

Town of Winchendon Master Plan 2001

Goals

The goals and policies statement identifies the goals and policies of the municipality for its future growth and development. Each community shall conduct an interactive process, to determine community values, goals, to identify patterns of development that will be consistent with these goals.

(Goals and objectives for each of the required elements of this plan are contained within the respective elements.)

Interactive Process

The Planning Board hosted a Master Plan charette on October 9, 1999 as the kickoff to the development of this Master Plan. Dr. John Mullin of U Mass facilitated the charette and the attending group determined the strengths and weaknesses of the Town, identified possible threats to the community, and listed opportunities on which the Town might capitalize. Dr. Mullin summarized the results in writing. A second charette was held in November 1999 for the middle and high school students. Also in November 1999, the Planning Board mailed a survey to every household in Town. 432 completed surveys were returned to the Planning Board. The results were electronically summarized and presented to the Town over the local cable channel in March 2000. A two-part series of workshops were held in April 2000. Participants defined the "character" of Winchendon, defined "rural", and determined goals and objectives for the required elements of the Plan. Writing of the Plan began in June 2000. As each element was completed, copies of it were placed in the library and the Town Clerk's office for public review and comment. Copies were also sent to each of the Select Board members and to the Winchendon Courier. The Implementation element was the result of a joint meeting between the Planning Board and the Select Board. Goals and objectives from the completed elements were prioritized, funding amounts and mechanisms assigned, and a timeline created.

Community Values

Community values expressed by participants in the interactive process were summarized by Dr. Mullin in the "Summary of the Winchendon Charette".

They are summarized here as follows:

- Ineffective zoning enforcement must be corrected immediately. (This was the most significant issue raised at the charette.)
- The participants desire greater board integration.

- The Town needs to expand its outreach efforts to prevent apathy, prevent the appearance of cliques, and to gain support for a common mission/vision statement.
- The Town should take a hard look at how it is growing. The participants overwhelmingly believe that residential growth is occurring too rapidly and without an emphasis on quality.
- There is strong support for growth management controls.
- There is concern that the tax burden is falling too heavily on residential property owners.
- There is strong support for all "Toy Town" activities.
- There is great concern for youth activities.
- The participants strongly support the Master Plan concept.
- Winchendon wants quality.

Preservation Policy

In the expenditure of Town funds, town planning and regulatory efforts, Winchendon's governing and related organizations will endeavor to preserve and protect vital Town interests. Among these are our rural character, our natural resources, our educational system, our labor, our historic heritage, our existing agricultural operations, and our downtown/main street.

Patterns of Development

Future development will be directed to follow the pattern of a traditional New England development. High densities will be encouraged in village centers where services are available. Density levels will decrease with increasing distance from village centers. Mixed uses shall be encouraged, particularly in the villages to promote community cohesiveness. Heavy industrial uses will remain segregated from all other types of uses. Residential development shall be balanced with other uses so as not to overwhelm the Town's resources. Open spaces shall be preserved for aesthetic, environmental, and economic purposes.

Land Use Plan

The land use plan element identifies present land use and designates the proposed distribution, location, and interrelationship of public and private land uses. This element shall relate the proposed standards of population density and building intensity to the capacity of land available or planned facilities and services.

A land use map illustrating the land use policies of the municipality shall be included.

Land use patterns develop along lines of least resistance - areas unconstrained by flooding, steep slopes, ledge, poor soils, etc. and in accord with the needs defined

by the use. Watercourses are often the sites of industrial activity, while flat, open ground was traditionally devoted to agriculture.

Through time, societal values and technological changes cause an evolution of the type and location of land uses. For example, industrial technology rendered waterpower obsolete and societal pressure made it illegal to dump untreated industrial wastes into the watercourses upon which the buildings were built. Thus waterfront property is no longer attractive to industrial development, although many of the buildings still remain. Likewise, agricultural land is now quickly consumed for residential development so long as site conditions are suitable for sewage disposal and potable water is readily available. This poses yet more societal conflicts, for now the rural character of the Town is sacrificed, open space is consumed, and prime agricultural soils are lost.

Present Land Use

Winchendon's existing land use pattern reflects that of a typical New England industrial town with a high-density village center and decreasing density of development with increasing distance from the village. Waterville, to the west of the downtown, and Spring Village, to the northeast of the downtown, are two secondary villages with small scale commercial activities, some industry, and high density residential uses. Lake Monomonac, which is in the extreme northeast of the Town, is also the site of high-density residential development, mainly due to the conversion of small, seasonal structures to year-round residences.

Detached, single family homes are the primary land use in Winchendon today. New lots for this type of development are created either in a subdivision or as "Approval Not Required" (ANR) lots. ANR lots are those that have frontage along an existing road.

Subdivisions create lot frontage by constructing new roads. The most recent subdivision is the 15-lot Toy Town Heights off of Ash Street. Benjamin Hill Estates (50 lots) and Watatic Woods (40 lots) are still under development. Winchendon Heights (90 lots) has not been completed, but is inactive at the present time.

ANR development has consumed many miles of frontage on Ash Street, Teel Road, Baldwinville State Road, Baldwinville Road, Town Farm Road and Mellen Road. West Street, Bosworth Road, Royalston Road North, and Brooks Road are likely to see an increase of new ANR lots in the near future.

There are advantages to each type of development. Subdivisions tend to be more expensive because they require installation of roads and services. The subdivisions regulations define the required improvements, call for a development schedule and timeline, and secure the requirements with cash, performance bonds, or a covenant. This in turn translates into higher cost houses. New roads, once accepted, mean more maintenance and plowing costs for the Town.

ANR development, on the other hand, is much less regulated by the Town, which translates into lower development costs and usually lower cost houses. However, this type of development turns narrow, back roads into "commuter arteries" and sacrifices the rural appearance of the area by cutting the large trees along the road and breaking through old stone walls. In addition, many new driveways are located on blind curves and where there are less than optimum site distances.

As the soils map shows most of Winchendon's soils are considered "severely constraining" for onsite septic systems. Soils that are severely limiting possess properties that are "so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and possibly increased maintenance are required." (*Interim Soil Report for Northwestern Worcester County Massachusetts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services*) Winchendon also has a high water table in many areas. Since most of the Town's new residential development is occurring outside of the water and sewer district, there are many raised or "mounded" septic systems being constructed to comply with the Title V requirements. The Town's wastewater treatment facility is unavailable at present, so extension of the collection system is not possible.

Winchendon's commercial land use is limited to the downtown, Waterville, and Spring Village, with a sprinkling of businesses along the gateways. Industrial development is located in the northern part of the town in the Town's industrial park, at Ray Plastics in Spring Village and several firms in Waterville. Silent testimony to past industries exists in large abandoned buildings such as the Glenallen Mills building off of Glenallen Street. Surrounded by residences, this building is unsuitable for its former industrial capacity.

Outdoor recreational uses dominate the southwestern border of the Town in the Lake Dennison recreational area and surrounding flood control/wildlife management area.

There are two working dairy farms in Town: Murdock Dairy, which is located near the downtown on 300+ acres; and Smith Country Cheese, which is located on the southern border of the Town. Both farms are valuable assets to the Town. Murdock Farm keeps a large number of acres open and undeveloped and the associated dairy bar is a part of many residents fond memories.

The farm is also located close to the center of town and near the Memorial Elementary School, making it highly visible for both tourists and as an educational resource. Smith Country Cheese occupies a much smaller parcel of land but provides employment, is a stop on many "wine and cheese" tours, and brings the name of Winchendon to Boston area markets.

The balance of the Town is undeveloped forest interspersed with water bodies and watercourses.

