are respectively located in the Town Hall and in an attached structure to its rear - they are discussed separately under Safety & Emergency Services Facilities.



Town Hall is a Victorian-era three-level structure with public meeting rooms and some offices on the lower level, additional offices and the Police Station on the middle (main) level, and a large auditorium on the upper level. Following substantial renovations and handicapped-access improvements in the 1990s, the building is in good condition for its age and is generally considered to be adequate for its current level of use. (Some additional storage and meeting space would be appreciated by employees and community groups.) Parking - shared with the Police and Fire stations - is provided in a small partially paved lot to the rear of the building, with additional parking available on nearby streets.

### Issues & Opportunities

- Parking - the small, partially paved and unstriped lot is inadequate for shared use among Town Hall users, police vehicles, and especially on-call firefighters
- ADA compliance - while generally accessible and equipped with an elevator, Town Hall's restrooms, parking areas and signage are noncompliant
- Structural vulnerability - as an unreinforced masonry structure, the building is particularly vulnerable to earthquakes; there is also a history of roof damage and flooding from severe winter weather
- Lack of a modern generator - the existing gasoline-powered backup generator powers only limited building systems and lacks a fire-resistant housing; this situation presents challenges for continuity of municipal operations and for emergency management
- Energy inefficiency - roughly \$1,200/year is lost to inefficient lighting systems alone
- Potential for reuse of Fire/Police spaces - if the Police and/or Fire departments relocate elsewhere, there would be substantial flexibility at the facility for new or expanded community uses and for improved parking



## Senior Center

Completed in 2005, the Senior Center is one of West Brookfield's newest public facilities. At the center, the Council on Aging provides services including lunch, socializing, exercise classes, benefits and tax counseling, health clinics, and transportation. The center is open five days a week.



Aside from services offered at the center itself, the Council on Aging offers an outreach program and coordinates local meals on wheels assistance. Activity at the center has been increasing, with unduplicated member visits growing from 48 to 136 in just a few years. This growth in part reflects the **expansion of West Brookfield's senior population (age 65+), which has jumped from 17% of residents in 1990 to 21% in 2015, and which is estimated to increase to 31% by 2030.** Additional growth is attributable to a recent formal agreement to share certain services with seniors from the Town of Brookfield.

West Brookfield's veterans services are provided at the Senior Center on an appointment basis.

### Issues & Opportunities

- Increasing demand - West Brookfield is an aging community and demand for senior services can be expected to increase as Baby Boomers in their 50s (nearly 650 in town as of 2015) reach retirement age; this growth can be expected to place burdens on the facility, its staff and its services
- Potential for regional services - West Brookfield's Senior Center is one of the larger and more active centers in the region and it attracts clients from a broad area; if capacity allows, there may be opportunities to formally partner with additional nearby communities to offer regional senior services to help defray operational and facility costs and expand programming options for West Brookfield's seniors.

## Merriam-Gilbert Public Library



The Merriam-Gilbert Library is one of West Brookfield's best-loved community facilities, with 81% of survey respondents satisfied or very satisfied. Built in the 1880s, the historic brick building located across the street from the Town Hall contains print, audio, and video holdings for adults and children on three floors. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the building with desktop computers available for patron use on two floors. Major renovations in 1997 included general upgrades as well as the installation of physical accessibility improvements, including an elevator. The building is in good condition for its age. No off-street parking is available for patrons.

## Issues & Opportunities

- Parking - No off-street parking is available, presenting an obstacle in particular to patrons with physical challenges
- Structural vulnerability - as an unreinforced masonry structure, the building is particularly vulnerable to earthquakes
- ADA compliance - while generally accessible and equipped with an elevator, the Library's restrooms, signage and some doorways are noncompliant
- Increased hours - the Library's hours are somewhat limited; opening on Fridays or Sundays would enable greater utilization of this popular facility

## Goals for General Government Facilities

1. *Improve/expand parking in the vicinity of the Town Hall and Library*
  - a. Add more marked parking spaces and handicapped spaces on Cottage Street
  - b. Reconfigure Town Hall parking lot as per Safety & Emergency Facilities section below
2. *Increase Senior Center capabilities to meet the needs of the aging population*
  - a. Develop a plan to monitor needs and gradually increase service levels and facility utilization
  - b. Pursue opportunities to partner with nearby communities to offer regional senior services to help defray operational and facility costs and to expand programming options for West Brookfield's seniors
3. *Improve structural resilience of unreinforced masonry structures*
  - a. Study the Town Hall and Library to assess risks from earthquakes; install seismic retrofits as needed based on the cost-benefit evaluation

## Safety & Emergency Services Facilities

### Police Station

West Brookfield police operations are based in a 700 square foot space in the front of the Town Hall's main level. The station has two small offices and a central room. Small storage spaces and lockers are available in various locations around the building. There is no holding cell - holding is accommodated off-site in other communities for a nominal fee. The station was excluded from 1990s renovations that upgraded the remainder of the building and provided for handicapped access. Parking for the Police Department's five vehicles is provided outdoors in the lot behind Town Hall. Currently the Department has six full-time and three part-time officers. In 2017 a full-time officer was hired to fill a vacancy, bringing the police force to their authorized strength for full-time officers. The Department responds to 4,000 to 4,400 calls each year, resulting in about 100 arrests; dispatch service is handled by the Massachusetts State Police in nearby New Braintree. Along with the Fire Station, the Police Station is considered West Brookfield's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Solutions to the difficult Police Station situation have periodically been pursued by the West Brookfield community. A feasibility study for relocating the Police and Fire departments to a new shared facility was completed by Caolo & Bieniek Associates, Inc. in 2012. The report recommended that the community consider a new public safety building at a Town-owned parcel on Wigwam Road, with total costs approaching \$12 million. No substantive action has been taken since the report.

A 2005 ballot measure to allocate \$5 million for a new Police Station at the former Brookfield Machine plant on Central Street was defeated at Town Meeting. Despite this lack of progress, town residents continue to express support for improvements to public safety facilities and services. Some 62% of survey respondents indicate support for expansion, relocation, replacement or regionalization of the public safety facilities.

The Police Department is an active participant in the Central Region Homeland Security Advisory Council and the Central Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council.

### Issues & Opportunities

- Undersized and unsuitable space - the current Police Station is too small for its level of use; integration within the Town Hall makes secure off-hours use difficult; there is inadequate secure evidence storage for properly maintaining chain of custody; there is no secure armory for police weapons (a small weapons safe is used instead); there is no holding cell; there is inadequate privacy for booking and other sensitive police work; there is no changing/locker area for female officers
- Parking - the shared Town Hall lot is overused, provides no weather protection for police vehicles, and has no space for vehicle impoundment
- ADA compliance - while the rest of Town Hall is generally ADA compliant, the Police Station was not included in earlier upgrades due to expectations of a new facility, and it retains several noncompliant items (inadequate door widths, etc.)
- Lack of a modern generator - the existing gasoline-powered backup powers only limited building systems and lacks a fire-resistant housing, presenting a challenge to emergency management

### Fire Station



The Fire Station is attached to the rear of Town Hall. Its primary space is an aging two-level addition facing the Town Hall parking lot on Cottage Street. The lower level of the addition consists of two vehicle bays, and the upper floor includes a meeting room, kitchen **and the Chief's** office, including an aging computer system. Access between the second floor areas and first floor apparatus bays is by a staircase at the back the vehicle bays, though there is the potential of connecting the upper level by passageway

to the elevator-equipped Town Hall. Two additional vehicle bays are located in a separate annex on the Town Hall's east side with access to Main Street via a narrow alleyway. Indoor

parking is limited to the four vehicle bays. The condition of the station is considered fair, with the roof and concrete floors in need of repair. The station's windows need replacing and the lighting is inefficient - at least \$500 per year is lost to obsolete lighting fixtures alone, according to a recent energy audit.

The Fire Department is a purely on-call force with 15 firefighters. It operates three engines (one scheduled for replacement in 2018), one tanker, one SUV (the Chief's vehicle), one forestry vehicle, one rescue vehicle, one amphibious ATV, and one hazardous materials trailer. With parking at the station limited, the trailer is kept outdoors in the Town Hall lot, and the forestry vehicle is based at the Water Department's garage facility.

The Fire Department achieved a ranking of 5/5Y in its 2016 ISO Public Protection Classification report, its best score in several years and a solid showing for a rural on-call department. This classification, based on training, facilities, water supply and other factors, is often used by insurance companies to set rates for property owners in a community. As part of its efforts to serve residents in rural areas outside the Town water service area, the Department operates dry hydrants on Sucker Brook, Brookhaven Lake and some other surface water bodies. The department responds to between 100 and 150 calls in most years, with 127 calls in 2016. The Fire Department participates in mutual aid through Massachusetts Fire District 7.

### Issues & Opportunities

- Marginal size and configuration - the current Fire Station is marginally large enough for a department of West Brookfield's size and activity level; the insufficient office space (and IT capability) hinders administrative functions such as reporting
- Parking - the shared Town Hall lot is undersized; non-emergency vehicles sometimes unintentionally block the department's vehicle bays; some emergency vehicles must be parked off-site
- ADA compliance - while the rest of Town Hall is generally ADA compliant, access to the Fire Station's upper level requires going up a flight of stairs, and there is a step up required at the Cottage Street entrance
- Lack of a modern generator - the existing gasoline-powered backup powers only limited building systems and lacks a fire-resistant housing, presenting a challenge to emergency management

### Rescue Squad (Non-Town facility)

The West Brookfield Rescue Squad (WBRS) is a non-profit organization founded in 1952 that provides EMS service to the West Brookfield community. While not a government service, the Rescue Squad provides a vital service to the community, and is therefore included here. Formerly housed within the Fire Department's Main Street-facing annex, since 2016 the Squad has been based in a rented commercial facility on West Main Street near the Town Center. The new location is considered adequate in size and in good condition, with one vehicle bay and a small office space. The WBRS employs 15 volunteer emergency medical technicians and operates two ambulances. Costs for this important service are primarily covered by transported patients and/or their health insurance. Many town residents and businesses also subscribe to the EMS service.



Annual subscriptions help fund the Squad while covering all or part of subscribers' transport fees that are not covered by insurance. The WBRS responds to 600 to 800 calls per year.

### Issues & Opportunities

- Financial sustainability - small-town EMS organizations generally face financial sustainability concerns in light of increasing costs and aging service populations
- Training level - WBRS members are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), the basic level of life-saving service; any opportunities should be pursued for some volunteers to become certified as paramedics to provide more advanced life-saving services

### Goals for Safety & Emergency Services Facilities

1. *Implement short-term solutions to mitigate inadequate public safety facilities*
  - a. Install a new backup generator system at the Town Hall/Police/Fire complex to provide for continuity of municipal and emergency management operations; consider FEMA's HMGP program for funding
  - b. Consider fully paving the Town Hall parking lot and reconfiguring the layout and striping of spaces to better accommodate emergency personnel and vehicular access
  - c. Continue to participate in and seek resources through the Central Region Homeland Security Advisory Council, the Central Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council, and Fire District 7.
  - d. Improve IT hardware and software to enhance administrative productivity (especially Fire)
2. *Implement a long-term solution to replace inadequate public safety facilities through relocation of the police and/or fire services*
  - a. Revisit the 2012 Fire and Police Department Needs Study to locate any potential programmatic cost savings from the recommended program
  - b. If necessary, complete a new public safety facility feasibility study that adheres to a budget that is likely to be supported by voters at Town Meeting
  - c. Develop a funding strategy to include State earmarks, State/Federal grant and loan programs (consider USDA), as well as local options
  - d. Evaluate options for regionalization or shared services in public safety to lower costs and potentially improve services; consider shared leadership, personnel, training, procurement, vehicles, vehicle maintenance, and/or facilities; also consider creation of an independent fire district
3. *Modernize the Fire Department's vehicle fleet*
  - a. Pursue funding options such as FEMA AFG grants to defray Town costs for major capital outlays for fire apparatus
4. *Support and encourage WBRS EMTs in becoming certified as paramedics*
  - a. Investigate funding options and the possibility of regionalized training

## Schools

### West Brookfield Elementary School

The West Brookfield Elementary School (WBES), serving grades PK through 6, is the sole school located in town. While the school property is owned by the Town of West Brookfield, since 1988 it has been operated by the Quaboag Regional School District that is comprised of West Brookfield and the adjacent community of Warren. The regional middle and high schools are located in Warren.

WBES is a single-level structure built in 1953 with expansions completed in 1958 and 1994. In the past five years, energy-related improvements have been an area of focus. The school's boiler system was converted from oil to natural gas, and solar panels were installed on the roof to help defray energy costs. In general, the school is considered to be in good condition, but some areas are in need of improvement in the near term. The School District's 2017 five-year capital plan outlines a series of information technology, energy, security, playground/gym and general maintenance projects with an estimated cost of around \$1 million.

Enrollment at WBES has fluctuated within a fairly broad range in the past decade, growing slightly from 323 students in 2007-08 to 326 in 2016-17. Over the ten-year period, enrollment was as high as 364 (2010) and as low as 307 (2014), with school choice students from outside the district helping to stabilize enrollment in last few years. The School District expects that enrollment at WBES will remain roughly steady or in slight decline for the foreseeable future. The current WBES building is expected to remain adequate in size indefinitely.

WBES is considered a Level 1 school by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, indicating that West Brookfield students are largely meeting gap-narrowing and cumulative progress and performance goals. The student/teacher ratio at WBES is 18.1/1, compared to 13.2/1 for all Massachusetts schools. The School District currently shares some services with other districts, including sharing its food services director and some sports activities with North Brookfield.



The school's outdoor recreational facilities are addressed separately, below.