According to the *Greater Gardner Sustainable Growth Management Plan (1999)* Winchendon has 18,423 acres of developable land (see Table 1).

| <u>Table 1</u> | <u>Town</u> |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Land Area</u> | |
| Total Town Area: | 28,222 acres |
| Developed Land: | 2,938 acres |
| Protected Open Space: | 4,989 acres |
| Wetlands and Water: | 1,439 acres |
| Other* | 434 acres |
| Developable Land: | 18,423 acres |

*Other land includes areas not correctly represented by the geometry of the data and is essentially a rounding correction

Under current zoning, the *Plan* predicts buildout to result in 9,248 new dwelling units, 9,053,888 square feet of commercial use, and 14,504 square feet of industrial use. The population would grow to 28,000 and see 8,200 new school children. Commercial development will be concentrated in strips along the Towns gateways, while industrial development will be located in the two industrial zones in the north central and southeastern parts of the Town. Residential development will continue on ANR lots until the available frontages are consumed. It will then continue as subdivisions of the remaining back lands.

The effects of this projected growth - loss of open space, degraded water quality, increased traffic on narrow roads, alteration of Town character - will be felt long before the Town reaches buildout. (*GGSGMP, 1999*)

Proposed Distribution, Location, and Interrelationship of Public and Private Land Uses

Winchendon wants to retain its rural New England character for aesthetic and economic reasons. Development of a tourist-based economy relies heavily on the balance of aesthetics and availability of services. Future land use patterns should therefore fit the pattern of villages surrounded by less dense development with a forested undeveloped outlying border. A mixture of residential and nonresidential uses on small, narrow lots with small-scale buildings set close to the road should be encouraged in the villages.

The villages should be “pedestrian-friendly”. Uses should accommodate residents on foot. This village concept exists in the downtown, in Waterville, and in Spring Village, and should be encouraged to grow in this manner. Minimum lot sizes, setback requirements, and maximum height restrictions should be examined and modified to allow for this type of development. Town water is available in all village areas. Town sewer is available in the downtown and in Waterville. Sewage disposal needs in Spring Village should be accommodated by shared systems if extension of the municipal sewer line is economically unavailable. The “village concept” might also be explored in the vicinity of Gardner Road and Spring Street (*refer to Future Land Use Map*). Village centers should contain a wide mixture of uses including high-density residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal (i.e. government, law enforcement, schools, libraries, etc.).

Strip commercial development should be avoided. Large commercial operations wishing to locate in Winchendon should be encouraged to occupy existing structures within the village centers.

Residential development in areas outside of the villages should decrease in density as distances from the villages increase. Cluster developments should be encouraged and linked together by their open spaces by multi-use trails. Shared, decentralized septic systems* should be required to avoid possible groundwater contamination resulting from smaller lots. To protect the remaining rural roadways and reduce traffic safety hazards curb cuts should be limited to an agreed upon standard.

**Decentralized wastewater systems are viable, long-term alternatives to centralized wastewater facilities, particularly in small and rural communities [and] can be designed for a variety of site and soil conditions, including shallow water tables, bedrock, and small lot sizes.”*

-US Environmental Protection Agency, 1999

Large lot sizes (10+ acres) and large frontage requirements should be used to protect extreme outlying areas that are still largely undeveloped. Residential development should be discouraged. These lands should be devoted to forestry, hunting, hiking, aquifer protection, and wildlife preservation. The purchase of development rights or the transfer of development rights to areas closer to the village districts should be employed to achieve this goal.

The Town has zoned most of its land for residential use. This may not be in the Town's best interest as buildout could overwhelm the Town's ability to service it. Therefore, the Town should consider balancing residential development with open space, agriculture, outdoor recreational, commercial, and industrial land uses.

Refer to the *Future Land Use Map*

Land Use Goal

Promote good stewardship in the development of the Town's lands.

Strive to maintain the character of a rural New England town.

OBJECTIVES

Current subdivision regulations should be amended to require conservation subdivision design. Clustering of new residential units should be required with residual land set aside as permanent open space.

Minimum lot size requirements in the zoning bylaws should be amended to conform to the existing landscape.

Every effort should be made to be creative with the zoning bylaws. Numerous techniques exist that will allow retention of rural character and open space while also accommodating projected growth needs and the Town should remain open-minded when considering their respective uses.

Research the Town for suitable sites for growth centers.

Balance the amount of residential land use with open space, agriculture, industry, and commercial land uses.

Housing

The housing element identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives including programs for preservation, improvement, and development of housing. This element shall identify policies and strategies to provide a balance of local housing opportunities for all citizens.

Historically, residents who worked in the local manufacturing industries lived in houses built and sold at prices that could be supported by the local economy. However, local manufacturing jobs have disappeared and been replaced by lower paying, service-type jobs. Conversely, new residential development has been provided to meet the needs and desires of an incoming population that resides in Winchendon, but works in other communities. These new residents typically hold higher paying jobs to the east of Winchendon and are therefore able to afford higher housing costs than local residents do. Providing affordable housing to local Winchendon residents may require a broad variety of housing types to meet local needs.

Affordable housing is defined as costing no more than 30% of gross household income. The cost for affordable housing includes utilities, mortgage, principal, interest, taxes and insurance for homeowners, and rent and utilities for rental units.

The median sales price of a single family home in 1990 was \$88,500 (Banker & Tradesman). The median household income at that time was \$32,362.

With a 10% down payment, an 8% interest rate on a 30-year mortgage, and approximately \$130 per month in taxes and insurance costs, the monthly payment comes to \$722. 30% of \$32,362 is \$809 per month; therefore \$722 was affordable at that time.

The median household income in 2000 is projected at \$48,000 (HUD). The median sales price is now \$112,500 (Banker & Tradesman). With an 11% down payment, 8% interest for 30 years and \$135 per month for insurance and taxes, the monthly payment comes to \$881. 30% of \$48,000 is \$1200; thus the median price of housing is still within the affordable range.

Existing Housing

Single family housing units comprise the greatest percentage of the housing stock in Winchendon. In 1990, single family units were 64% of the total housing stock. They increased to 86% of the stock in 2000, according to Assessors' records.

Single family housing is evenly distributed throughout the Town. There is a greater density of units in the central core of the Town due to the smaller lot sizes and age of the developments. 2- and 3- family homes are widely scattered around the Town, while buildings containing more than 4 residential units appear to be confined primarily to the central core.

According to the US Census, there were 3 building permits granted for multifamily structures between 1990 and 1999. In that same period, there have 444 permits granted for single family homes. New residential construction, then, is almost exclusively limited to single family dwellings.

45% of Winchendon's housing units were built in 1939 or earlier; 22% were built between 1980 and 1988. Older housing requires greater levels of maintenance and often needs substantial upgrading for energy efficiency and livability. Housing built today is often subject to quality issues due to too-fast construction, lack of timely inspections and poor quality materials.

Assessors' records indicate that 72% of the housing stock is average quality (C-rating). Housing quality is a standard that describes how a house was built, i.e. the quality of the materials and the quality of the construction itself. The Assessors also measure housing condition. Condition describes the physical state of the structure at the time of the assessment. 53% of the Town's housing stock is in good condition.

The cost of residential land and structures increases with increasing demand and decreasing availability. As local manufacturing jobs continue to decline and local jobs continue to be concentrated in the service sector, it will become more difficult for local Winchendon residents to purchase the traditional detached, single family home and work in the Town.

Winchendon Housing Stock

1990
(US Census)

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Total Median Units</u> <u>Sale Price</u> | <u>Occupied</u> | <u>Vacant</u> | <u>Median Year Structure Built</u> | <u>Median Value</u> |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1990 | 3349 \$88,500 | 3052 | 297 | 1950 | \$112,200 |

According to the 1990 census, 42% of those renting in Winchendon were paying between \$400 and \$600 per month for rent. Using the 1990 median income stated previously, these rents are within the 30% affordability range. The 1999 Planning Board survey indicates that 42% of renting respondents pay more than \$450 monthly rent.

Currently the Winchendon Housing Authority owns 245 residential units in Winchendon. They also manage another 35 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. The Rural Housing Improvement (RHI) owns 26 condominium units and manages 10 others in the same complex. These units provide unsubsidized affordable housing to lower income families and individuals. Additionally, RHI manages 19 various Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, certificates, and Modern Rehabilitation rental units throughout the Town.