## Issues & Opportunities

- Maintenance and upgrades - a number of systems and building elements require upgrade or major maintenance in the next five years, per the 2017 School District capital plan
- ADA compliance - while WBES is generally quite accessible, some aspects of the school's entryways and ramps are not fully compliant, nor are some older classrooms
- School Choice students - with enrollment at WBES stagnant or in slight decline, acceptance of additional school choice students could stabilize enrollment; however, the benefits of accepting these students must be weighed against possible additional expenses, such as any increases in language support or special education needs
- Inter-district shared services - the School District already shares some key services with neighboring districts; additional opportunities may exist to do so at a district level or specific to WBES

## Goals for School Facilities

1. *Implement and add to the capital plan*
  - a. The district should seek MSBA assistance to complete projects at WBES as laid out in the current capital plan
  - b. The district should address the relatively few handicapped access concerns through future capital planning and/or securing of variances (also see below for related concerns at WBES's recreational facilities)
2. *Expand upon existing shared services*
  - a. Continue to pursue options for sharing services with other districts, where appropriate
3. *The district should study the impacts of school choice on the district and on WBES in particular*
  - a. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the school choice program to better understand how the benefits of enrollment stabilization through inbound school choice students are balanced against any increased costs for language support or special education needs
  - b. If warranted, increase or decrease the level of school choice participation

## Public Works Facilities

### Highway Garage & Salt Shed

The Highway Department occupies an 8,400 square-foot facility on Front Street half a mile south of the town center. The garage contains a single multi-vehicle maintenance bay, an equipment storage area, and an office space. The majority of the facility was built in the 1960s with an addition constructed several years later. While the addition is in fair condition, the building as a whole fares poorly. The roof, windows, heating system, and electrical system need replacement, and termite damage is a recurring problem.

Building systems are obsolete and inefficient, with utilities costs almost \$5,000 per year above what they could be with modern equipment. The parking lot is unpaved - excess road salt in the lot leads to particularly difficult muddy conditions in winter weather. The salt shed located next to the garage is likewise in poor condition, with roof leaks that contribute to salt contamination in the parking area. Both facilities are located within the 500-year flood zone associated with Coys Brook and the Quaboag River. No ADA improvements have been made to the building.

The Highway Department has a staff of roughly 5.25 FTE, including the superintendent, the mechanic, three road crew members, and a part-time office assistant. The department operates four dump trucks, one large plow/sander, three utility/pickup trucks, one backhoe, and two loaders. Several of the larger vehicles are overdue for replacement, and some equipment has become inoperable in recent years due to age or obsolescence.



### Issues & Opportunities

- Building condition - there are considerable concerns regarding the structural condition of the buildings as well as with the condition of the parking surface
- Energy inefficiency - roughly \$5,000/year is lost to inefficient and obsolete lighting, weatherization, and HVAC systems
- ADA compliance - the garage's uneven floor surface is among several accessibility compliance issues; the very limited public programming at the building (occasional permit seekers) suggest that access concerns can be addressed programmatically rather than structurally
- Flood risk - the location of the Highway Department within the 500-year flood zone presents a risk to the facility and equipment as well as to essential Highway Department services during a major flood event

### Solid Waste Drop-Off Center

With a few exceptions, solid waste disposal in West Brookfield is the responsibility of homeowners and businesses. Households currently must contract with one of several vendors for trash and/or recycling collection, resulting in an abundance of waste collection vehicles on local roads on various days of the week. Limited municipal solid waste disposal services are provided by the Highway Department at the Drop-Off Center at the Town's former landfill on Wigwam Road. The small 8' x 8' Center, open one to three days a week depending on the season, is in poor condition and lacks electricity, heat, restrooms and phone service. A plan for a municipal recycling center at the site was developed in the 1990s but was not constructed. Yard waste and certain toxic substances (motor oil, anti-freeze, etc.) can be disposed of by residents free of charge at the Center. Yard waste is stockpiled on site. The Town is under contract with a vendor to dispose of a variety of other household hazardous substances and appliances, including TVs, batteries, air conditioners, etc. Costs for these items are passed along to residents through nominal fees. Roughly 63% of survey respondents support expansion of the Drop-Off Center's services to include on-site trash and/or recycling collection.



## Issues & Opportunities

- Size and configuration - the Drop-Off Center is inadequate in size and lacks basic utilities that would enable more efficient operation; the structure is also considered to be in poor condition
- Expansion of services - survey results indicate that many residents support expanding the Drop-Off center into a transfer station where household trash and recycling are collected
- Composting - yard waste is currently stockpiled on site but is not composted; municipal composting could provide a useful product for residents and limit the volume of stockpiled waste
- Home trash collection - survey results also indicate that most residents think the Town should explore contracting with a single waste disposal vendor to provide a reduced-rate option for residential trash pickup

## Water Department Facilities

See *Water Supply System* content below

## Goals for Public Works Facilities

1. *Implement short-term solutions to mitigate inadequate Highway Department facilities*
  - a. Consider paving the Highway Garage's parking lot to reduce the impacts of salt contamination and improve vehicular access during winter conditions
  - b. Replace the existing shed at the Drop-Off Center with a larger prefabricated structure with additional storage and some basic amenities for staff
  - c. Implement the recommendations of the recent energy audit to improve energy efficiency
2. *Implement a long-term solution to replace inadequate Highway Department facilities through relocation or renovation*
  - a. Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate options for renovation and/or replacement of the Highway Garage and Salt Shed, considering renovation costs vs. relocation to a reused or new structure, as well as other factors such as flood risks at the current site
3. *Expand solid waste disposal options for Town residents*
  - a. Study options for the Drop-Off Center's conversion into a transfer station where household trash and recycling are collected
  - b. Consider on-site composting of yard waste
  - c. Study options for procurement of a single waste disposal vendor to provide a reduced-rate option for residential trash pickup

## Housing Authority

The West Brookfield Housing Authority (WBHA) is a non-municipal public entity that provides subsidized housing for eligible families and individuals with funding from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). While not a Town service, the WBHA provides a vital public service to the community, and is therefore included here. Housing is provided at the Authority's Olde Village complex (built 1993) across East Main Street from the Town Common. Olde Village is comprised of 36 one-bedroom units for elderly and disabled tenants and 10 two-to-three bedroom units for low-income families. Also on the property is an 8-bed building rented to the Bridge of Central Massachusetts as a group home for developmentally-disabled individuals. The facility is generally kept in good condition through regular DHCD investment in capital maintenance projects. Upcoming projects are expected to include new floors in the 8-bed facility, new paint in common areas throughout, and repaving of the parking lot. Demand for placements at the WBHA is high - nearly 40 potential tenants are on the waiting list for elderly or disabled housing as of September 2017. Expansion of the facility is constrained by the location of the septic system, wetland and river protection regulations, and DHCD budget limitations.



Oversight of the Housing Authority is provided through a five-member Board, of whom four members are elected by Town residents and one is appointed by the Governor. The WBHA contributes a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to the Town of West Brookfield each year to help defray the cost of local services to the Authority and its residents. In 2016, the PILOT payment was just under \$4,000.

### Issues & Opportunities

- Inability to expand - despite a demonstrated need for subsidized elderly and disabled housing, site and budget constraints preclude expansion of the complex
- Enhanced coordination with Town services - relations with the Town are cordial, but there may be opportunities for greater collaboration with certain departments, including the Senior Center and the Police Department

### Goals for Housing Authority Facilities

1. *Supplement existing coordination between the Town and the Housing Authority*
  - a. Increase outreach by the Senior Center to residents of the Housing Authority to increase access to social programs, meals, wellness activities and referrals to other programs
  - b. Supplement patrols to Olde Village by the Police Department to demonstrate the Town's commitment to residents' security

## Active Recreational Facilities

### Town Common & Bandstand

The Town Common is the eastern gateway to West Brookfield's town center and is the community's most visible landmark. Larger than most New England commons at five acres, ownership of this large triangular parcel in the town center is muddled, with functional control shared amicably between the Town of West Brookfield and the adjacent First Congregational Church. Sometimes known as Quaboag Park, the Common contains attractive, mature trees and sweeping lawns alongside public monuments, fountains, and a baseball field.



A bandstand is located on Town land across School Street and functions as an extension of the Common. Together, the Common and the bandstand form the core of the West Brookfield Center Historic District.

The Common serves as a hub of community life. Many annual events and celebrations take place here; 99% of survey respondents have attended at least one event on the Common in the past five years. While the Asparagus and Flower Heritage Festival each May is for many residents the signature event, other yearly milestones include the 4<sup>th</sup> of July concert and bonfire, the White Christmas celebration, the annual Congregational Church tag sale, and commemorations of other holidays such as Memorial Day. Seasonal attractions include a weekly summer farmers market, a summer concert series, and youth sports.



The Common is an important community asset and is managed as such by the Town and its residents. Oversight of maintenance and activities is provided by the Common Committee, a three-member elected body. Music programming is guided by the Friends of the Bandstand Committee. In recent years, a number of significant improvements have been made to ensure the continued relevance of this key community amenity.

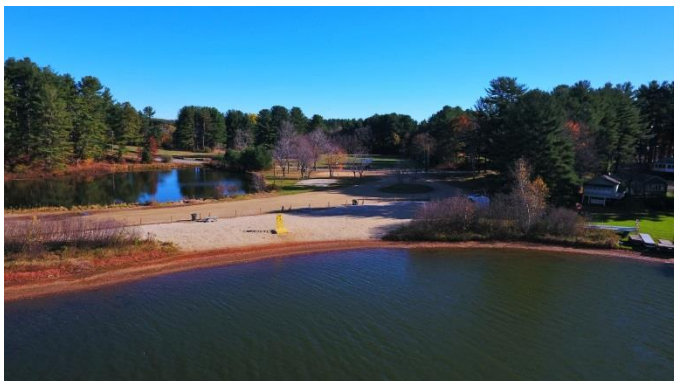
The Rice Memorial Fountain, erected in the 1880s, was rehabilitated using a \$100,000 State earmark in 2013. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation is undertaking a \$1.6 million improvement of the roadways adjacent to the Common in 2017, with reconfiguration of adjacent intersections, improvements to stormwater drainage, new curbing and signage, and improved sidewalks and pedestrian crossings. As a companion to MassDOT's project, the West Brookfield Little League has committed to updating the Common's ballfield, which has deteriorated recently.

## Issues & Opportunities

- Parking for special events - roughly 72% of survey respondents had difficulty parking near the Common during special events, which may deter attendance at future events
- Ownership of the Common is somewhat unclear - muddled ownership between the Town and the Congregational Church may complicate access to certain grants and presents potential liability questions
- ADA compliance - while the Common's walkways and monuments are generally accessible to all, the bandstand's upper level and restrooms are noncompliant
- Popularity and visibility - the Town and local businesses and institutions could leverage the Common's popularity and visibility to expand programming for both residents and visitors
- Event Coordination - major events on the Common could be coordinated more aggressively with local businesses and institutions to enhance economic benefits

## Town Beach

The Town's beach is located at the southeast corner of Lake Wickaboag, less than half a mile from the town center. The popular six-acre property has a large sandy beach, a boat ramp, a lifeguard station, a marked swimming area, and unpaved parking for roughly 26-40 cars and up to seven boat trailers. Some 85% of survey respondents had visited the beach in the past five years. The Recreation Committee provides a lifeguard during the summer season, and youth swimming lessons are available. Parking is limited to permitted Town residents only. Some Master Plan survey respondents and event attendees have noted that unpermitted out-of-town vehicles are occasionally a problem during the busiest summer weekends. The Town's 2006 Accessibility Study noted that there is no accessible route of travel from the parking area to the water, and that the existing handicapped parking spots are undersized.



## Issues & Opportunities

- Parking - anecdotally, some residents report that parking can be difficult during the peak summer season
- ADA compliance - there is no accessible route of travel from the parking lot to the water; handicapped parking spots are undersized
- Parking expansion - given the apparent popularity of the beach among both residents and non-residents, the Town has an opportunity to increase usage and potentially revenues through expansion of the parking area; there may an opportunity to engage a private property owner across Lakeview Ave. to develop parking on undeveloped land that abuts the 100-year flood zone



## WBES Playground & Ballfields

The bulk of West Brookfield's active recreation facilities are at the Elementary School. These include two playgrounds designed for small children, two tennis courts, a basketball court, three baseball/softball diamonds and three soccer fields. The playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts and one soccer field are on the level with the school and generally accessible by paved walkways. The baseball diamonds and two additional soccer fields are located at lower elevations well to the east of the school. While the playing areas are generally accessible to handicapped persons, full compliance will require implementation of an accessible route to the baseball fields, as well as an alternative seating area near the bleachers.

### Issues & Opportunities

- ADA compliance - there is no accessible route of travel to the baseball fields; the no alternative seating is provided at the bleachers

### Goals for Active Recreational Facilities

1. *Evaluate and improve parking near the Common and Town Beach*
  - a. Review current parking usage and capacity, especially during special events (Common) and high summer (beach)
  - b. Develop a plan to potentially reconfigure street parking near the Common to maximize capacity, and increase utilization of remote parking options
  - c. Engage Lakeview Ave. property owner across from beach parking area to discuss potential usage of undeveloped flood-prone land for occasional parking, through access agreement, easement, gift or purchase
  - d. Increase enforcement of permitted parking requirement at the beach
2. *Leverage special events on the Common to enhance economic development*
  - a. Review current programming in the Brookfields region and identify gaps in dates and types of events that could potentially be exploited
  - b. Continue and expand coordination between special events and related local businesses and institutions

## Other Facilities

### Quaboag Historical Society Museum

Located in the former Senior Center (itself formerly West Brookfield's Boston & Albany Railroad station, built 1884), the Quaboag Historical Society rents space from the Town for its museum. The museum is open monthly and by appointment, and displays artifacts ranging from the region's founding as the Quaboag Plantation in 1660 to more recent events.

### Wickaboag Sportsmen's Club

The Sportsmen's Club rents space in a Town-owned facility on New Braintree Road. Open seasonally, the Club is focused on outdoor recreation and education with emphases on hunting, shooting and fishing.

### Cemeteries

West Brookfield maintains three cemeteries: Pine Grove, Methodist Cemetery, and Old Indian Cemetery. Of the three, only Pine Grove, a 20-acre property, is actively in use. Oversight of the cemeteries is assigned to the appointed Burial Ground (Cemetery) Commission, which supervises two caretakers. A small maintenance facility is present at Pine Grove.



## Water Supply System

The West Brookfield Water Department provides water for drinking and fire control in the Town Center, residential neighborhoods to its north, along a large portion of the Route 9 corridor, and at most of the Lake Wickaboag waterfront. Just under 1,000 accounts serving several businesses and roughly 2,400 residents are connected to Town water. Residents on Town water are largely satisfied with their service, with 75% of Master Plan survey takers calling it good or excellent. The roughly one-third of residents and businesses in rural areas outside of the water service area are reliant on private wells.

The Town's water is sourced from two wellfields installed in the 1960s. Well #1 (500 gallons per minute capacity) is located at Warepoint Road at the southwest corner of Lake Wickaboag. Wells #2-5 (500 gpm total capacity) draw groundwater from the same aquifer a short distance away on Leland Road. Water at Well #1 is treated with chlorine and for pH. Water from the other wells is filtered, chlorinated and treated for pH, iron, and manganese.

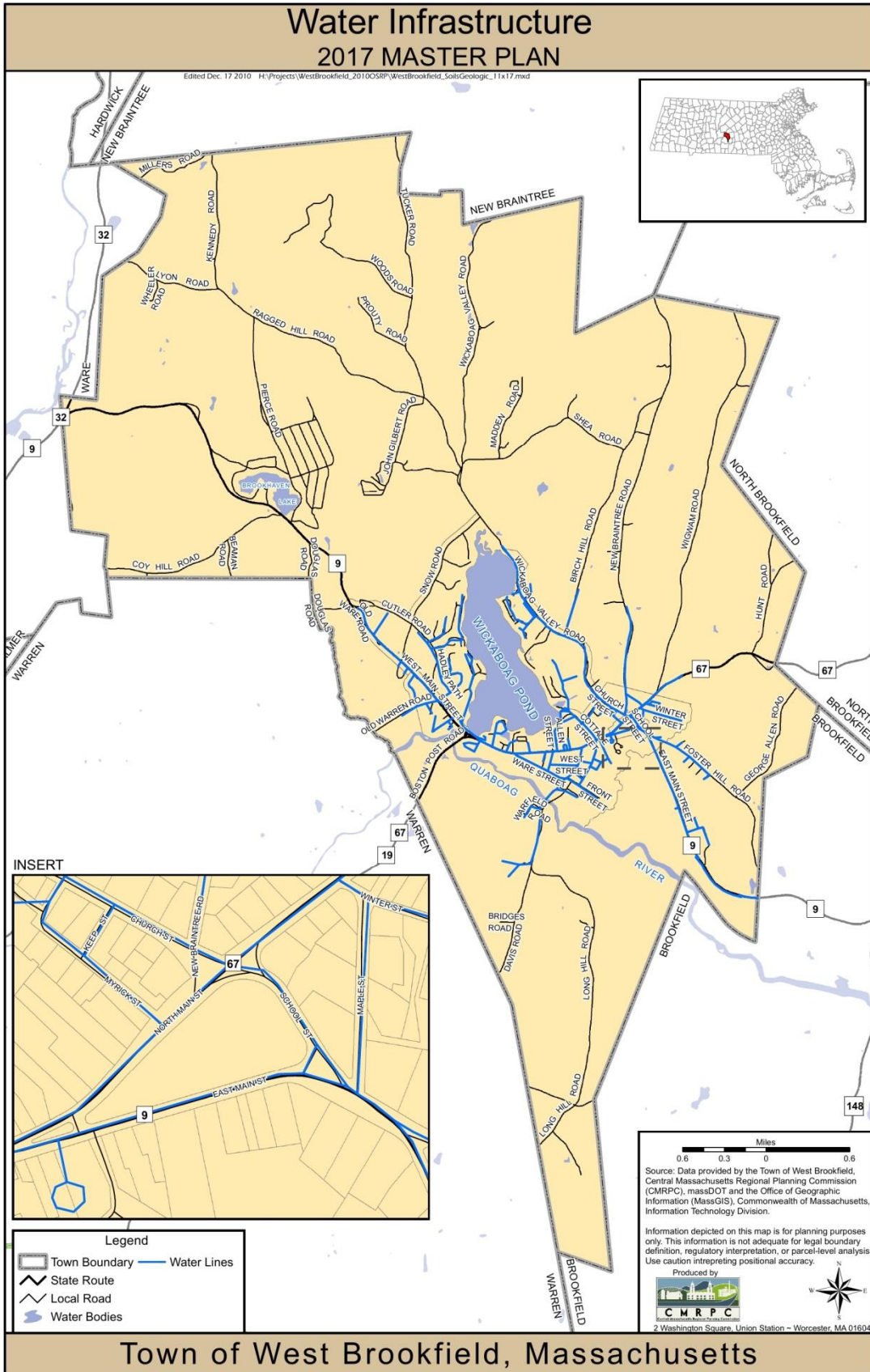
The local aquifer is considered vulnerable to potential contamination because of the absence of hydrogeologic barriers (i.e., clay) that help prevent contaminant migration; the Town owns a number of conservation properties surrounding the wellfields that serve to protect the water supply. The water meets state and federal requirements for safe drinking, with limited concern about sodium levels. A backup water source for use during drought or other emergency is available through cross connection with the Town of Brookfield's water system.

The Water Department reports that there is adequate system capacity for substantial expansion. Average usage varies seasonally from around 150,000 gallons per day (winter) to 250,000 gpd (summer), with peak days exceeding 400,000 gpd. Permitted treatment capacity is 1,010,000 gpd if water is drawn from both wellfields simultaneously. A small system expansion was recently completed on New Braintree Road to accommodate residents whose wells had been threatened by contaminants downgradient from the former Town landfill. Public support for continued expansion of the system to serve other parts of town is inconclusive based on the Master Plan's public survey and will largely depend on the cost structure for both the Town and for potential beneficiaries.

The Water Department's administrative office is located in the lower level of Town Hall. Other facilities include pump stations and treatment/filtration plants at both wellfields, a garage and pipe storage facility on Warepoint Road, and a 600,000 gallon storage tank off Long Hill Road. With the exception of the Leland Road treatment plant (completed in 2014), the Department's facilities date to the 1970s and 1980s. The older facilities are in decent to good condition, with none in imminent need of replacement or major renovation.

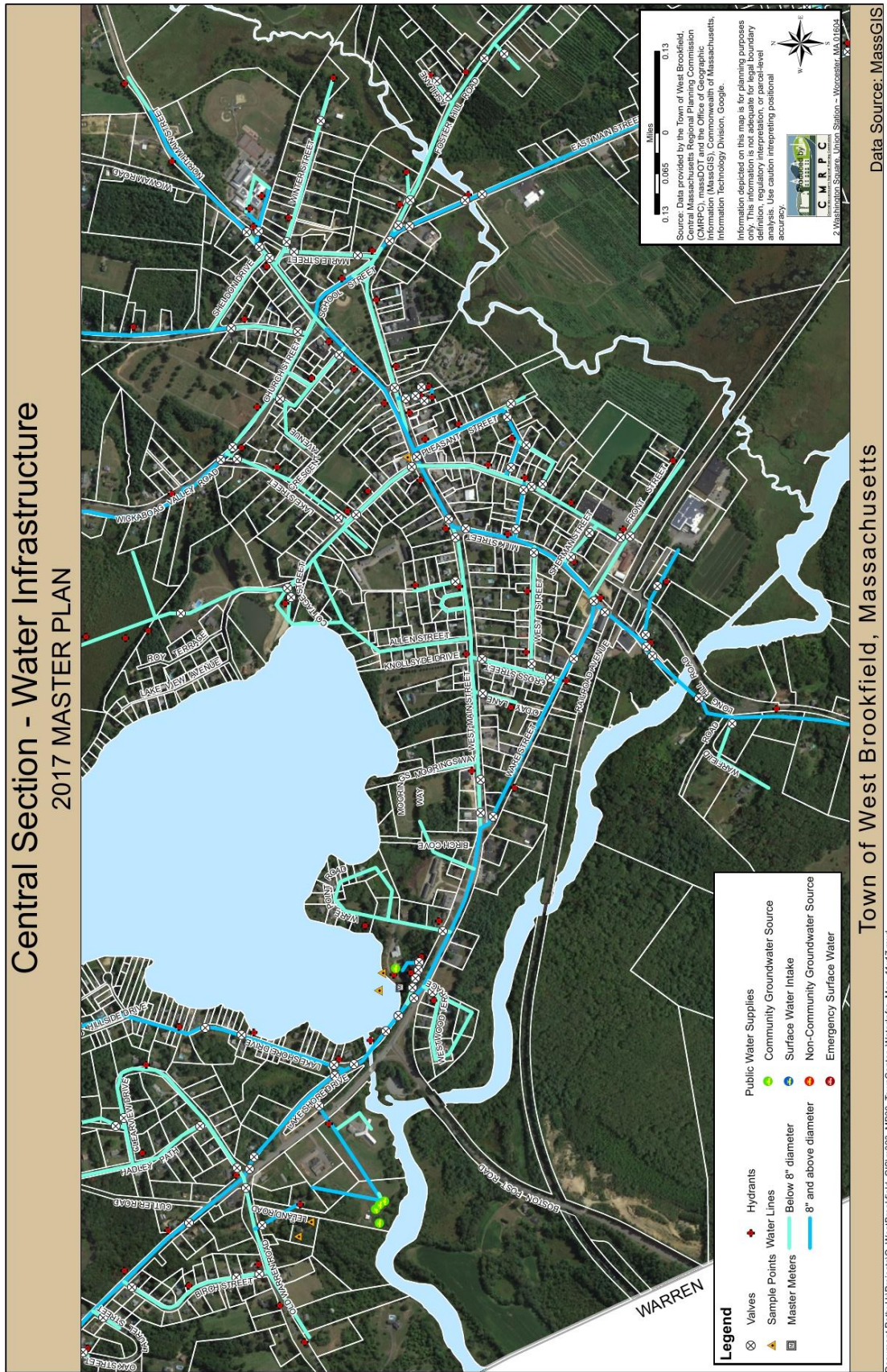
More than 21 miles of water mains are operated by the Water Department. Of these, about 9.8 miles (or 46.5%) meet the 8-inch diameter standard set by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to ensure adequate flow for fire protection. It is the West Brookfield Water Department's policy that all new or replacement mains are installed to the 8-inch standard or larger. Removal of older asbestos cement mains is another priority (these mains present almost no risk to system users, but are typically replaced as a best practice). While there have been limited expansions and upgrades to the water main network in recent decades, much of the system, especially in the Town Center area, dates back to the decades following the system's establishment in 1911. Despite the system's advanced age, most years see fewer than two breakage events. No systemic engineering assessment of water main age and condition or planning for capital improvements has been conducted in recent memory.

Map 7-1 Water Infrastructure (Appendix N40)





Map 7-2 Central Section – Water Infrastructure (Appendix N39)



**Table 7-3 Water Main**

Water Main Diameter (inches)	Installed Quantity (miles)	Percent of System Total (%)
12"	0.72	3.4
10"	1.63	7.7
8"	7.46	35.4
6"	7.22	34.2
4"	2.11	10.0
2"	1.87	8.9
1.3"	0.19	0.9
All sizes	21.09	100.0

The water system is self-funded by its ratepayers through usage fees, with excess revenues going to a surplus account for future capital improvements. The quarterly rate structure is \$55 for the first 500 cubic feet plus \$2 for each additional 100 cubic feet. In the past decade, nearly all customers have received new wireless water meters to aid in the billing process. Local oversight of the Water Department's three staff is provided through a three-member elected Water Commission. All non-emergency expenditures must be approved at Town Meeting.

**Issues & Opportunities**

- Undersized water mains - while adequate for potable water supply, more than half of the system's mains are considered undersized for fire protection; this constrains options for economic development, especially development of commercial and industrial uses that require sprinkler protection; this is a particular problem for reuse of previously developed properties on side streets near the Town Center, where smaller mains are the most common
- Lack of system assessment data - there is no comprehensive recent information about the condition of the system; an engineering study of system and facility conditions and capacity would aid in capital planning and inform system operations
- Funding approval process - the requirement to gain Town Meeting approval for all non-emergency expenditures in practice limits the effectiveness of capital planning and plan implementation
- Capacity for expansion and growth - the Town's available water supply is well above its average usage, which allows for future geographic expansion or for more intensive industrial or commercial usage

## Goals for the Water Supply System

1. *Develop an improvement plan (with funding strategy) for the water system*
  - a. Hire a civil engineering firm to conduct a comprehensive assessment and develop a long-term prioritized action plan for the existing water system including water sources; pumping, treatment and storage facilities; mains; valves; and hydrants
  - b. Evaluate and quantify system expansion options, in conjunction with any proposed zoning changes or economic development initiatives
  - c. Develop a funding strategy to make priority improvements including grants (MassDEP, USDA, etc), Town funds, and betterments
  - d. Consider creating a mechanism for water user fees to be reinvested in the water system more readily to foster long-term capital plan implementation; options include a water enterprise fund or multi-year budgeting
2. *Improve the water system's fire suppression capability to support public safety and commercial/retail/industrial development in the town center and Route 9 corridor*
  - a. Replace substandard water mains with mains at least 8" in diameter
3. *Leverage surplus water capacity for economic development purposes*
  - a. Develop materials for use when marketing West Brookfield to potential developers and to existing local business who are considering expansion
  - b. Consider establishing a commercial water rate for future large system users



## Wastewater Management System Exploration

Development of a municipal wastewater management (or sewer) system has been considered since at least 1969, when the Town participated in a region-wide sewer study led by CMRPC. West Brookfield still has no public sewer system despite recurring interest since then, largely due to funding considerations. Without sewers, water bodies such as Lake Wickaboag and Quaboag River are potentially threatened by effluent from septic systems that residents and businesses must maintain at their own expense with little or no financial assistance or professional guidance. Lack of a sewer system may also limit options for economic development in industries ranging from manufacturing and hospitality to food processing and brewing. While the upfront cost of establishing a public sewer system is daunting, the potential benefit of such a system is also high. To aid local decision-making about this important issue, several key considerations are explored below.