Housing Satisfaction 1999*

Elderly Public Housing
Affordable Housing
Affordable Rental Housing
Low Income Housing

Availability

mostly adequate - about average
mostly adequate - about average
about average - somewhat inadequate
about average

**Planning Board Survey, November 2000*

Real Estate demand and sales indicate that at the present time, the greatest housing demand is for detached single family homes, 1600-2000 sq. ft. in size, on 1-2 acre lots and costing between \$120,000 and \$150,000. The availability of existing houses is too limited to provide a viable choice to prospective buyers. Thus, the demand for housing is met through new construction, typically on ANR lots in the outlying districts of the Town. New construction is limited, however, due to the building cap in the zoning bylaws. (*Sparks Realty, Morin Real Estate interviews, June, 2000*)

The Winchendon Housing Authority supplies low and very-low rental housing in Winchendon and surrounding communities. At present, the WHA feels that they are meeting the need for affordable rental housing in Winchendon. *D. Connors, WHA Executive Director, Interview, June 2000*

Projected Housing Needs

Using midlevel population projections (*MISER*), there will be 247 new housing units needed by the year 2005. At 69% owner occupancy rate (*1990 US Census*) there will need to be 170 owner occupied housing units and 77 rental units. Under current zoning, it is most likely that these new homes will continue to be single family detached dwellings located on 1-2 acre ANR lots in the outlying districts of the Town with onsite water and septic systems. This means 170-340 acres of land and 5-6 miles of road frontage would be consumed to meet this need. With a projected median income of \$53,000, these homes would need to cost approximately \$140,000.

New rental housing will most likely be provided by the conversion of existing older, larger homes in the central part of Town, as these structures are not being sold easily as single family homes at the present time and the trend is likely to continue. As rental housing becomes more expensive to the east (Fitchburg & Gardner), the need for more affordable rental units will increase in Winchendon. Conversion of these existing structures will most likely be the most economically attractive option.

Elderly housing needs are conflicting. The Winchendon Housing Authority asserts that additional units could be easily filled if available. (These would be voluntary occupancies - not emergency homeless needs. *MISER* projects that in the period of April 1, 1990 to July 1, 2010, there will be a 10% - 40% decrease in the proportion of persons aged 65 and over.

Winchendon has a strong desire to maintain its rural new England character and preserve its sense of community. An adequate supply of safe, attractive, good quality homes, at prices supported by the local economy helps maintain and strengthen community continuity. Families can grow and remain within reach of one another, while those who live and work in the same community maintain a sense of community "ownership" not witnessed in other types of communities.

Programs for Preservation, Improvement, and Development of Housing

The Housing Rehabilitation Program, operated by the Town's Community Development Office, is the only program for the preservation and improvement of Winchendon's housing. The Program provides loans to qualified low- and moderate-income owners of substandard housing units located within a HUD-designated target area. (*See map*) The Community Development Office determines the repair needs. The Program focuses on violations of the Massachusetts Building Code and sanitary regulations, and HUD Section 8 Safe

Living Standard Codes. Funds for this program are available through grant applications on an annual basis.

Substandard septic systems are repaired through Title V funding, available from the Massachusetts Water Pollution Abatement Trust Agency and administered by the Town's Community Development Office.

RHI manages and implements additional programs for income eligible person, families, or property owners who are renting to eligible persons. They are "Get the Lead Out" for de-leading; "Home Modification" for modifying existing structures for persons with disabilities; and the Home Improvement Loan Program, which may include energy efficiency improvements. All of these are low - interest loan programs.

Housing Goals

Provide a variety of housing options to meet the needs of a population with a wide range of financial means and lifestyle choices.

Promote high quality new housing construction to ensure durability and lasting value of the town's housing stock.

Direct the location of new housing construction so as to maintain existing open space & rural character and promote efficient distribution of town services, such as road maintenance, fire protection and school bus routing.

Promote compact growth centers.

OBJECTIVES

Maintain 10% affordable housing inventory. Affordable housing should be available in all forms - detached single-family houses, townhouses, condominiums, mobile homes, and multifamily structures.

Promote mixed use of older, larger houses and commercial structures in the downtown. Mixed use means residential use on the upper floors of the structure and institutional, government/public service, or commercial uses on the ground floor.

Promote mixed use of existing, unoccupied industrial structures.

Promote upgrading of existing, older apartment buildings to provide for upper end rentals.

Require strict enforcement of the Massachusetts Building Code. Provide sufficient staff to ensure ample, timely inspections of new construction.

Economic Development

The economic development element identifies policies and strategies for the expansion or stabilization of the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities.

In its early years, Winchendon was an agricultural town. By the early decades of the 19th century, however, industrial activity began to appear along the Millers River. In its heyday, Winchendon industries produced vast quantities of yard goods, wooden barrels, clothespins and so many shingles that the Town earned the nickname "Shingle Town". Winchendon also played a key role in the evolution of woodworking machinery. The rotary-head cylinder planer was actually created in Winchendon. The town was also home to several tanneries and dairy industries. With the appearance in 1914 of "Clyde" the wooden rocking horse, the Town became known as "Toy Town".

Today, economic activities in Winchendon are based on the trades, manufacturing, government, and services.

Table 2

| <u>Winchendon's Labor Force*</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>1999</u> |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Employed | 4011 | 4066 |
| Unemployed | 336 | 167 |

| <u>Winchendon's Unemployment Rate*</u> | <u>1990</u> | <u>1999</u> |
|----------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Winchendon | 7.7% | 3.9% |
| Statewide | 6.0% | 3.2% |

Employment*

| | <u>Agriculture</u> | <u>Govt</u> | <u>Const- ruction</u> | <u>Manu- facturing</u> | <u>TCPU</u> | <u>Trade</u> | <u>FIRE</u> | <u>Services</u> |
|------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1990 | conf. | 319 | 76 | 302 | 50 | 488 | 101 | 318 |
| 1998 | conf. | 395 | 82 | 289 | 121 | 487 | 72 | 366 |

* Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Employment and Training

TCPU = Transportation, Communication, and Public Utilities

Conf. = data suppressed due to confidentiality

FIRE = Finance, Insurance and Real Estate

The average annual wage has risen from \$15,842 in 1990 to \$23,424 in 1998. The largest employers in Winchendon are the Town, Ray Plastic, Rural Housing Improvement, Kamenstein, Inc., and the Winchendon School.

1990 census shows
77% of Winchendonians
had attained at least a high school diploma; only 12% attained a bachelor's degree or higher. 80% of Winchendonians traveled less than 34 minutes to their place of work in 1990. These statistics suggest that Winchendon's labor force may not be commuting to the higher paying high tech jobs to the east. This may be due to a lack of higher education and/or appropriate training.

During the recession of 1988-1991, 41,300 jobs were lost in the Central Region of Massachusetts. 30% of the total job losses were in manufacturing; 50% were in construction. With a decline in new home construction, employment in the furniture business dropped by 45%. These losses have not yet been completely recovered, nor are they likely to in the near future. Service jobs sustained the least severe losses during this period. Health, private education and engineering service jobs actually increased. (*Economic Development Strategy, 1996*)

Winchendon, then, is faced with the need to create job opportunities equivalent to those that were lost in the recession in order to meet the immediate and short-range needs of its existing labor force. Long range planning, however, demands that the Town also strive to raise the average level of education of its labor force so that the Town is able to attract and compete for the higher-paying, college-dependent jobs.

The 1996 Economic Development Strategy suggested tourism, downtown revitalization, and industrial expansion as ways of meeting Winchendon's economic development needs. The Town still strongly favors these strategies (*Planning Board Survey, 1999*).

Tourism

Creating a tourist economy involves building on existing attractions and creating new ones. Existing attractions include outdoor recreational activities, e.g. Lake Dennison, and general hunting, fishing, canoeing and bike riding opportunities, and ongoing festivals and events such as the Summer Solstice Celebration at the Clark Memorial and the Chili Cook-off.

New attractions to be created might include development of the Toy Town theme attractions (such as, and in addition to, the *Top Fun* Aviation

Toy Museum that recently opened in the Old Murdock High School), an Historical Museum at the Whitney House, the North Central Pathway, an Historic Downtown Village District, and recreation opportunities at Whitney Pond. The opening of the State Veterans' Cemetery will hopefully help to create tourism traffic as well.