### Service Area & Sewer Main Network

Sewers are often considered an urban amenity. However, public wastewater systems operate successfully in many nearby rural communities: Barre, Hardwick, North Brookfield, Paxton, Ware and Warren. In each case sewer service is available in and around the town or village center where denser development reduces per-customer system costs. Outlying areas continue to rely on private septic systems. Following the pattern established in these nearby towns, a plausible West Brookfield sewer system would largely overlap with the Water Department's existing service area, excluding certain low-density residential areas like New Braintree Road and Long Hill Road. Outside the water service area, sewers could also be provided to adjacent locations with ecological vulnerabilities such as the Snow Road area at the north end of Lake Wickaboag, and to areas with economic development potential like Boston Post Road (Route 19). The conceptual service area as described here is illustrated in Map 7-5. As delineated on the map, the service area includes roughly 959 housing units and 131 acres of commercial and industrial land with several dozen existing businesses.

Providing wastewater service throughout central West Brookfield would require installation of roughly 23.7 miles of new sewer mains. Topography in the town center area generally supports installation of sewers draining south and southwest toward the Quaboag River; it is assumed for this exercise that subsurface conditions will allow the required trenching without excessive excavation at great depths or through ledge. Without a detailed engineering analysis of topography, hydrology, subsurface conditions, and flow rates it is impossible to provide an authoritative breakdown of the types of mains and related equipment (pumps, etc.) that would need to be installed. With these caveats, the following breakdown is provided as an order-of-magnitude estimate of sewer main requirements to serve the area described above. Unit price estimates are taken from the Town of Ware's 2016 Sewer Master Plan. Engineering costs can be expected to add roughly 10% to installation costs.



**Table 7-4 Sewer**

Sewer Type	Est. Quantity	Unit Price (\$)	Est. Cost (\$)
12-inch Gravity Sewer (feet)	25,059 (20% of mains)	240	6,014,160
8-inch Gravity Sewer (feet)	93,971 (75%)	210	19,733,910
Force Main (feet)	6,265 (5%)	130	814,450
River Crossing (number)	6	100,000	600,000
Railroad Crossing (number)	2	75,000	150,000
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	N/A	N/A	<b>27,312,520</b>
Engineering (10%)	N/A	N/A	2,731,252
<b>TOTAL</b>	N/A	N/A	<b>30,043,772</b>

### Treatment Needs & Options

Wastewater treatment capacity to meet the needs of the conceptual service area would be substantial. The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission's TR-16 standard assumes a minimum of 70 gallons of wastewater per day per person. With roughly 2.17 persons per housing unit in the service area of 959 housing units, residential treatment demand at that rate would be nearly 146,000 gallons per day (gpd). Commercial and industrial needs would add to total demand. Based on a usage-per-acre methodology used in Ware's recent Sewer Master Plan, the 131 commercial/industrial acres in West Brookfield's service area could result in nearly 69,000 additional gpd. Adding 10% to account for possible groundwater infiltration and unpermitted inflow, total treatment capacity needs would start at roughly 236,500 gallons per day. Peak flows during wet weather would be higher.

Construction costs for wastewater treatment plants vary widely depending on both technical and regulatory factors. A rough estimate of "at least \$5 million" was provided by staff at the US Department of Agriculture's office in Holden, MA for use in this plan. Recent USDA-funded sewer projects in the area range from \$4.6 million at the Wagon Wheel mobile home park in Brookfield (a new treatment plant plus a small distribution network) to \$5.5 million in Gilbertville (comprehensive plant upgrades) to \$9 million in New Hartford, CT (a plant upgrade and expansion from 90,000 to 400,000 gpd). Using a methodology developed by the Cape Cod Commission in its 2013 Regional Wastewater Management Plan and based on their analysis of construction costs at 24 treatment plants, a plant at the 236,500 gpd scale would cost approximately \$7.2 million to build.

Location and permitting issues are also important to consider. Options for siting a treatment plant in town are somewhat constrained due to the presence of municipal drinking water wellfields at and near the downstream portion of the Quaboag River, which in many respects would be the obvious receiving location for treated waste. State and federal environmental regulations can limit siting options and may impose higher permit standards for a plant built within or shortly upstream from a Zone I or Zone II wellhead protection area (see Appendix N38)). Local geology is a complicating factor - the aquifer from which municipal water is drawn is considered vulnerable to contamination due to the absence of natural protective barriers, such as layers of clay. Overall, design and permitting costs can be expected to add 10 to 15% to plant construction costs and may add significantly to the project timeline. Total plant development costs of over \$8 million can therefore be expected.

One alternative to a local treatment plant could be to seek a partnership with the Town of Warren. Warren's sewer plant on the Quaboag River in West Warren is permitted for 1.5 million gpd, well above that community's current needs (an average of 670,000 mgd). A sewer main from central West Brookfield downgradient to the nearest existing main just east of Warren Center could allow access to this available treatment capacity without the need to build a new treatment facility. The cost to extend a 12" gravity main roughly 1.5 miles south from the town line to the nearest connection point would be around \$1.9 million. Though the grade to Warren is generally downhill, depending on the precise route selected, one or more pump stations may be required to move waste along. Upgrades to portions of Warren's main network may also be required to allow adequate flow capacity for West Brookfield's waste. As part of the development of this plan, preliminary conversations were held with Town of Warren planning and sewer staff, who expressed an initial openness to exploration of a shared sewer system. Operational considerations and cost-sharing agreements would be a critical component of any inter-municipal system.

### Alternatives to a Large Municipal System

Given the high costs required to install a fairly comprehensive municipal wastewater system, West Brookfield may want to consider other options. One choice is to employ a decentralized network to serve the immediate town center and/or portions of the Route 9 corridor through one or more "package plants". These smaller plants - generally 3,000 to 200,000 gpd - are cheaper to install than traditional treatment facilities, though operational costs may not be appreciably lower. They utilize a number of different treatment technologies, some of which can attain a high standard of effluent quality and meet permit requirements. System costs are highly variable due to size and technical differences. Communities often use decentralized systems in targeted locations where development needs (commercial/industrial or large-scale housing) or environmental concerns (water quality or geology) preclude widespread use of septic systems. Public-private or private-only funding models may be viable for service areas with business development or subdivision plans. Package plants may also help communities seeking to constrain development by providing sewer service only to specific areas where development is suitable or desirable, unlike a community-wide system that can encourage more intensive development throughout its large service area.

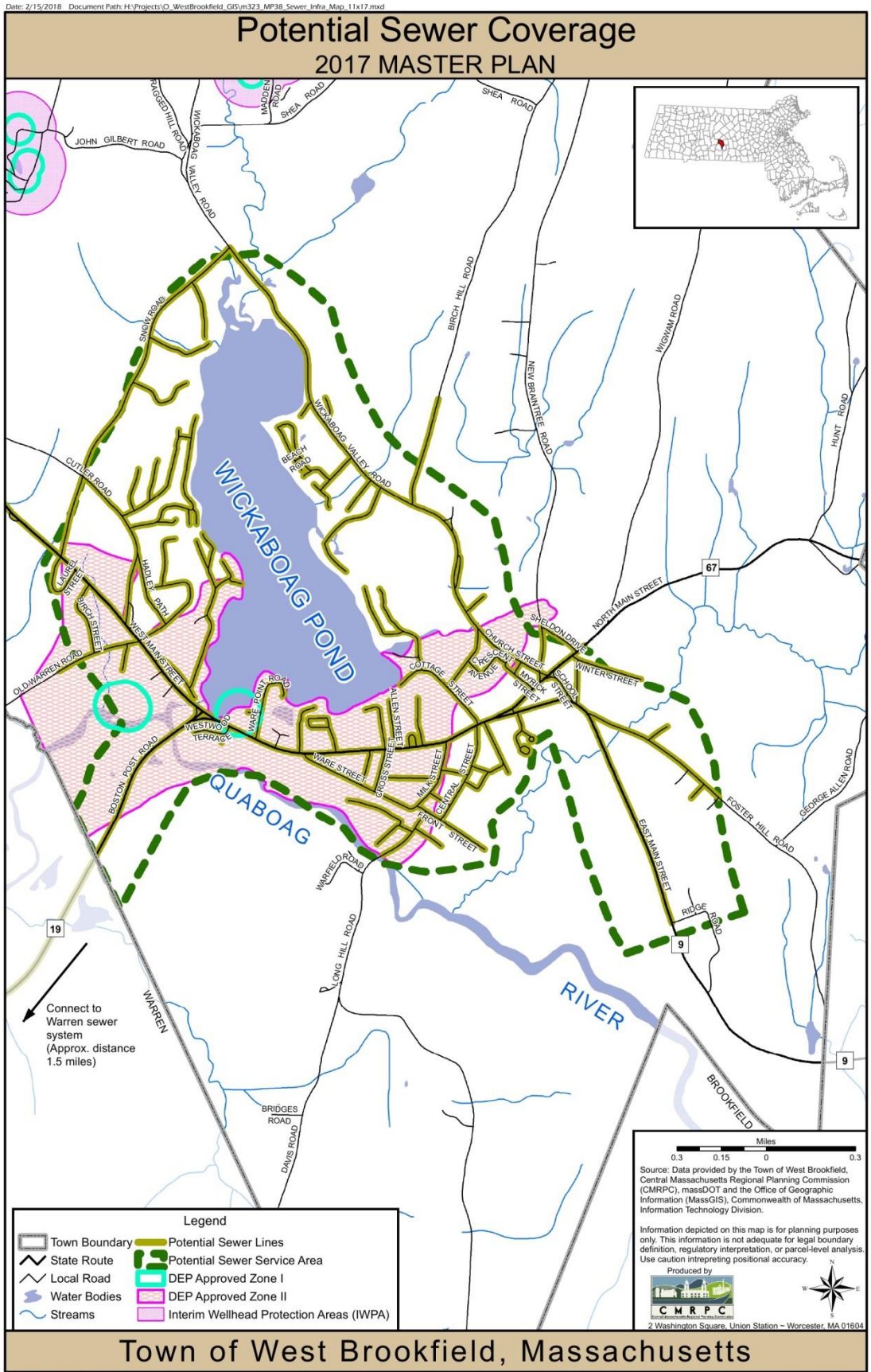
Another approach to protecting local water quality is to increase engagement with (and enforcement against) property owners in ecologically sensitive areas. North Kingstown, RI, for example, created a wastewater management program that requires homeowners to regularly inspect and maintain septic systems and report problems to the Town. Repairs and upgrades of legacy septic systems with advanced technologies were encouraged for properties in high-risk areas. Through state grants, the Town is able to offer low-interest loans to aid homeowners in complying with the program. West Brookfield could implement a similar program focused on properties near its most sensitive water assets.

## Funding Sources

Sewer development funding is available from a number of sources. Many communities are funded by the US Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program, which offers predevelopment and construction-related funds, typically in a combined loan/grant format. Loans up to 40 years are available. Many communities also seek loans from the Massachusetts Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF), which likewise funds both planning and construction activities. A variety of other federal and state grants and loans can be used for certain components of system implementation. In addition to government grants and loans, many communities use various types of municipal bonds to fund construction. Revenue bonds backed by future system revenues are often used to fund capital sewer improvements.

Because any West Brookfield sewer system is unlikely to benefit all residents, the Town should consider charging special assessments (betterments) and connection fees to those households and businesses that are within the service area. Similarly, in most communities operational costs for wastewater management are borne by user fees and related capital fees, supplemented as needed and available by grants, loans, and local funds.

Map 7-5 Potential Sewer Coverage (Appendix N38)





## Issues & Opportunities

- Economic development limitations - the lack of sewer services limits economic development potential in certain industries and in development of moderate or high density housing
- Environmental quality risk - aging and poorly-maintained septic systems pose a threat to human health and the environment, especially at surface waters such as Lake Wickaboag; installation of a sewer system would reduce these risks substantially
- Burden on residents and businesses - without municipal sewer, all costs for individual septic systems are borne directly by local residents and businesses; development of a sewer system in the more densely developed parts of town could lower long-run costs for many households
- Costs and political support - any sewer project will need to be carefully structured to achieve political and public support in light of the high up-front costs
- Limited siting options for a local treatment plant - the location of the Town's potable water sources along and near the Quaboag River complicates potential permitting of a treatment plant in town; costs for regulatory approvals and construction would likely be increased
- Potential for regionalization with Warren - the Town of Warren has excess sewage treatment capacity at its plant and informally has expressed willingness to examine regionalization; Warren is located downhill from West Brookfield, likely limiting the need for pumps; existing sewer mains in Warren are roughly 2-3 miles from West Brookfield's town center and 1.5 miles from the town line

## Goals for the Wastewater Management System

1. *Explore options pursuant to creation of a local sanitary sewer system or systems*
  - a. As an initial step, engage the Town of Warren in formal discussions to determine its level of openness to sharing its existing sewer treatment capacity through future extension of mains into West Brookfield
  - b. Hire a civil engineering firm to more fully explore the feasibility of developing a municipal sewer treatment plant and distribution network; examine potential sites, permitting requirements, costs (design, construction, and operational), revenues, regionalization options (i.e., Warren), service area scenarios (i.e., a narrow focus on the town center and Route 9 corridor vs. a broader area coterminous with the water service area), funding options, and timelines
  - c. To support economic development efforts in the short term, explore distributed sewer treatment solutions focused on single large commercial/industrial users or on partnerships of smaller users; examine package plants, solar aquatic systems, and other innovative small-scale approaches; development could be fully private or subsidized by the Town as an incentive for development
  - d. Develop a targeted septic system enforcement and incentive program focused on ecologically sensitive areas like the Lake Wickaboag waterfront

## Other Utilities

Private utilities in West Brookfield are provided by National Grid (electric and gas), Charter Spectrum (cable TV and internet) and Verizon (landline telephone). These utilities are widely available in and around the town center area and along the Route 9 corridor. Some outlying parts of town lack some or all private utilities, in particular natural gas, which is more restricted to the developed portion of the community. Charter's ten-year license to provide cable and internet service will expire in 2023.

## Dams

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts regulates four dams in West Brookfield, and a fifth is maintained by the Trustees of Reservations at the Rock House Reservation. The Town of West Brookfield owns and operates the Lake Wickaboag Dam, built in the 1930s, which enlarged the existing Wickaboag Pond into today's 320-acre lake. It is considered a low-hazard dam by the state. The Town has spent roughly \$50,000 in recent years maintaining the dam, and it conducts natural weed control annually. The Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan (2017) prioritizes continued maintenance of the dam and recommends a cost/benefit investigation of installing automatic dam controls. Water Department staff currently operates the dam manually.



Source: LakeWickaboag.com

**Table 7-6 Town Facilities**

Facility Category	Facility Name	Address	Year Built	Square footage	Insured or Assessed Building Value (\$)	Disabled Access Compliance	General Condition	Replacement/Major Renovation Need
<b>General Government/Safety &amp; Emergency Services</b>	Town Hall & Police Station/Fire Station	2 East Main Street	1859/ca. 1940	21,440	\$2,944,784	Mostly compliant	Good/Fair	Low/High (Police & Fire only)
<b>General Government</b>	Senior Center	73 Central Street	2005	3,776	\$490,540	Compliant	Excellent	Low
<b>General Government</b>	Merriam-Gilbert Public Library	3 West Main Street	1880	7,575	\$1,133,599	Mostly compliant	Good	Low
<b>Safety &amp; Emergency Services</b>	Rescue Squad	18R West Main Street	N/A	N/A	\$234,300	Not required	Excellent	Low
<b>Schools</b>	West Brookfield Elementary School	89 North Main Street	1953	62,700	\$14,662,700	Mostly compliant	Good	Low
<b>Public Works</b>	Highway Garage/Salt Shed	15 Front Street	1965/1975	8,436/3,000	\$819,320/\$389,731	Not compliant	Fair/Poor	High/High
<b>Public Works</b>	Water Treatment Facility/Pump House	4-16 Leland Road	2014/1972	864/100	\$1,025,000/133,955	Not required	Excellent/Good	Low/Medium
<b>Public Works</b>	Pump Bldg./Filtration, Garage Bldg./Pipe Storage	28 Warepoint Road	1972/1972/1972	100/3,800/400	\$14,205/\$1,753,907/\$51,964	Not required	Good/Good/Good	Low/Low/Low
<b>Public Works</b>	Water Storage Tank (600,000 gallons)	Long Hill Road (near #61)	1975	N/A	\$645,551	Not required	Good	Low
<b>Public Works</b>	Drop-off Center (& old landfill)	78 Wigwam Road	Unk.	64	\$1,400	Not compliant	Fair	Low
<b>Housing Authority</b>	Olde Village Place	29 East Main Street	1993	46 units	N/A	Compliant	Good	Low
<b>Active Recreation</b>	Town Common/Bandstand	East Main Street & School Street	1790s/1971	0/1,260	0/\$178,984	Partly compliant	Good/Good	Low/Medium
<b>Active Recreation</b>	WBES Playground & Ballfields	89 North Main Street (rear)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partly compliant	Good	Low
<b>Active Recreation</b>	Town Beach	Cottage Street	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partly compliant	Good	Low
<b>Other Facilities</b>	Quaboag Historical Society Museum	27 Front Street	1884	3,500	\$497,179	Mostly compliant	Good	Low
<b>Other Facilities</b>	Wickaboag Sportsmen's Club	89 New Braintree Road	1920	1,463	\$27,700	N/A	Fair	Low
<b>Other Facilities</b>	Pine Grove Cemetery	41 Church Street	1909	400	\$56,821	Not required	Good	Low
<b>Other Facilities</b>	Old Indian Cemetery	Cottage Street	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not required	Good	Low
<b>Other Facilities</b>	Methodist Cemetery	Lyons Road	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not required	Good	Low
<b>Other Facilities</b>	Lake Wickaboag Dam	South end of lake	1930s	N/A	N/A	Not required	Fair	Low

# INTRODUCTION – TOWN SERVICES

West Brookfield offers a very typical array of public services for a Central Massachusetts community of its size and budget. Whether or not they are required by state law, most town government services are understood by residents and businesses to be essential or at least desirable. West Brookfield does not have to provide a library, recreational programming, or a senior center, but over the decades its townspeople have chosen to offer these services to enhance local quality of life and to help establish and maintain community identity.

In West Brookfield, the following departments and positions provide direct services to the public:

**Table 7-7 Town Services Departments**

Department/Position	Posted Office Hours per Week	Staffing Level
<b>Board of Selectmen &amp; Exec. Secretary</b>	25	1 full-time, 3 part-time
<b>Animal Control/Inspector</b>	On-call	2 part-time
<b>Assessors</b>	20	1 part-time
<b>Board of Health</b>	12	4 part-time
<b>Building Inspector/Zoning Officer</b>	1 to 2 (Seasonal)	2 part-time
<b>Cemetery Commission</b>	15	2 part-time
<b>Drop Off Center</b>	6 to 12 (Seasonal)	Staffed by Highway Dept.
<b>Electrical Inspector</b>	By appointment	1 part-time
<b>Fire Department</b>	On-call 24/7	15 on-call
<b>Gas &amp; Plumbing Inspector</b>	By appointment	1 part-time
<b>Highway Department</b>	By appointment	5 full-time, 1 part-time
<b>Library</b>	31	3 full-time, 10 part-time
<b>Police Department</b>	27.5 (On-call 24/7)	5 full-time, 6 part-time
<b>Senior Center/Council on Aging</b>	30	1 full-time, 2 part-time
<b>Tax Collector</b>	13	1 part-time
<b>Town Clerk/Board of Registrars</b>	19	1 part-time
<b>Treasurer</b>	20	1 part-time
<b>Tree Warden</b>	By appointment	1 part-time
<b>Veteran's Services</b>	2	1 part-time
<b>Water Department</b>	28	2 full-time, 1 part-time



In general, residents are satisfied with their services, with more than half of Master Plan survey respondents either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with all listed services.

Town Hall registered the most "not satisfied" votes at 17%, with specific complaints about short and inconsistent office hours for some boards and departments, which is a particular concern for those boards that lack regular paid staff support. Recreational services and facilities also registered some complaints (14% not satisfied), as did the Town's website (11% not satisfied) and online bill-pay (23% of active users not satisfied).

These modest but locally-high levels of dissatisfaction are reflected in survey responses regarding services and related staffing that the Town needs but does not currently provide. A majority of respondents felt that the Town should consider providing a Parks Department (79%), a Town Administrator (77%), an Economic Development Committee (65%), a Town Planner (56%), and a Conservation Agent (54%). Other desired service changes include Town-arranged home trash and recycling collection (61% in support) and increased hours for the library (30%). Anecdotal reports at public events show a desire for longer office hours by inspectional services. While not highlighted in the Master Plan survey, ongoing clientele and demographic trends suggest that greater capacity for senior-related services will be required over the next decade-plus.

Beyond its staffed departments, West Brookfield maintains more than thirty elected and appointed boards, committees, and commissions that oversee or help implement Town policies. This number is roughly typical for the area; Brookfield similarly has more than thirty, East Brookfield has nineteen, and North Brookfield has over twenty. Results of the Master Plan survey show that residents are broadly familiar with West Brookfield's governing and advisory bodies, but lack understanding of some which are narrowly focused: the Earth Removal Board (77% of respondents "do not know anything about" it), the Stormwater Authority (71%), the Agriculture Commission (69%), and the Town Manager Exploration **Committee (67%) are the least well understood. The Town's elected and appointed boards, committees, and commissions are summarized in the table below.**

West Brookfield's primary executive is its Board of Selectmen, a body composed of three elected members who serve as the main policymakers for the local government. Supported by an Executive Secretary, the Selectmen are responsible for hiring and supervising most Town administrative staff, appointing members to unelected boards and commissions, and executing contracts, among many other tasks. Other elected boards such as the Planning Board, Water Commission and Board of Assessors are charged with setting and/or regulating specific policies per state statute or local by-law independent of the Board of Selectmen. Appointed boards often (but not always) serve in more advisory roles. Recent reports by the Town Manager Study Committee (2016) and the Mass. Department of Revenue (2011) have recommended a limited consolidation and professionalization of town staff with broad administrative supervision under a Town Administrator.

**Table 7-8 Boards and Committees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Elected or Appointed</b>	<b>Core Purpose(s)</b>
<b>Advisory Committee</b>	7	Appointed	Makes recommendations to Selectmen on many topics; submits budget at Town Meeting
<b>Agricultural Commission</b>	10	Appointed	Encourages the pursuit of agriculture and the protection of farmland
<b>Asparagus &amp; Flower Heritage Festival Committee</b>	5	Appointed	Organizes and publicizes annual festivals
<b>Board of Assessors</b>	5	Elected	Values property annually at full and fair cash value as per MGL Chapter 59, for use in local taxation
<b>Board of Registrars</b>	3	Appointed	Maintains the voter registration database and annual street listing
<b>Board of Health</b>	3	Elected	Regulates food safety, septic systems, and other health topics; conducts various public health activities
<b>Board of Library Trustees</b>	6	Elected	Provides oversight of Merriam-Gilbert Library operations and policies
<b>Board of Selectmen</b>	3	Elected	Executive branch of the Town government; appoints many other officials; assisted in day-to-day activities by Executive Secretary
<b>Board of Water Commissioners</b>	3	Elected	Provides oversight of Water Department operations and policies
<b>Burial Ground (Cemetery) Commissioners</b>	5	Appointed	Provides oversight of operations and policies at the three Town cemeteries
<b>Cable Television Committee</b>	1	Appointed	Provides oversight of operations and policies at the local access cable TV station
<b>Common Committee</b>	3	Elected	Provides oversight of operations and policies relating to the Common; coordinates with Congregational Church, which owns the Common
<b>Computer Technology Advisory Committee</b>	3	Appointed	Advises the Town on information technology issues related to local government operations
<b>Conservation Commission</b>	7	Appointed	Regulates protection of natural resources with particular emphasis on wetlands and other open spaces
<b>Council on Aging</b>	7	Appointed	Advocates for and provides services for local seniors; provides oversight of operations and policy at the Senior Center

<b>Cultural (Grants) Council</b>	7	Appointed	Promotes cultural and local heritage activities serving primarily youth and seniors; distributes grants from Mass. Cultural Coalition
<b>Earth Removal Board</b>	5	Appointed	Regulates commercial earth removal to minimize nuisances and protect natural resources
<b>Historical Commission</b>	8	Appointed	Advocates preservation, promotion and development of local historical assets
<b>Lake Wickaboag Dredging Administrators</b>	3	Appointed	Oversees dredging plans and activities
<b>Master Plan Committee</b>	9	Appointed	Provides oversight of Master Plan development process
<b>Music Committee</b>	5	Appointed	Organizes and publicizes community musical programming
<b>Open Space Implementation Committee</b>	6	Appointed	Oversees implementation and updates of the Open Space & Recreation Plan
<b>Planning Board</b>	5	Elected	Regulates land use; reviews site plans and subdivision requests; periodically reviews zoning and oversees long-range plans
<b>Quaboag Regional School Committee</b>	11	Elected	Provides oversight of operations and policy in the Quaboag Regional School District; 5 members from West Brookfield, 6 from Warren
<b>Recreation Committee</b>	5	Appointed	Oversees recreation policy and assists when possible with recreational sports teams and Town beach
<b>Road Projects Advisory Committee</b>	5	Appointed	Provides input on road maintenance projects and capital improvements
<b>Stormwater Authority</b>	7	Appointed	Regulates implementation and enforcement of the stormwater by-law to protect water resources
<b>Town Manager Study Committee</b>	7	Appointed	Investigates changes to the Town's form of government and administration, and reports to the Selectmen
<b>Triathlon Committee</b>	3	Appointed	Organizes and publicizes the Quaboag Triathlon
<b>War Memorial Committee</b>	4	Appointed	Oversees maintenance and activities at War Memorial
<b>White Christmas Committee</b>	3	Appointed	Organizes and publicizes seasonal festivities
<b>Zoning Board of Appeals</b>	5	Appointed	Acts on discretionary zoning-related permits, including special permits and variances

## Issues & Opportunities

- Limitations in staffing structure, hours and composition - resident surveys and past studies suggest that administrative/professional staffing at times is uneven due to outdated organizational structure, limited hours, and/or staff composition, which can challenge aspects of service delivery
- Gaps in desired services - the Town does not provide certain services/staff positions that residents find desirable, based on survey results
- Website and online bill pay - survey results indicate relative dissatisfaction with the Town's online services
- Service capacity with regard to demographic change - with growth in the Town's senior population, long-term service capacity may become a problem for the Senior Center, Board of Health, Veterans Agent and other relevant Town entities
- Shared or regional services and staffing - opportunities exist to potentially lower costs and/or improve selected services through regionalization or bilateral sharing with other communities
- Interest and participation in governing and advisory bodies - with public awareness of the roles of boards and commissions fairly high overall but low for some entities, a limited outreach/education/marketing campaign could provide new interest and participation