Industrial Expansion

The establishment of the Industrial Park on Lincoln Avenue Extension was a direct implementation of the 1996 Economic Development Strategy. There is paved access to all of the parcels in the Park and municipal water and sewer services are available as well. However the Town does not own any of the land within the Park and there is no Industrial Park Commission to oversee its marketing and occupancy.

In 1997, the Massachusetts Office of Business Development designated four areas in Town as Economic Opportunity Areas. These included the Industrial Park, the Whitney Pond area including the former Whites Mill, Mylec /Winchendon Springs area, and the industrially zoned areas on Route 140. This designation allows the Town to offer tax incentives to prospective businesses or industries that may wish to locate in any of these areas.

The industrially zoned areas on Route 140 are difficult to market, however, due to lack of Town services and because of the abundance of available, serviced industrial land along the Route 2 corridor to the east.

A strong economy is critical to the vitality of any community. So too is the ability of the Town's people to live and work in close proximity. The fabric of our society rests on family members across generational lines remaining near one another. Also, any town that relies on volunteers to fulfill many of its municipal obligations must take these factors into account. People who must travel great distances to their jobs have little or no time to contribute to local affairs. It is therefore in the Town's best interests to work to attract good paying jobs for its residents.

Economic Development Goal

Develop an environmentally sound economy that will provide a wide range of economic opportunities and employment for the Town and area residents.

OBJECTIVES

Support community development and revitalization efforts of the Community Development office and the Winchendon Enrichment Foundation.

Increase the value potential of the available labor force by providing additional educational and/or vocational opportunities within Winchendon.

Continue to encourage and support public transportation links to educational, training, and job opportunities.

Develop low impact, environmentally sensitive recreational facilities on Town owned parcels at Whites Mill Pond.

Clean up Whitney Pond and pursue efforts to develop recreational opportunities at the Pond.

Improve appearance of the Town's gateways.

Improve parking availability in the downtown business district through land acquisition, cooperative agreements, etc.

Restore, protect and provide better access to the Millers and Otter Rivers.

Scrutinize existing industrial lands.
Evaluate needs and potential.

Create an Industrial Park Commission.

Improve the Town's bond rating.

Natural Resources

This element provides an inventory of the significant natural, cultural, and historic resource areas of the municipality, and policies and strategies for the protection and management of such areas.

Winchendon is located in the Northeastern Highlands Ecoregion, an area characterized by a cooler climate and a shorter growing season. The Town has an abundance of forest lands, wetlands and surface waters, which offer a wide variety of wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities. Healthy natural resources make an important contribution to the rural character of the Town.

The health and stability of natural resources is reflected in their level of biodiversity.

Biodiversity is a term used to describe the variety of organisms found in a particular system. Usually the greater the biodiversity the greater the stability and vitality of the system. Biodiversity is lost through fragmentation and destruction of wildlife habitats, and the introduction of nonnative species.

Natural Resources Goal

Preserve and protect Winchendon's natural resources, to ensure their sustainability and continuation of their environmental, aesthetic, and economic values.

OBJECTIVES

Utilize all available funding sources, (e.g. EOEAs Self- Help and Urban Self-help Programs, and the Land and Water Conservation Funds) to preserve, protect, enhance, and/or rehabilitate the Town's natural resources.

Work to preserve, protect, enhance, or rehabilitate the biodiversity of our local ecosystems.

Work with the Council on Invasive Species to establish a program to control invasive species on municipal lands and throughout the Town.

Evaluate the Town's use and storage of salt as a road deicer. Ensure maximum efficiency in its application, minimizing adverse environmental impacts to roadside vegetation and adjacent wetlands.

Prohibit deposit of used street sand into the Town's surface water

Forest Resources

Forest lands cover a large percentage of the Town's land area. They are predominantly comprised of northern hardwoods (maple, birch, and beech). The abundance of stone walls meandering through the woods today give silent testimony to the time when 70% of the State's forests were clear cut to provide lumber for wood-burning railroads and packing crates and to provide pastures for numerous sheep farms. Today, over 60% of the state is once again forested. (*The State of Our Environment, 2000, EOEAs*)

Forest lands are ecologically and economically valuable for many reasons. They clean the air, provide shade and reduce erosion and runoff. They provide habitat for wildlife, are a renewable energy resource and a source for lumber. The leaves of the deciduous trees decompose to create rich new soil. Trees are being newly identified as a quick and economic means of removing soil contaminants from brownfields. (Brownfields are sites of former industrial activities, which have been abandoned or are underutilized, and often contaminated by hazardous materials.) Whether they line the streets of our downtown or are located in large, undisturbed tracts, trees are an important natural resource for the Town.

The values of our forest lands are threatened when there is unmanaged exploitation of them. Fragmentation of large tracts often compromises the habitat value of a forest. When clear cutting occurs, rampant erosion often follows. Little or improper management of this resource weakens its sustainability. Market forces that favor new construction coupled with little or no financial incentive to retain our forest resources pose the greatest threat to their preservation.

Forest Resources Goal:

Preserve and protect Winchendon's forest resources to ensure continuation of their environmental, aesthetic and economic value.

OBJECTIVES

Promote measures that encourage owners of large forested tracts to avoid fragmentation or subdivision of forested areas.

Support local, State and Federal programs and funding which will encourage landowners to retain managed forest lands.

Encourage awareness of the Town's urban trees through an "adopt-a-tree" program with the Town's elementary schools.

Continue and expand the tree-planting program funded by the Conservation Commission.

Implement forest ecology education in our school system.

Ensure sustainable management through replanting whenever cutting occurs for development. Require "Best Management Practices" in all development requiring tree cutting.

Encourage compatible uses of forest lands for recreation, tourism and economic benefit where such uses will not impair forest quality or wildlife and/or forest habitat.

Avoid the use of single species or nonnative species in development site plans and Town landscaping projects. Promote diversity and the use of native, drought resistant species.

Agricultural Resources

Almost 4% of Winchendon's land area is in agricultural use. Presently there are two working dairy farms, one Community Sustained Agriculture (CSA) operation, and a variety of small homestead operations. Visible evidence of agricultural activities, which includes hayfields, pastures, grazing livestock, and cropfields is an integral component of the rural character which the Town wants to preserve. Additionally, agricultural activity offers potential economic opportunity for the Town as a tourist attraction. Such activities might include petting zoos of heirloom and traditional livestock, "pick-your-own" crop operations, farm tours, "farm work vacation" opportunities, farmers' markets, and research foundations for alternative farming techniques. Working farms also support a wide variety of secondary businesses including machinery sales and services, veterinarian services and supplies, feed, seed and fertilizer supplies, and the like. Working farms also ensure a local supply of fresh foods.

The Town's agricultural resources are under severe development pressure. Once excavated and built upon, the soils and land area required to support agricultural activity are lost. As economic conditions are less favorable to farming, there is little economic incentive to preserve these lands for future generations and needs to be determined. It is unwise for any community to allow the loss of all of its agricultural land and activities to overseas food production and with the resulting vulnerability to interrupted food supplies.

Agricultural Resources Goal:

Conserve viable agricultural lands for current and potential value as a resource for the production of food, and for their aesthetic and other contributions to economic markets in tourism and recreation.

OBJECTIVES

Support efforts to create and promote "agri-tourism".

Support local agricultural operations through a "buy local" campaign.

Inventory prime agricultural soils and preserve them for future needs.

Form a local land trust to preserve farmlands.

Promote agricultural education in the school system, raising the level of awareness of food sources and production techniques.

Encourage environmentally responsible, sustainable agricultural operations in Town.

Earth Mineral Resources

Gravel is the primary earth mineral resource in Winchendon. Repeated glaciation has left an abundance of moraines, eskers, and various other types of deposits. While gravel is essential to most types of development, extraction in Town has led to such controversy that future extraction has been restricted to the industrial zoning district. The lack of inventorying and appropriate zoning, coupled with ineffective regulation and enforcement, has made extraction unacceptable and left a number of abandoned and unreclaimed sites which pose environmental and/or safety hazards, and aesthetic damages.