## GOALS AND ACTIONS – TOWN FACILITIES

1. *Develop a long-term plan for maintenance and replacement of Town facilities*
  - a. Complete a capital plan for all major Town assets that includes facilities maintenance and renovation/replacement budgets, timelines, and prioritization
  - b. Complete a facilities needs assessment to comprehensively review departmental needs to inform capital planning for facilities
  - c. Integrate long-term capital facilities improvements into the budgeting process and consider establishing an independent building maintenance fund
  - d. Consider establishing a municipal buildings committee to oversee facilities-related planning and projects and to provide guidance to Town leadership and voters
2. *Routinely maintain Town facilities to reduce or delay capital maintenance and facility replacement costs*
  - a. Adhere to suggested maintenance timelines to reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance at some facilities
3. *Improve compliance with ADA and 521 CMR at applicable Town facilities*
  - a. Appoint a local Commission on Disability with an initial mission of reviewing compliance improvements since the 2006 Accessibility Plan and establishing a prioritized timeline for future action at Town facilities
  - b. Pursue funding for access improvements through state grants (MOD, EOEEA, DHCD, etc.) and/or opt-in programs such as the Community Preservation Act
4. *Improve energy efficiency at Town facilities to lower costs and reduce energy use*
  - a. Continue to implement the recommendations of recent energy audits through upgrades to building systems and structures
  - b. Examine options for siting renewable energy facilities such as solar PV and wind on Town-owned land to defray municipal energy costs
  - c. Pursue designation as a Green Community to enable access to state funds for municipal energy efficiency improvements

# GOALS AND ACTIONS – TOWN SERVICES

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1. *Maximize the "human infrastructure" capacity of West Brookfield's government through limited restructuring and expanded professionalization*
  - a. **Implement the recommendations of the Town Manager Study Committee's** 2016 final report by creating a Town Administrator position to serve as chief administrative officer (replacing the more limited Executive Secretary position) and by consolidating the elected Treasurer and Tax Collector positions into a single appointed Treasurer/Collector position
  - b. Hire a management/human resources consultant to review work flows, departmental structures, staffing needs and skills, and compensation; develop a plan to further professionalize Town staffing where appropriate and to consider possible new capabilities and/or reorganization of existing departments; Community Compact funds may be available for this type of review
  - c. Examine options to increase the capacity of local inspectional services; consider increased hours, shared or regional staff, and development of a permitting guidebook
  - d. Where allowable by state law, consider shifting some current elected boards/commissions to appointed status to foster qualifications-based selection, allow for more consistent training and increased professionalization, centralize supervision under the Board of Selectmen, and help fill vacancies more quickly
2. *Consider addressing "gaps" in Town staffing as reflected in Master Plan survey results*
  - a. Consider hiring a part-time Recreation Director to coordinate and augment functions performed by the Recreation Committee
  - b. Consider hiring a part-time Town Planner, Conservation Agent and/or **Economic Development Coordinator to enhance the Town's local capacity** to attract and retain appropriate development; one individual may be qualified to serve two or three of these roles; other options include shared or regional staff; District Local Technical Assistance, Community Compact, and Efficiency and Regionalization grants may be available to support this type of review or early-stage implementation
3. *Improve the Town's website and online services*
  - a. Conduct an overall review of Town information technology (IT) assets, capabilities, security and resilience; resources for such review may be available through the Mass. Office of Information Technology's IT Health Check program and/or Community Compact funding
  - b. Update the Town's website and related online services (bill pay, etc.); consider adding new online services (e.g. e-permitting); Community Compact and/or Efficiency and Regionalization funding may be available

4. *Expand on regionalization and sharing of services and staffing, where appropriate*
  - a. Partner with CMRPC through District Local Technical Assistance and/or Community Compact funds to review specific needs and options for regional and bilateral shared services, expanding upon existing collaborations (Senior Center, schools, etc.)
5. *Explore and potentially implement a Town option for home trash and recycling collection*
  - a. Study options for procurement of a single waste disposal vendor to provide a reduced-rate option for residential trash pickup
6. *Improve public awareness of and participation in governing and advisory boards, committees, and commissions*
  - a. Conduct an outreach campaign to educate residents on the function of Town governing and advisory bodies to improve membership in these entities and overall public participation

# Implementation





# Introduction

The residents of West Brookfield take great pride in their town. Preserving the rural, small town character is a key component of the vision for the future of West Brookfield. Many residents have contributed to ideas in this plan including the vision, goals, and specific actions to take to achieve the vision. In addition, town residents through volunteering, paying taxes, raising children in the school district, and attending town events are all part of the decision-making process for the town's future. Unfortunately, opportunities for residents to have input into the future of the town are very rare. Often, by the time that something is in front of Town Meeting for consideration, years of work, research, and planning has already been done.

The overall goal of this master plan is to identify key steps and actions that should occur in the short term (1-3, 3-5, and 5-10 years). The Plan should be used as a resource and manual for Town officials in creating projects, or evaluating the importance or priority of initiatives, or assessing funding requests. Many of these items will require future funding, future Town Meeting approval, and many will affect your life as a resident. A key finding of the master plan process is that the Town must take proactively coordinated and planned steps to ensure that each distinct aspect of the community will be preserved or enhanced. Development pressures will increase and the existing regulations (both for open spaces, route 9, the Town center, and route 9 and 67 corridor) **do not stand up and preserve the town's character** against the test of anticipated new development and the likelihood of change.

The Town of West Brookfield does not employ many of the common regulations enacted by other communities seeking to proactively protect their character. These primarily include:

- Demolition delay bylaw
- Local Historic District
- Updated Zoning Districts (For example: Village center areas, light industrial, and conservation/rural protection)
- Other zoning tools (updated Open Space Subdivision, mixed use, new use categories, dimensional flexibility for town center areas, housing options)

In addition, the Town could significantly benefit from investments into common programs or services that will help advance many of the goals of this Master Plan:

- Green Communities designation
- Community Preservation Act
- Complete Streets
- Town Administrative leadership
- Full time/shared inspection services

These actions items, combined with other challenging issues, such as finding ways to offset the residential tax burden, the potential need for a new police and fire facilities, and many others could take years to raise public awareness, initiate, and accomplish. Taxes affect all

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residents and are necessary to support the future success of the town. In fact, how they are spent will likely become more important in the decision-making process.

A primary goal of this Master Plan is to map out a set of actions that will allow the community to monitor tax expenditures, and, for residents to understand that decisions made now will affect how those funds could be spent in 3, 5, or 10 years from now. To accomplish these goals, residents, boards, committees, town employees, and Town Meeting must all work together and participate in implementation. It will be critical for people to move past or be freed **from notions such as “that will never work”, or, “it didn’t pass in 1989”**.

The 10 year vision for this master plan sets important initial goals for these common municipal tools to be initiated, presented, and approved by Town Meeting in order to create the structure and framework to fulfill the vision and goals listed in this plan. Updating the plan and continuing to monitor implementation is critical. It is commonly recommended to review and update the plan again in 5-8 years. The modest investment and allocation by Town Meeting in 2016 for the creation of this plan shows the desire to be forward thinking. Resident volunteers will need to work hard and creatively to achieve the future vision and will need to be open to exploring new thoughts and ideas to keep their town competitive and retain the character it presently has.

As part of the master plan, the goals and strategies lay out necessary steps to navigate common municipal processes in Massachusetts, from ensuring the Town has achieved the necessary criteria to apply for grant funding, to ensuring that public outreach and involvement occurs prior to Town Meeting. Many of the steps can accomplish multiple goals. **It’s imperative that implementation of the steps occurs; otherwise, the town is vulnerable to changes that disrupt the character of the town.** Now is the time to begin efforts to create, update, and re-align regulations so that in the future when new developments or changes are proposed, the regulations will be in place. A prime example illustrating the need to act is the fact that under existing regulations, the **“Plantation Store” could be** demolished and replaced with a large gas station similar to a Cumberland Farms. While it seems dramatic, there is nothing in place that shapes the future development pattern for that parcel; or for any other historic property in town, in line with the desires of residents. There is the common sentiment to automatically resist new regulations or assume that property owners will do the right thing. However, there is too much at risk to rely on that hope over the next 10 years.

The approach to this Plan is to identify a program of specific changes that, if taken over time, will allow West Brookfield to retain and enhance its character while remaining economically and fiscally competitive. At the same time, the costs of services and thus taxes will likely increase over time. Therefore, strategic steps to increase the tax base can match or alleviate the costs to taxpayers while fulfilling the vision of the town. This is the goal of the Master Plan; to create the framework for this to happen. The Master Plan in and of itself will not create or protect anything. Residents, volunteers, town employees, and other stakeholders or agents need to organize, plan, act, seek funding and remain committed to working to create the future of the town. Without action, the town may change in unanticipated or undesirable ways or be developed in a haphazard way that may not benefit the residents.

## Implementation Committee

The development of a Master Plan takes a great deal of time and requires input from a number of local sectors such as town staff, elected and appointed officials and volunteers, citizens, the business community, and a variety of other stakeholders. This input and participation is essential in developing a plan that **will not “sit on a shelf”**. **Because the Master Plan serves as a blueprint and contains a “menu” of various options, creating an implementation plan and strategy is essential.**

A key recommendation of this Plan is for the Town to form a committee or working group comprised of a diverse set of members in order to facilitate the implementation work. There are a wide range of options and variations for the composition of the implementation committee. The following is an example that may or may not need to be tailored provided the availability of a key staff people and/or interested residents to carry forward the entire plan.

- Board of Selectman
- Advisory Board
- Planning Board
- Town Official #1
- Town Official #2
- Resident (at large)
- Resident (Town Center)

The Committee should consider creating a **“charge”** to guide and establish a series of initial goals over the first 1 to 2 years. Further evaluation of the implementation matrix to prioritize actions should occur and additional responsible parties and/or funding sources be considered. One approach could be to identify, through additional meetings and consultation with other town officials and boards, at least one goal/action item in the plan to be pursued by the various existing Boards and Committees in Town. This type of program would allow for multiple actions to be explored by existing committees especially where minimal staff time is available.

After a period of time, an evaluation of the work should be conducted by the Board of Selectmen to gauge effectiveness and/or help identify or fund resources for next steps. Additionally, it is noted that grant funding (such as through DLTA) could be sought to potentially provide outside guidance and assistance during the creation of the Committee.

Other important aspects that should be considered by an Implementation Committee include, but are not limited to:

- Representation - The Board of Selectmen, Advisory Board, Planning Board and other boards and committees will need to work together with Town staff and residents to use this Master Plan as a guidance and policy document for the period of 2017 to 2027.
- Accountability - The creation of a mechanism for reporting on progress should be established. The goal may be to track action but also identify funding sources, or, identify barriers to implementation. If actions can be coordinated and grouped, the effectiveness and ability for the Plan to be useful is increased.
- Education - It will be important for Town Meeting members to become aware of the Master Plan over time and for them to understand that many future actions and funding requests may be generated out of the goals and actions identified in the Plan.
- Adaptability - It is important to note that planning is a dynamic process and priorities **can shift over time. Additionally, the Town’s capacity to implement the Plan may shift** over time due to changes in staffing and board membership, for example. Therefore, the actions and **implementation matrix are not intended to be “set in stone” and are not necessarily permanent.** The Plan offers background and guidance but requires interpretation, investigation, and subsequent action.

## Implementation Matrix

Table 8-3 below summarizes the specific “goals” found at the end of each of the Plan’s elements. For purposes of the chart, not every “action” under each goal is listed. However, it is those actions and others necessary to achieve the listed goal that will require the time to implement. The matrix is not listed in a prioritized order. The timing listed in the Matrix should be considered a guide, but may require more careful review, adjustments, and consideration by the Implementation Committee or other Town officials or boards.

Pursuant to the Request For Proposal, the **plan’s recommendations are assigned on an immediate, short-, medium-, and long-term basis** to assist in determining the timeframe in which each item is to be considered. Some recommendations do not necessarily fall into an immediate, short-, medium-, or long-term designation and are noted in each column to reflect that they are ongoing in nature. It is important to note that when a recommendation is assigned into a long-term category, it should not imply a lesser degree of importance or a lower priority. Some recommendations simply require time for financing or design, but would still be considered a high priority. It is important that the town carefully review, adjust, and make changes to the implementation matrix as situations change. This can be done without disturbing the overarching goal of a chapter or the Plan itself. In summary, the chart is a guide that requires fine tuning by the town.