Earth Mineral Resources Goal:

Ensure that land areas disturbed by earth mineral extraction are restored and that future extraction methods will not result in significant degradation to the environmental, aesthetic, or economic value of surrounding areas.

OBJECTIVES

Inventory viable gravel and other earth mineral resources in Town.

Ensure that extraction occurs only in areas where there will be the least conflict with surrounding land uses.

Ensure timely reclamation of extraction sites, for uses which are in harmony with the surrounding land uses.

Restore existing unreclaimed sites to safe, environmentally sound and aesthetically pleasing uses.

Water Resources

Surface Water

There are approximately 635 acres of water, roughly 2% of the total area of Winchendon. The Town is wholly within the Millers river watershed and is drained by the Connecticut River. The Millers River runs roughly east to west, nearly at the Town's mid-point. It is a Class B river, designated for primary (swimming) and secondary (boating and fishing) contact recreation.

(Greater Gardner Sustainable Growth management Plan, 1999)

Water Resources

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Whitney Pond and Whites Mill Pond are artificial ponds created by damming the Millers River. Hunts Pond, which is just downstream from Whitney Pond, is used to generate hydroelectric power at the dam below the High Street bridge.

Lake Dennison is a part of the US Army Corps of Engineers Birch Hill Flood Control Project. The 4,221 acre site is managed by the Dept. of Environmental

Management for recreational use. In addition to a public swimming area there is a 150-site campground on the property.

Lake Monomonac and Mill Glen Pond (also known as Stoddard Pond) are naturally occurring ponds whose water levels have been raised by damming. A lake association at Lake Monomonac address local issues such as nuisance vegetation control.

Public Water

Winchendon's public water supply comes from Upper Lake Naukeag in Ashburnham, with approximately 2000 connections to the Town's water system. Currently, Ashburnham and Winchendon are constructing a new filtration plant to comply with State mandates. In 1995, municipal water use averaged 0.68 million gallons per day. It is projected to be 0.71 in 2000 and 0.73 by 2010. (*Greater Gardner Sustainable Growth Management Plan, 1999*)

Ground Water

Groundwater resources are a function of both surface and subsurface geology. In Winchendon, surface geology shows the results of repeated glaciation, during which the ground surface was eroded to bedrock and subsequently covered by deposition of various materials, mainly till and stratified drift. Stratified drift deposits tend to show higher groundwater yields than till deposits, particularly those composed of coarse grained materials. Drift deposits with a saturated thickness of greater than 40 feet may be suitable for municipal water supplies, if they yield 200 gpm for extended periods

The 1990 census shows there are 782 drilled wells in Town and 121 dug wells. These wells provide drinking water for residents living outside of the municipal water system.

Groundwater is less susceptible to contamination than surface water. However, it is much more difficult and much more expensive to clean once it is polluted. For that reason, it is best to use great caution in determining appropriate land uses that may overlie known aquifers.

Water is necessary for life. Its availability or lack thereof, has a profound impact on development patterns. Limited quantities must be acknowledged. In addition, water availability is compromised when, through public water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities, the water is withdrawn from one watershed and returned to another. Local aquifers cannot be recharged when there is a deficit in the rate of return. Likewise, water that runs off of impermeable surfaces and into flowing surface waters fails to recharge local aquifers. (*The State of Our Environment 2000, EOEA*)

Water Resources Goal:

Preserve and protect the quality and quantity of Winchendon's present and future water resources.

OBJECTIVES

Develop a comprehensive water resources plan which will maintain a balanced "water budget".

Reduce non point source pollution by reducing the amount of impermeable surfaces in Town and limiting the use of fertilizers on the Town's green areas.

Ensure separation of storm water and wastewater collection systems to prevent discharges into the Millers River.

Reduce road salt usage and provide secure storage of stockpiles to prevent leaching.

Upgrade the wastewater treatment facility to meet current and projected needs.

Develop a Capital Improvements Program, ensuring timely repairs and upgrades to the wastewater treatment system.

Protect areas which serve as water supplies in the future - particularly land overlying potentially productive aquifers - through acquisition or zoning, and other regulations which restrict incompatible uses.

Ensure proper disposal of waste oils at the Town garage.

Continue Hazardous Household Waste collection efforts.

Promote use of native drought resistant plant species in site plans and Town landscaping projects.

Finish groundwater mapping, providing a complete picture of the Town's aquifers.

Ensure that lot sizes reflect the type of soil present and its ability to absorb wastes without polluting water supplies or adjoining waters.

Conduct an inventory of hazardous waste generators in Town. Ensure the proper disposal of wastes being generated.

Ensure that commercial development is properly sited and that hazardous wastes are properly handled.

Wildlife Resources

Wildlife resources in Winchendon are those which typically occupy the wetland and woodland habitats dominating the Town. They range from Black Bear and White Tailed Deer to songbirds, game birds, amphibians, and reptiles. Rare plants and animals known to occur in Winchendon include Bartram's shadbush, Wood turtle, Eastern Elderberry Long-Horned beetle and the Spring salamander. Bartram's shadbush is a threatened species and the Eastern Elderberry Long-Horned beetle and the Wood turtle are both species of special concern.

Hunting, fishing, photography, and bird watching are just a few of the many recreational and educational opportunities offered by the abundant wildlife population. Certain wildlife species also serve as environmental health indicators. However, wildlife resources across the State are at risk due to habitat loss, fragmentation and/or degradation. Those species able to adapt are crowded into close proximity with human activity, and conflicts often occur. Those unable to adapt dwindle in numbers, or vanish completely.

Wildlife Resources Goal

Preserve and protect the wildlife resources of our Town.

Strive to maintain or increase levels of biodiversity in the Towns various ecosystems.

OBJECTIVES

Establish a Local Species and Habitat Registry, maintained by the Conservation Commission for use in local land use permitting and open space planning.

Promote subdivision designs which reduce habitat fragmentation.

Promote healthy habitats through appropriate land uses, sound waste management practices, and environmental awareness.

Wetlands

Although not often thought of as a natural resource, research indicates the environmental value of wetlands. Wetlands contain greater biodiversity than almost any other habitats (tidal pools being the sole exception). They serve as breeding areas for many species of birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians. Vernal pools, a unique form of wetland habitat, are home to such creatures as fairy shrimp and fingernail clams.

Wetlands serve as nature's flood control areas, absorbing large volumes of water and then releasing it slowly into the surrounding areas. They provide pollution abatement capacity when their carrying capacities are not unduly strained or

exceeded. (The carrying capacity is the amount of pollution or degree of change that an ecosystem can sustain without permanent damage.) What was once considered "a stagnant nuisance" is now being respected for the many valuable functions it serves.

Wetlands are threatened when disturbed by development or contaminated by pollutants and sediments. Mitigation measures, such as wetlands replication, which often accompanies development, are usually unsuccessful, and although protected by State and Federal law, wetlands continue to be sacrificed for development.

Many species that inhabit wetlands are threatened or endangered. The map of estimated habitats of state-listed rare wetlands wildlife (1992) show two generally defined areas. The specific locations of these rare and threatened species are not published for protection purposes.

Wetlands Goals

Preserve and protect the Town's wetland resources.

OBJECTIVES

Promote public awareness of wetlands values. Encourage school students to assist in the certification of vernal pools.

Ensure development regulations promote wetland preservation and integrity.

Soils

"Soils information indicates the ability of a parcel of land to support buildings, absorb water, and grow plants. Steep slope, shallow depth to bedrock, poor drainage, and wet soils can hamper the construction of sturdy buildings. Sewage disposal by onsite septic tanks and leach fields may pollute water supplies, cause a public health hazard, and reduce wildlife in nearby natural areas." (*Small Town Planners Handbook, 1995*)

Slopes

Soil slopes are measured as a percentage of drop (or rise) over 100 feet of horizontal distance. Thus a 3% slope describes land that rises or falls 3 feet over 100 horizontal feet of distance. A 15% slope is considered moderate. Slopes greater than 15% are considered steep for most construction purposes. Most slopes in Winchendon do not represent a limiting factor to development. Any slope, however, is prone to erosion when disturbed by development. Soil erosion causes many problems including loss of valuable topsoil, instability of the remaining slope, soil deposition in unwanted places, and unattractive landscapes. Every effort should be made to minimize soil erosion.

Slopes in
Winchendon

| | |
|------------------|--------------|
| % SLOPE | ACRES |
| 0 to 3% | 2147 |
| 3 to 8% | 14442 |
| 3 to 15% | 923 |
| 8 to 15% | 3536 |
| 15 to 25% | 888 |
| 25 to 35% | 182 |
| 25 to 45% | 254 |

74% of the soils in Winchendon are severely limiting for onsite septic systems due to perched water tables (hardpan), bedrock, and wetness. 26% of the soils tend to be moderately limiting for home sites. "Limitations are considered *moderate* if soil properties or site features are not favorable for the indicated use and special planning, design, or maintenance is needed to overcome or minimize the limitations. Limitations are considered *severe* if soil properties or site features are so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and possibly increased maintenance are required." (Interim Soil Report, Northwestern Worcester Conservation District)

Soil Limitations**

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | ACRES |
| Septic | Severe | Bedrock | 1094 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wetness | 10947 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Slope | 663 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hardpan* | 3923 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homesites | Severe | Bedrock | 1094 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wetness | 4257 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Slope | 370 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hardpan | 0 |

*Hardpan describes a layer of soil that is impermeable to water. The hardpan in Winchendon is soil that was compacted by glaciation that took place 12,000 years ago. The Paxton soil unit contains this hardpan. Water tables are often "perched" on top of these impermeable layers.

**Only that part of the soil between depths of 24 and 72 inches is evaluated.

Prime Farmland

The U. S. Department of Agriculture defines prime farmland as “the land best suited to food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. It may be cultivated land, pasture, woodland, or other land, but it is not urban and built-up land or water areas. Prime farmland produces the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources, and farming it results in the least damage to the environment. It is of major importance in providing the Nation's short- and long-range needs for food and fiber. Because the supply of high quality farmland is limited, the U. S. Department of Agriculture recognizes that responsible levels of government, as well as individuals, should encourage and facilitate the wise use of our Nation's prime farmland.” (*Interim Soil Report, Northwestern Worcester Conservation District*)

The map units that are considered prime farmland (in Winchendon) include Scituate (27B)*, Merrimac (37A & B)*, Sudbury (38A & B)*, Woodbridge (81B)*, Canton (113B)*, and Paxton (122B)*. (* See *Soils Map Overlay for Winchendon, 1995*) There are 1594 acres of these map units in Winchendon. Unfortunately, the largest continuous tract of these units underlies the most urbanized section of town including half of the R4 residential district, half of the central business district, and the lower portion of the Lincoln Avenue industrial park. The remaining units occur as scattered pockets throughout the Town with somewhat higher concentrations occurring in the northwestern and north central parts of Town. Every effort should be made to preserve as many of these tracts as possible.

Soils Goals

Land uses shall reflect the capability of the underlying soils to sustain them.

Good stewardship shall be employed in the care and improvement of the Town's soils.

Prime farmland will be preserved for future agricultural uses.

OBJECTIVES

Develop and enforce an erosion control bylaw to prevent unnecessary loss and improper movement of soil.

Soils inventories shall be conducted on any parcel to be developed.

Open Space

This element provides an inventory of recreational resources and open space areas of the municipality, and policies and strategies for the management and protection of such resources and areas.

M.G.L. chapter 61B defines "recreational land" as land that is *"...retained in substantially a natural, wild, or open condition or in a landscaped condition in such a manner as to allow to a significant extent the preservation of wildlife and other natural resources, including but not limited to, ground or surface water resources, clean air, vegetation, rare or endangered species, geologic features, high quality soils, and scenic resources."*

The "Environmental Handbook for Massachusetts Conservation Commissioners" equates recreational land with open space. For the purposes of this Plan, the two terms shall be equated.

The values of open, undeveloped land are many. It is esthetically pleasing, it contributes to the Town's rural character, it helps prevent runoff and the associated pollution of surface waters, it prevents loss of topsoil, it reduces pollution of groundwater, and aids in recharging aquifers. Open space also serves as a type of "land bank" for future agricultural and natural resource needs. Large blocks of undeveloped land are important for the protection of biological and ecological diversity. Winchendon residents and visitors have enjoyed the Town's open spaces for hiking, hunting, fishing, and other recreational pursuits.

As development of these lands continues, the resource diminishes. Increasing populations put greater demands on diminishing resources, making those resources that remain more valuable still.

Open space is a vital and necessary component of the Town's landscape and measures should be taken to protect it. Open spaces are valuable whether they are in the outlying areas of Town or in the more urbanized downtown areas. Therefore when considering parcels for preservation, all lands should be considered.

| <u>Recreational Resources</u> | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| INVENTORY | |
| <u>Town-owned</u> | <u>Resources</u> |
| Memorial School | (playground equipment, basketball hoops, swing sets) |
| Toy Town Elementary School | (playground equipment) |
| Marvin School | (playground equipment, swing sets, ball field) |
| Murdock Middle/High School | (athletic fields, outdoor track, ball fields) |
| Warren Bentley Athletic | (ball field) |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Field | |
| <u>State and Federally owned</u> | <u>Resources</u> |
| Birch Hill Wildlife Management Area | (4,221 acres in Winchendon, Templeton & Royalston; hiking, fishing, camping, canoeing, bird watching, hunting, historic sites) |
| Otter River State Forest | (12,788 acres in Winchendon and Templeton camping, swimming, playing field, picnic areas, hiking, fishing, hunting, multi-use trails) |
| Lake Denison Recreation Area | (non-motorized boating, hiking, horseback riding, camping, multi-use trails) |
| <u>Privately-owned</u> | <u>Resources</u> |
| Winchendon School | (playing field, soccer and baseball fields, trails, tennis courts, outdoor pool, 18-hole golf course) |
| Clark Memorial | (soccer fields, playground, swing set, ice rink, basketball court, tennis courts, outdoor walking track, indoor pool, indoor gymnasium) |
| Eugene M. Connor American Legion | (softball field) |
| <u>Other</u> | <u>Resources</u> |
| North Central Pathway | 16-mile long bike path linking downtown Gardner to downtown Winchendon; under development |
| Webster Street Park | 6 acres of Town-owned land on Webster Street to be developed as a neighborhood park; awaiting funding |

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Whites Mill Pond | Town-owned waterfront parcels recommended by Planning Board to be developed as low-impact recreation areas |
| Skateboard Park | Still under consideration |

MANAGEMENT/PROTECTION

Town-owned parcels are under the management of the Public Works Department or the School Department (if located on school grounds). At the annual Town Meeting in June 2000, the Town approved the establishment of a Recreation Commission. The Commission, once established, will have charge of all playgrounds, parks, and recreation facilities of the Town that are not under the control of the School Department. The Commission will be responsible for facilities and maintenance, recreation programs, and long range planning.

The Otter River/Birch Hill/Lake Dennison complex is jointly managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Environmental Management, and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

The management of these lands for the next ten to twenty years is described in the "Goals Plan" for the northern tier. According to the Open Space and Recreation Plan, *"The majority of recreational facilities enjoyed by townspeople are made available through the Clark Memorial, the American Legion, and the Winchendon School. Their generosity has enabled the Town to offer very limited recreation facilities on municipal land."*

Open Space Areas

INVENTORY

Town Owned

The Town of Winchendon Open Space and Recreation Plan (OS&RP) (updated 1998) indicates approximately 300 acres of undeveloped open lands in the Town's ownership. The parcels are widely varied in size and are widely scattered throughout Town. Of particular note are the following:

- 90 acres of forested land on Town Farm Road (Town Forest)
- 16.55 acres on N. Royalston Road
- 9.7 acres on Robbins Road - now zoned Industrial
- 54.24 acres on Lincoln Avenue (former landfill, now capped & zoned industrial)
- 65 landlocked acres near N. Ashburnham Road
- 15.50 acres on Teel Road (former Militia Training Grounds)
- the "Town Green" at Old Center

The remaining parcels are substantially smaller. At present there are no known plans for development or sale of these parcels. They are not protected from development either.