The following table identifies the acronyms used for responsible parties listed in the matrix: and potential funding sources in the table:

Table 8-1 - Responsible Parties

Code	Responsible Party
AB	Advisory Board
BI	Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer
BOH	Board of Health
BOS	Board of Selectmen
CC	Conservation Commission
CMRPC	Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
COA	Council on Aging
CUC	Cultural Council
DCS	MA Division of Conservation Services
DEP	MassDEP/Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
HW	Highway Department
LIG	Local Interest Group
EDE	Economic Development Entity (such as Chamber of Commerce)
EOHED	Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
FD	Fire Department
HA	Housing Authority
HC	Historical Commission
LIB	Public Library
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection
DOT	MassDOT/Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MHC	Massachusetts Historical Commission
PB	Planning Board
PD	Police Department
PRC	Parks and Recreation Commission
SC	Senior Center
SD	School Department
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals

The following table identifies potential funding sources listed in the matrix:

Table 8-2 - Potential Funding Sources

Code	Funding Source
0	Not Applicable
1	General Fund
2	Capital Budget
3	Grant, Federal
4	Grant, State
5	Grant, Regional
6	Regional Planning Agency Technical Assistance or Consultant
7	Revenue Bond
8	General Obligation Bond
9	Special Assessment or Tax
10	Loan
11	Service Charge or User Fee
12	Community Preservation Act (CPA), if applicable
13	Other/TBD

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
<b>POPULATION AND HOUSING GOALS &amp; ACTIONS</b>								
<i>Goal 1: Fully understand and plan for current and future housing needs</i>								
a	Create a community-guided, comprehensive housing plan that addresses the needs of all residents, accounting for changing demographic and market factors						BOS, COA, PB	4
b	Raise awareness and understanding of housing types and affordability						PB	1
<i>Goal 2: Increase the amount and variety of housing options in certain areas</i>								
a	Identify steps to encourage small incremental increases in new housing opportunities closer to goods, services, and infrastructure						PB	6
b	Identify suitable areas for development of housing targeted at independent seniors, empty-nesters and young professionals						PB	1, 6
<i>Goal 3: Ensure that any new residential development will enhance and/or preserve the character of West Brookfield</i>								
a	Identify and outline protective zoning measures to be applied to rural areas						PB	1, 6
b	Create design guidelines for new housing types						PB	6 or 13
<i>Goal 4: Protect and preserve the existing stocking of historical and aging housing</i>								
a	Identify and inventory key historic housing assets						HC	1
b	Develop locally generated and controlled source of capital for acquisition and rehabilitation of housing assets						BOS	13
<i>Goal 5: Understand and evaluate the potential costs and benefits of new residential development</i>								

Implementation

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
a	Conduct buildout analysis to help the town better understand what lands are available for new development						PB	4, 6
b	Conduct a fiscal impact analysis to assess the costs and benefits of future development						PB	4, 6
LAND USE GOALS & ACTIONS								
Goal 1: <i>Preserve and enhance the existing Town Center area and Route 9 and Route 67 corridors</i>								
a	Consider alternate zoning districts for the Town Center and Route 9/67 corridor to encourage and support desirable, small scale business growth						PB	1, 6
Goal 2: <i>Preserve and protect important scenic landscapes and rural character of outlying areas through permanent protection or conservation-oriented zoning provisions</i>								
a	Create areas for Natural Resource Protection Zoning (NRPZ) or other similar conservation zoning techniques						CC, PB with other interest groups	1, 6
b	Utilize the findings of a complete buildout analysis to assist the town in prioritizing key parcels for protection						CC, PB	1
c	Consider revisions to the Open Space Residential Development Bylaw to ensure that it incorporates best practices, such as allowing these types of developments by-right, or providing the proper incentives to encourage the use of this method over a conventional subdivision						CC, PB,	6

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
<i>Goal 3: Identify options for increasing small scale, light industry</i>								
a	Consider a Light Industrial Overlay District or zoning bylaw designation for certain key areas						PB	6
<i>Goal 4: Explore options to moderate lakeside growth and protection of water resources</i>								
a	Create a residential lake zoning overlay district to provide reasonable regulations for new or renovated homes, including consideration for sanitary and water infrastructure						PB	6
<i>Goal 5: Make the permitting process clearer and more predictable for applicants and town officials (NOTE: This should be the outcome of a review by all local review boards and such a group should also serve as a development review committee going forward)</i>								
a	Review key processes and procedures to determine key areas of improvement						BOS, PB, AB, BI, BOH, ZBA	1, 4, 6
b	Create a permit process guide to outline a typical permit process for applicants						BOS, PB, AB, BI, BOH, ZBA	1, 4, 6
<i>Goal 6: Conduct a complete build-out analysis to provide more detailed information on outlying residential development as the basis for future land use policy questions</i>								



Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
a	Conduct a thorough review and inventory of subdivisions over a period of time to determine the rate of development for each method. Identify the underlying characteristics in each area, and consider application of more tailored zoning in certain areas (such as Farmland Conservation around Snow Road and Natural Resource Protection Zoning around Wickaboag Valley Road). For each specific area, an inventory and analysis should occur along with preparation of information for property owners and town meeting.						PB	1, 6
Goal 7: <i>Conduct a site assessment and evaluation for 1 East Main Street. Such an evaluation should consider zoning constraints, sanitary sewer capacity, building code requirements for changes in use, and other factors necessary to preserve, restore, and/or revitalize the building.</i>								
a	Conduct a site assessment and evaluation for 1 East Main Street							
Goal 8: <i>Review and amend portions of the Town Common Overlay District to incorporate newer best practices associated with adaptive reuse of existing historic structures and preserve community character</i>								
Goal 9: <i>Consider adoption of a comprehensive solar bylaw incorporating new best practices for appropriate siting and preservation of community character</i>								
Goal 10: <i>Review and amend the sign bylaw requirements to ensure that new future signs are compatible with the characteristics of a certain area or the town as a whole. This effort should include consideration of suitably located tourist-oriented wayfinding signs.</i>								
a	Consider suitably located tourist-oriented wayfinding signs							
b	Consider size, height, and citing aspects							
c	Consider requiring multi-tenant signs where applicable							

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
Goal 11: <i>Consider and explore different parking strategies in certain areas.</i>								
a	Consider a small scale parking inventory and utilization study in the town center to identify available parking and/or options to increase parking supply or efficiency.							
b	Explore options to create a more coordinated event parking plan coordinated with event organizers, police, DPW, and day of volunteers to direct visitors to other available parking areas or shuttles.							
c	Review parking policies associated with pick up and drop off at the Elementary School and explore any feasible options to alleviate congestion on North Main Street and adjacent streets.							
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS & ACTIONS								
Goal 1: <i>Increase tourism activity in West Brookfield</i>								
a	Create a <b>“brand”</b> and <b>“placemaking”</b> program for the entire town with respect to its enticement from inside and outside the region (see additional info)						Responsibility here should be either an economic development committee or staffer/consultant (EDE)	1, 4, 6, 13
b	Enhance and grow ecological, agricultural, and cultural tourism businesses in West Brookfield						EDE	1, 13
c	Establish a town brand based on quality of life, food and farms, plus active and passive outdoor recreation						EDE	1, 13

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
d	Encourage lodging opportunities to capture business currently flowing to Sturbridge						PB, EDE	1, 13
<i>Goal 2: Increase tourism awareness for visitors outside of West Brookfield and/or the region</i>								
a	Increase and/or support small businesses						EDE	1, 13
b	Enhance general marketing for the Town as a destination within the region						EDE	1,13
<i>Goal 3: Study opportunities to increase moderate new commercial development in certain areas</i>								
a	Explore the feasibility of increasing light industrial opportunities in three primary areas (South Route 67 on existing quarry land, the Railroad Street/Front Street area, and eastern end of Route 9) through zoning						PB	1, 6
<i>Goal 4: Consider rezoning of areas of Route 9/67, Town Center, and General District to ensure compatibility of new business and commercial uses</i>								
a	Explore development opportunities and constraints in key areas of the Route 9 corridor and the General District						PB	1, 6
<i>Goal 5: Increase tax base through encouraging and seeking appropriate and desirable businesses</i>								
a	Establish a municipal water and sewer infrastructure plan and seek funding for improvements via MassWorks, I-Cubed (Infrastructure Investment Incentive) Program, and other sources						AB, BOS, HW	4,6
b	Encourage a diverse retail and service base to meet the needs of residents and visitors						PB	1,6

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium -Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
c	Support existing businesses to increase their viability and scale						EDE	1
d	Encourage the expansion of the industrial base by creating specific zoning districts and requirements for various compatible uses						EDE	1
e	Form an Industrial Development Authority, CDC, Economic Development Committee or other body to work market and negotiate development/ redevelopment/ expansions						BOS, EDE	1
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS & ACTIONS								
Goal 1: <i>Create a permanent standing Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee to steer the development of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update.</i>								
a	Employ a full-time planner to maintain day-to-day operations and communications						BOS, PB, CC	1
b	Continue to work with the Conservation Commission and Stormwater Authority to prioritize remaining and ongoing action items identified in the 2011 OSRP						PB, CCC	1
c	Facilitate agreements with developers to preserve open space and provide recreational facilities						PB, ZBA	1
d	Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas						CC	1
Goal 2: <i>Identify priority open space parcels for permanent protection and/or future acquisition in order to establish a wider, more connected open space network</i>								
a	Promote the preservation of important land resources						CC	1



Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium -Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
b	Coordinate the permanent protection and acquisition of the areas identified in the 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan as unprotected <b>“Unique or Natural Lands”</b>						CC	1
c	Encourage the use of Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B to maintain lands identified as priority conservation parcels						CC	1
d	Identify key privately-owned open space parcels (including those with limited public access) and seek change in ownership to allow for increased recreational opportunities for residents						CC	1, 4, 6
e	Purchase lands that are withdrawn from Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B through the process of first right of refusal, then place a permanent restriction on them to maintain their existing use						CC	1, 2, 13
f	Acquire a change in ownership of the Town-owned lands along Route 9 to the Conservation Commission							
Goal 3: <i>Promote the preservation of West <b>Brookfield's</b> surface and groundwater as an important source for wildlife and recreational use</i>								
a	Take actions to improve the water quality for recreational activities on Lake Wickaboag and Brookhaven Lake						CC & Lake Wickaboag Assn.	1
b	Collect data about watershed quality on an annual basis						Intern	13
c	Identify areas of contamination and pollution loads						TBD	13

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
d	Increase resident understanding of current water quality issues at Lake Wickaboag and their effects on recreational opportunities						CC, LWA	13
e	Mitigate non-point source pollution runoff into rivers and lakes						CC, HW	1
f	Continue to monitor septic systems failures near well sites and within known aquifer areas, and in homes upgradient of Lake Brookhaven, Lake Wickaboag, and tributaries to these lakes						BOH	1
g	Continue to monitor bacteria and algae problems evident in Lake Wickaboag and provide viable solutions						BOH, LWA	1, 13
Goal 4: <i>Actively pursue funding through grants, state matching funds, or other programs for land purchase, resource preservation, and rehabilitation of existing facilities</i>								
a	Identify key priority recreation areas in need of upgrade, repair, or maintenance						PRC	1, 4, 6
b	Seek application of the Community Preservation Act to facilitate protection of conservation lands						AB, BOS, PB, CC, HC	1,4,6
c	Seek application of the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant to allow the development of a new public outdoor recreation facility or park						PRC	1, 4
d	Seek application of the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grant to provide additional passive recreational opportunities						PRC, CC	1,4

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
e	Continue to apply for the 604(b) Water Quality Management Grant to preserve the quality of the lake and the surrounding areas						HW	1,4
Goal 5: <i>Enhance recreational opportunities and open space resources by encouraging multiple uses and by creating linkages between open space and recreational properties.</i>								
a	Enhance West <b>Brookfield's</b> natural environment by taking advantage of local and regional linkages of open space in the creation of greenways						CC	1
b	Create a strategic prioritization plan for preserving certain key parcels with the Route 9/67 corridor						CC	1
c	Provide additional passive and active recreational opportunities for all residents						CC, PRC	1, 13
Goal 6: <i>Increase educational awareness and understanding of State-aid programs and local regulations and bylaws amongst community members</i>								
a	Develop an education campaign or program to build awareness of the pollutants affecting Lake Wickaboag and best practices						LWA, CC	1, 13
b	Educate the public about the adopted scenic roads bylaw and the environmental impacts on local open space resources						CC, PB	1
c	Increase public understanding of the Community Preservation Act in regards to land acquisition through tax title takings							

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
NATURAL, CULTURAL, AND HISTORIC RESOURCES GOALS & ACTIONS								
Goal 1: <i>Continue to promote communication, outreach, and advocacy for the protection of natural and historic resources in town</i>								
a	Assemble a project team to update the 2007 West Brookfield Reconnaissance Report						MHC	1, 4, 13
b	Continue to inventory, map, and prioritize key unprotected open spaces						CC	1
c	Create a permanent standing Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee to steer the development of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update						CC	1
d	Continue to pursue adoption and implementation of key recommendations in Open Space and Recreation Plan						CC	1, 13
e	Identify and prioritize additional historic sites to be included in the National Historic Registry						HC	1
f	Continue to promote local history and culture at special town events						HC	1
Goal 2: <i>Establish common protective regulatory tools in key areas of town in order to preserve the <b>community's</b> rich cultural and historical heritage</i>								
a	Seek a cultural district designation in the Town Center area to provide funding and awareness to the <b>area's</b> importance							
b	Build local awareness of Local Historic District benefits and initiate public process to establish a Local Historic District in an appropriate area in Town						HC	1

Implementation

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium -Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
c	Adopt a demolition delay ordinance or bylaw to ensure protection of significant historic structures that are not presently located within historic districts in West Brookfield						HC	1,6
d	Ensure zoning districts protect historic structures in terms of use and design						HC, PB	1
<i>Goal 3: Pursue state-funded programs for land purchase and natural resource conservation</i>								
a	Begin a multi-phased process towards seeking the adoption of the Community Preservation Act, including a public education campaign on land acquisition through tax title takings						AB, BOS, PB, CC, HC	1,6
b	Encourage more property owners to pursue Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) and Conservation Restrictions (CR)						CC, PB	1
<i>Goal 4: Increase collaboration with neighboring communities and conservation groups to closely monitor and protect water resources as sub-regional assets</i>								
a	Consider options for volunteer-based programs including water quality monitoring and reporting, to allow for greater resident involvement and understanding of vital resources						LWA, CC	1
b	Identify areas of contamination and pollution loads						LWA, CC	1
c	Increase education and outreach efforts to promote the protection of Lake Wickaboag and Brookhaven Lake						LWA, CC	1



Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
d	Provide guidance for towns to integrate care of water resources into the goals and policies of all relevant plan documents.						PB	1
TRANSPORTATION GOALS & ACTIONS								
Goal 1: <i>Maintain and enhance the condition of West Brookfield's transportation network</i>								
a	Establish a Road Survey program to help determine road maintenance and funding needs						HW, CMRPC	1, 6
b	Establish a sidewalk and ADA ramp survey program to help determine maintenance and funding needs						HW, CMRPC	1, 6
Goal 2: <i>Increase access to different forms of transportation</i>								
a	Increase the access of residents to carpooling and other transit options						BOS, CMRPC	1, 6
b	Expand the existing pedestrian network						PB, HW	1, 3, 4
c	Enhance the parking experience of residents and visitors in key locations						HW, PB	1,3,4
Goal 3: <i>Pursue available funding through the State or other sources</i>								
a	Pursue funding from multiple sources for improvements to roads						HW	1,2,3,4, 13
b	Pursue funding from multiple sources for improvements to sidewalks and ramps						HW	1,2,3,4, 13
TOWN FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS & ACTIONS								
General Government Facilities								
Goal 1: <i>Improve/expand parking in the vicinity of the Town Hall and Library</i>								
a	Add more marked parking spaces and handicapped spaces on Cottage Street						HW	1,2,3,4, 13

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
b	Reconfigure Town Hall parking lot as per Safety & Emergency Facilities section below						HW	2
<i>Goal 2: Increase Senior Center capabilities to meet the needs of the aging population</i>								
a	Develop a plan to monitor needs and gradually increase service levels and facility utilization						COA, SC	1
b	Pursue opportunities to partner with nearby communities to offer regional senior services to help defray operational and facility costs and to expand programming options for West Brookfield's seniors						COA, SC, CMRPC	1, 6
<i>Goal 3: Improve structural resilience of unreinforced masonry structures</i>								
a	Study the Town Hall and Library to assess risks from earthquakes; install seismic retrofits as needed based on the cost-benefit evaluation							
Safety & Emergency Services Facilities								
<i>Goal 4: Implement short-term solutions to mitigate inadequate public safety facilities</i>								
a	Install a new backup generator system at the Town Hall/Police/Fire complex to provide for continuity of municipal and emergency management operations; consider FEMA HMGP program for funding						AB, BOS, PD, FD	1,2
b	Consider repaving the Town Hall parking lot and reconfiguring the layout and striping of spaces to better accommodate emergency personnel and vehicular access						HW	2

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
c	Continue to participate in and seek resources through the Central Region Homeland Security Advisory Council, the Central Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council, and Fire District 7						AB, BOS, PD, FD	1,3,4,6
d	Improve IT hardware and software to enhance administrative productivity (especially Fire)						IT	1,2
<i>Goal 5: Implement a long-term solution to replace inadequate public safety facilities through relocation of the police and/or fire services</i>								
a	Revisit the 2012 Fire and Police Department Needs Study to locate any potential programmatic cost savings from the recommended program						AB, BOS, PD, FD	1
b	If necessary, complete a new public safety facility feasibility study that adheres to a budget that is likely to be supported by voters at Town Meeting						AB, BOS, PD, FD	1, 13
c	Develop a funding strategy to include State earmarks, State/Federal grant and loan programs (consider USDA), as well as local options							
d	Evaluate options for regionalization or shared services in public safety to lower costs and potentially improve services; consider shared leadership, personnel, training, procurement, vehicles, vehicle maintenance, and/or facilities; also consider creation of an independent fire district						AB, BOS, PD, FD	1, 6

Implementation

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
<i>Goal 6: Modernize the Fire Department's vehicle fleet</i>								
a	Pursue funding options such as FEMA AFG grants to defray Town costs for major capital outlays for fire apparatus						AB, BOS, FD	1, 6
<i>Goal 7: Support and encourage WBRS EMTs in becoming certified as paramedics</i>								
a	Investigate funding options and the possibility of regionalized training						AB, BOS, PD, FD	1, 6
Schools								
<i>Goal 8: Implement and add to the capital plan</i>								
a	The district should seek MSBA assistance to complete projects at WBES as laid out in the current capital plan						SD	
b	The district should address the relatively few handicapped access concerns through future capital planning and/or securing of variances (also see below for related concerns at WBES's recreational facilities)						SD	
<i>Goal 9: Expand upon existing shared services</i>								
a	Continue to pursue options for sharing services with other districts, where appropriate						SD	
<i>Goal 10: The district should the impacts of school choice on the district and on WBES in particular</i>								
a	Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the school choice program to better understand how the benefits of enrollment stabilization through inbound school choice students are balanced against any increased costs for language support or special education needs						SD	

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium -Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
b	If warranted, increase or decrease the level of school choice participation						SD	
Public Works Facilities								
Goal 11: <i>Implement short-term solutions to mitigate inadequate Highway Department facilities</i>								
a	Consider paving the Highway Garage's parking lot to reduce the impacts of salt contamination and improve vehicular access during winter conditions						HW	1,2
b	Replace the existing shed at the Drop-Off Center with a larger prefabricated structure with additional storage and some basic amenities for staff						HW	1,2
c	Implement the recommendations of the recent energy audit to improve energy efficiency						AB, BOS	2,3,4,1 3
Goal 12: <i>Implement a long-term solution to replace inadequate Highway Department facilities through relocation or renovation</i>								
a	Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate options for renovation and/or replacement of the Highway Garage and Salt Shed, considering renovation costs vs. relocation to a reused or new structure, as well as other factors such as flood risks at the current site						AB, BOS, HW	1,6
Goal 13: <i>Expand solid waste disposal options for Town residents</i>								
a	Study options for the Drop-Off Center's conversion into a transfer station where household trash and recycling are collected						HW	1
b	Consider on-site composting of yard waste						HW	1



Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
c	Study options for procurement of a single waste disposal vendor to provide a reduced-rate option for residential trash pickup						HW	1
Housing Authority Facilities								
Goal 14: <i>Supplement existing coordination between the Town and the Housing Authority</i>								
a	Increase outreach by the Senior Center to residents of the Housing Authority to increase access to social programs, meals, wellness activities and referrals to other programs						SC, COA, HA	1
b	Supplement patrols to Olde Village by the Police Department to demonstrate the Town's commitment to residents' security						PD	1
Active Recreational Facilities								
Goal 15: <i>Evaluate and improve parking near the Common and Town Beach</i>								
a	Review current parking usage and capacity, especially during special events (Common) and high summer (beach)						PRC	1
b	Develop a plan to potentially reconfigure street parking near the Common to maximize capacity, and increase utilization of remote parking options						HW, CMRPC	1,6
c	Engage Lakeview Ave. property owner across from beach parking area to discuss potential usage of undeveloped flood-prone land for occasional parking, through access agreement, easement, gift or purchase						PRC	13

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
d	Increase enforcement of permitted parking requirement at the beach						PD	1
<i>Goal 16: Leverage special events on the Common to enhance economic development</i>								
a	Review current programming in the Brookfields region and identify gaps in dates and types of events that could potentially be exploited						EDE	1, 13
b	Continue and expand coordination between special events and related local businesses and institutions						EDE	1, 13
Water Supply System								
<i>Goal 17: Develop an improvement plan (with funding strategy) for the water system</i>								
a	Hire a civil engineering firm to conduct a comprehensive assessment and develop a long-term prioritized action plan for the existing water system including water sources; pumping, treatment and storage facilities; mains; valves; and hydrants						AB, BOS, HW	1, 4
b	Evaluate and quantify system expansion options, in conjunction with any proposed zoning changes or economic development initiatives						AB, BOS, HW	1, 4
c	Develop a funding strategy to make priority improvements including grants (MassDEP, USDA, etc.), Town funds, and betterments						AB	1
d	Consider creating a mechanism for water user fees to be reinvested in the water system, in part or in full; a water enterprise fund is one option						Is there a Water Dept?	1

Implementation

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
Goal 18: <i>Improve the water system's fire suppression capability to support public safety and commercial/retail/industrial development in the town center and Route 9 corridor</i>								
a	Replace substandard water mains with mains at least 8" in diameter						WD	4
Goal 19: <i>Leverage surplus water capacity for economic development purposes</i>								
a	Develop materials for use when marketing West Brookfield to potential developers and to existing local business who are considering expansion						EDE	1
b	Consider establishing a commercial water rate for future large system users						WD	1
Wastewater Management System								
Goal 20: <i>Explore options pursuant to creation of a local sanitary sewer system or systems</i>								
a	As an initial step, engage the Town of Warren in formal discussions to determine its level of openness to sharing its existing sewer treatment capacity through future extension of mains into West Brookfield						AB, BOS, HW	1

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
b	Hire a civil engineering firm to more fully explore the feasibility of developing a municipal sewer treatment plant and collection network; examine potential sites, permitting requirements, costs (design, construction, and operational), revenues, regionalization options (i.e., Warren), service area scenarios (i.e., a narrow focus on the town center and Route 9 corridor vs. a broader area coterminous with the water service area), funding options, and timelines						AB, BOS, HW	1,2,3,4,13
c	To support economic development efforts in the short term, explore small-scale sewer treatment solutions focused on single large commercial/industrial users or on partnerships of smaller users; examine package plants, solar aquatic systems, and other innovative small-scale approaches; development could be fully private or subsidized by the Town as an incentive for development						AB, BOS, HW	13
Goals and Actions - Town Facilities								
Goal 21: <i>Develop a long-term plan for maintenance and replacement of Town facilities</i>								
a	Complete a capital plan for all major Town assets that includes facilities maintenance and renovation/replacement budgets, timelines, and prioritization						AB, BOS	1

Implementation

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
b	Complete a facilities needs assessment to comprehensively review departmental needs to inform capital planning for facilities						AB, BOS	1, 13
c	Integrate long-term capital facilities improvements into the budgeting process and consider establishing an independent building maintenance fund						AB, BOS	1
d	Consider establishing a municipal buildings committee to oversee facilities-related planning and projects and to provide guidance to Town leadership and voters						AB, BOS	1
<i>Goal 22: Routinely maintain Town facilities to reduce or delay capital maintenance and facility replacement costs</i>								
a	Adhere to suggested maintenance timelines to reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance at some facilities						AB, BOS	1
<i>Goal 23: Improve compliance with ADA and 521 CMR at applicable Town facilities</i>								
a	Appoint a local Commission on Disability with an initial mission of reviewing compliance improvements since the 2006 Accessibility Plan and establishing a prioritized timeline for future action at Town facilities						AB, BOS	1
b	Pursue funding for access improvements through state grants (MOD, EOEEA, DHCD, etc.) and/or opt-in programs such as the Community Preservation Act						AB, BOS	1



Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
<i>Goal 24: Improve energy efficiency at Town facilities to lower costs and reduce energy use</i>								
a	Continue to implement the recommendations of recent energy audits through upgrades to building systems and structures						AB, BOS	1
b	Examine options for siting renewable energy facilities such as solar PV and wind on Town-owned land to defray municipal energy costs						AB, BOS, PB	1
c	Pursue designation as a Green Community to enable access to state funds for municipal energy efficiency improvements						AB, BOS, CC, PB	1
Goals and Actions - Town Services								
<i>Goal 25: Maximize the "human infrastructure" capacity of West Brookfield's government through limited restructuring and expanded professionalization</i>								
a	Implement the recommendations of the Town Manager Study <b>Committee's</b> 2016 final report by creating a Town Administrator position to serve as chief administrative officer (replacing the more limited Executive Secretary position) and by consolidating the elected Treasurer and Tax Collector positions into a single appointed Treasurer/Collector position						AB, BOS	1

Implementation

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
b	Hire a management/human resources consultant to review work flows, departmental structures, staffing needs and skills, and compensation; develop a plan to further professionalize Town staffing where appropriate and to consider possible new capabilities and/or reorganization of existing departments; Community Compact funds may be available for this type of review						AB, BOS	13
c	Examine options to increase the capacity of local inspectional services; consider increased hours, shared or regional staff, and development of a permitting guidebook						AB, BOS	11 or 13
d	Where allowable by state law, consider shifting some current elected boards/commissions to appointed status to foster qualifications-based selection, allow for more consistent training and increased professionalization, centralize supervision under the Board of Selectmen, and help fill vacancies more quickly						AB, BOS	1
Goal 26: Consider addressing "gaps" in Town staffing as reflected in Master Plan survey results								
a	Consider hiring a part-time Recreation Director to coordinate and augment functions performed by the Recreation Committee						AB, BOS, PRC	1

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
b	Consider hiring a part-time Town Planner, Conservation Agent and/or Economic Development Coordinator to enhance the <b>Town's</b> local capacity to attract and retain appropriate development; one individual may be qualified to serve two or three of these roles; other options include shared or regional staff; District Local Technical Assistance, Community Compact, and Efficiency and Regionalization grants may be available to support this type of review or early-stage implementation						AB, BOS, PB, CC, ZBA	1
Goal 27: <i>Improve the <b>Town's</b> website and online services</i>								
a	Conduct an overall review of Town information technology (IT) assets, capabilities, security and resilience; resources for such review may be available through the Mass. Office of Information Technology's IT Health Check program and/or Community Compact funding						AB, BOS, IT	1,2,3,4
b	Update the Town's website and related online services (bill pay, etc.); consider adding new online services (e.g. e-permitting); Community Compact and/or Efficiency and Regionalization funding may be available						IT or Intern	1
Goal 28: <i>Expand on regionalization and sharing of services and staffing, where appropriate</i>								

Implementation

Table 8-3 Implementation Matrix		Immediate Actions (0-6 mo.)	Short-Term Actions (6-12 Mo.)	Medium-Term Actions (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term Actions (5-10 yrs.)	Ongoing Actions	Responsible Party	Funding Source
a	Partner with CMRPC through District Local Technical Assistance and/or Community Compact funds to review specific needs and options for regional and bilateral shared services, expanding upon existing collaborations (Senior Center, schools, etc.)						AB, BOS, CMRPC	1,6
<i>Goal 29: Explore and potentially implement a Town option for home trash and recycling collection</i>								
a	Study options for procurement of a single waste disposal vendor to provide a reduced-rate option for residential trash pickup						AB, BOS	1,6
<i>Goal 30: Improve public awareness of and participation in governing and advisory boards, committees, and commissions</i>								
a	Conduct an outreach campaign to educate residents on the function of Town governing and advisory bodies to improve membership in these entities and overall public participation						AB, BOS	1