State Owned

The OS&RP shows 1,646 acres of state owned open space land in the Town. These include the Birch Hill Wildlife Management Area, Otter River State Forest, and Lake Dennison Recreation Area in the western part of the Town. The State also owns the Winchendon State Forest on Mellen Road (175 acres), 1.6 acres of frontage on Lake Monomonac, and the State Wildlife Management Areas along the Millers River between Spring Street and the North Ashburnham Road.

Federally Owned

There are 2,607 acres of Federally owned open space lands in Town located in the western part of the Town. These are almost exclusively in the Birch Hill Wildlife Management Area and the Lake Dennison Recreation Area.

Privately Owned

This category includes "public, private, and nonprofit properties" (OS&RP, 1999) and contains 515 acres which are widely scattered and of varying sizes. Of particular note is the 85-acre parcel of the New England Wildflower Association on West Street and the 240 acres owned by the Winchendon School on Ash and Hall Roads.

Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B

These lands are inventoried as follows:

- Chapter 61 - 5,187 acres
- Chapter 61A - 975 acres
- Chapter 61B - 174 acres.

MANAGEMENT/PROTECTION

Land is considered "protected" from development if a Land Trust owns it, if it has deed restrictions that prohibit or limit development, or if it has conservation easements on it. Land that is owned by the Town, the State, or the Federal government is not considered "protected" for open space purposes. Land in Chapter 61, 61A or 61B is also not considered protected.

The OS&RP states:

- The state and federal government own "slightly less than 16% of Winchendon's land mass". This represents 36% of the inventoried open space lands.
- Nearly one-fourth of Winchendon's land mass is enrolled in the Chapter 61, 61A or 61B program. This represents 53% of the inventoried open space lands.

According to Joseph Iagallo, Principal Park Supervisor at Otter River State Forest, (*telephone interview, Sept. 2000*) the lands at the Lake Dennison/Otter River State Forest/Birch Hill complex are jointly managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Department of Environmental Management. The management policies are described in the "Goals Plan" for the northern tier, and do not include any plans for development of these parcels for anything other than wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation.

Parcels enrolled in the Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B program "distributed in large blocks throughout Winchendon and comprise much of the open fields and green forests that townspeople associate with our rural environment." (*OS&RP, 1999*)

These lands are subject to market forces and the needs of their respective owners and are therefore vulnerable to development pressure. The Town has the opportunity to purchase these lands when they are removed from the Chapter 61 program.

"State law allows property owners to sell or donate permanent voluntary restrictions on the use of their land for conservation, watershed, agricultural, or historic preservation purposes. A government agency or a nonprofit enforces the restriction. The owner retains fee ownership of the land, while possibly qualifying for tax benefits." (*The State of Our Environment, EOE, 2000*)

To prevent the loss of municipally owned parkland, the Massachusetts constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the legislature before open space can be used for non-park purposes. In the event that no other land is feasible for a proposed non-park use, the town must dedicate other compensatory land of equal or greater value to ensure there is no net loss of open space.

Governor Cellucci has set a goal to protect 200,000 acres of open space by the year 2010. This is a good time for the Town to pursue protection strategies for its own open space resources.

Open Space Goals (*Summarized from OS&RP, 1999*)

Conserve open space resources, including agricultural land, forested land, wildlife habitat, and recreational land.

Protect the rural character and scenic quality of the Town through the preservation of open spaces.

Link Open Space goals with Natural Resources goals.

Preserve wildlife habitats and rare plant habitats.

Support the Recreation Commission.

Integrate, where possible and/or appropriate, open spaces with recreational activities and facilities.

Resolve the problem of substandard or nonexistent onsite septic disposal systems, with first priority going to areas in close proximity to the Millers River, Lake Monomonac, and Whitney Pond. Go on to other failing systems that may be near other major bodies of water.

Finish the North Central Pathway.

Support the Community Development Office's Title V program.

Create an active recreation area for such endeavors as skateboarding, rollerblading, and biking.

Implement goals and objectives of the 1999 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

OBJECTIVES

Regulate inappropriate land uses to avoid or mitigate loss of water quality or wildlife habitats.

Prioritize open spaces considered for preservation. Criteria should be based on level of contribution to biological and ecological diversity; water supply and water quality; aesthetics and recreation; community character; and agricultural lands.

Identify scenic roadways and corridors that will aid in the protection of open spaces. Then adopt a local corridor district in the general bylaws and a scenic roadway bylaw in the zoning bylaws to regulate development along these declared scenic roadways and corridors.

Protect the Town's working farms from development.

Develop a linked system of open spaces and recreation, integrating activities where appropriate.

Seek funding sources and alternative, low-cost means for protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

Establish a fund for purchase of (a) tax title lands and (b) development rights on parcels that meet the criteria for open space preservation.

Modify zoning bylaws to encourage styles of development that will preserve open space.

Modify zoning bylaws to regulate inappropriate uses on lands that are adjacent to surface waters, are located in watersheds to important surface waters, and those

that overlie known aquifers and their recharge zones. The industrial zoning district in the southeast part of the Town is known to overlie the protective district for the city of Gardner's Crystal Lake water source. This may need to be modified to prevent degradation of this resource. Similarly, the Zone II for some of Templeton's public wells extends into Winchendon. The effects of the overlying zoning should be examined and modified if necessary.

Transfer ownership of the Town forest lands on Town Farm Road to the Winchendon Conservation Commission for the purpose of conservation and preservation.

Any new lands that the Town acquires for protected open space or recreation should be transferred to the Conservation Commission.

Establish a local land bank or community land trust as authorized under the Community Preservation Act.

Encourage the Winchendon School system to become involved with the Outdoor Classroom Program offered by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

Services

This element identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted needs for facilities and services used by the public.

The Town's Zoning Bylaws contain a building cap, which limits construction of new homes to fifty per year. The purpose of the bylaw is to help prevent sharp deviations in the number of new families moving into the Town in a single year, thus preventing unanticipated loads on the Town's services.

Police Protection

Winchendon is served by a full-time, 24-hour police department consisting of 15 full-time police officers and 5 part time officers. The department is housed to the rear of Town Hall on Pleasant Street in facilities that are cramped and outdated. The department has 5 marked cruisers on the road, one back-up vehicle, a chief's car, (which seconds as a cruiser) and one unmarked car.

Police statistics show that the total number of offenses committed each year have increased for the past three years. (Table 2) Offenses requiring investigations have also increased. (Table 3) At present, the department has one part-time detective who investigates the more serious crimes. Approximately 60% of the investigations are solved within 2 months. The remainder remain unsolved much longer. As Patrol Officers are required to respond to increasing numbers of calls,

their time available to conduct follow-up investigations of unwitnessed crimes decreases.

As a result, investigations are not completed or remain open for long periods of time. Criminal investigations that remain unsolved for long periods of time may actually increase the crime rate, which in turn adds to the burden of the police department.

Table 2 Police Statistics

| | <u>1997</u> | <u>1998</u> | <u>1999</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Offenses | 1116 | 1690 | 1817 |
| Total Crime Related Incidents | 360 | 619 | 619 |
| Total Non-Crime Related Incidents | 0 | 30 | 127 |
| Total Protective Custodies | 54 | 54 | 54 |
| Total Arrests | 444 | 612 | 623 |
| Total Juvenile Arrests | 57 | 68 | 80 |

Table 3 Investigative Offenses

| | <u>1997</u> | <u>1998</u> | <u>1999</u> |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Forcible Rape | 2 | 11 | 10 |
| Sexual Assault | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Aggravated Assault | 0 | 92 | 142 |
| Arson | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Burglary | 0 | 67 | 73 |
| Counterfeiting | 7 | 15 | 21 |

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Credit Card/ATM | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Stolen Property | 10 | 5 | 18 |
| Statutory Rape | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| <u>Bad Checks</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>4</u> |
| <hr/> Total | <hr/> 24 | <hr/> 208 | <hr/> 277 |

The department has two officers dedicated to an active Community Policing Program. The program uses an integrated, indirect approach to solving law enforcement problems, working with citizens at large and various municipal departments and boards. One officer works within the school system, the other works as a bike patrol in the downtown areas in the evenings.

Winchendon has a 'zero tolerance' policy regarding drugs. All local drug offenses are prosecuted. The department also works with the North Worcester County Drug Task Force to focus on large drug dealing operations.

The department needs additional support staff so as to free up officers for patrol and investigative duties. The facilities need to be increased and upgraded to provide for a much-needed juvenile holding area, and interviewing, office and storage space. There is need for two additional marked cruisers and an unmarked vehicle.

The current chief is working to attain accreditation for the department so as to gain greater access to grant funds for much needed improvements.

Police Goal

Provide reliable, efficient police protection.

OBJECTIVES

Develop a capital improvement program to address expansion needs on a regular time schedule.

Achieve accreditation.

Strive to reduce the amount of time that crimes remain unsolved.

Fire Protection

The Winchendon Fire Department is located at 405 Central Street near the downtown business district and in one of the most densely populated areas of the

Town. The Winchendon Fire Department is a “paid on-call department”, with 3 full time fire fighters, a chief, and 35 part time employees. Services are available to the Town 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Town belongs to two mutual aid associations: Mid-State (Massachusetts) which is centered in Fitchburg, and the Southwestern New Hampshire District Fire Mutual Aid, which is centered in Keene. Membership in these two associations provides the Town access to fire fighting assistance in more than 60 communities.

Fire fighting equipment housed at the fire station is shown in Table 4.

| Description | Year | Pump | Water* | | Condition | Life Expectancy | |
|---------------|------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | | Truck | Attached Equipment |
| Engine 3 | 1996 | 1500 gpm | 500 gal | | Excellent | 2025 | |
| Engine 4 | 1991 | 1000 gpm | 1000 gal | | Excellent | 2016 | |
| Ladder 1 | 1984 | 1000 gpm | 500 gal | 85' | Excellent | 2010 | |
| Forestry 5 | 1985 | 300 gpm | 300 gal | DEM | Excellent | 2008 | 2030 |
| Forestry 8 | 1953 | 250 gpm | 250 gal | DEM | Poor | 2001 | 2033 |
| Forestry 6 | 1969 | 300 gpm | 1200 gal | DEM | Excellent | 2012 | 2035 |
| Truck 7 | 1983 | <input type="text" value="x"/> | <input type="text" value="x"/> | DEM | Satisfactory | 2014 | 2014 |
| Engine 1 | 1981 | 1000 gpm | 1000 gal | | Poor | 2000** | |
| Car 1 | 2000 | | | (4WD) | Excellent | | |
| Car 2 | 1996 | | | | Satisfactory | | |
| Ambulance 1 | 1997 | | | | Excellent | 2015 | |
| Ambulance 2 | 2000 | | | | Excellent | 2017 | |
| Water Trailer | 1996 | (400 gals) | | | Excellent | 2015 | |

* Volume of water the vehicle can carry to a fire. The total of this column has a direct impact on the Town's insurance rating.

** Engine 1 is being rehabilitated as of November, 2000, and will be returned to service in excellent condition before the end of 2000.

Currently there is no capital improvement plan with which to guide replacement of fire fighting equipment. Replacement decisions are made on the recommendation of the Fire Chief. Funds for replacements have come primarily from outside donations, although the Town has contributed when the need arises.

Water for fighting fires comes from either the Town's water and hydrant system, natural water sources near the scene, or from water brought to the scene by the fire department. The Town's water and hydrant system functions fairly well, although the age of the system is its primary shortcoming. Several of the hydrants are out of service because they are broken or not functioning properly. The effect of these shortcomings is added time in getting water to a fire.

For areas outside of the Town's water district, water must be transported or obtained from a source near the scene, mainly from a pond or a stream.

Limitations arise when access to the water is impractical or impossible, either because it is too far downslope for the truck to pump it up or the surface of the water is frozen. A system of dry hydrants installed at key locations would help eliminate these difficulties. The Town currently has dry hydrants located at Whitney Pond, behind the bowling alley, at the base of High Street, and at Lake Monomonac. Not all of them are functioning at present, however. Additional alternatives for increasing the Town's fire fighting capabilities outside of the water district include a larger tank truck, the installation of fire ponds or underground storage tanks at locations not served by accessible surface water or dry hydrants, and residential sprinklers. The Planning Board requires recommendations from the Fire Chief on all site plans and subdivisions.

At present the Town's insurance rating (ISO) is 5/9 (downtown/rural). The rating scale is 1 = excellent, 10 = poor. The last ISO survey for Winchendon was done in 1992. The rating is a function of several factors, including equipment available, the volume of water deliverable to a fire in a rural district, the rate at which water can be pumped, the manner in which calls are received and transmitted, and so on. The alternative strategies discussed above, if implemented, would have a direct, positive impact on the ISO rating. Improving the rating will reduce the cost of the Town's insurance coverage.

Table 5 Department Statistics

| | <u>1997*</u> | <u>1998</u> | <u>1999**</u> |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Fires | 94 | 130 | 76 |
| EMS | 755 | 787 | 342 |
| False Alarms | 13 | 47 | 21 |
| Good Intent/Scares | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Other Emergencies | 54 | 89 | 44 |

*Reporting software different from 1998 and 1999

** Represents 6-mos only due to change to fiscal year reporting

An evaluation of the Town's fire fighting protection services was performed using the distribution standards shown in Table 6.

| Type of Land Use | <i>Suggested Service Radius</i> | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | <u>Engine or Pumper Company</u> | <u>Ladder Company</u> |
| 1. Commercial/Industrial | .75 - 1.0 mile | 1.0 mile |
| 2. High to medium density residential | 2.0 miles | 2.0 miles |
| 3. Scattered residential | 3 - 4 miles | 3.0 miles |
| 4. Rural low density residential | 4 - 6 miles | ----- |

Most residential development in the Town is within the recommended service radii with the possible exception of the dense development at Lake Monomonac. Commercial and industrial development may also pose difficulties. Under current zoning, there could be commercial and industrial development outside of the .75-1.0 mile radius. These areas would include the industrial park on Jackson Avenue extension, the industrial zone along the town's eastern boundary, highway commercial development along route 140, and neighborhood business development along School Street, River Street and Route 202.

In addition to fighting fires, the Fire Department also enforces fire safety codes; provides fire safety education, rescue and emergency medical services, and hazardous material controls; determines the cause of fires; investigates arson; and supports arson prosecution. To accomplish these varied tasks the Fire Department works regularly with the building department, the Planning Board, Community Development, DPW, the police department, the public school system, private sector companies, and regional, state, and national organizations.

The fire department is equipped and trained to respond to spills of hazardous materials. When responding to a spill, the department's focus is on isolating the material, protecting the surroundings, evacuating lives, and containing the spill.

Clean up and post-spill mitigation at this time requires outside assistance through the State Fire Marshall's Office.

Ambulance Service

The Winchendon ambulance service is run by the Fire Chief under the direction of the Town Manager. The Town currently has two ambulances, a 2000 and a 1996. Both vehicles are identically equipped according to State requirements. Winchendon currently offers Basic Life Support (BLS) service.

The Town has applied for a license to provide Intermediate Life Support, a step that requires the Town to commit to proceeding to Advanced Life Support (ALS) services within three years. Once ALS services are available, the Town will have a paramedic on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In the interim, the Town utilizes paramedic services from Gardner when needed.

Ambulances are replaced every 5-6 years. Funding for replacement often comes from outside sources, although Town Meeting has approved funding in the past.

Fire Protection Goals

Provide adequate fire protection at acceptable cost.

Reduce fire risks.

Control fire losses.

OBJECTIVES

Promote fire safety awareness at all levels of the community.

Provide emergency medical life support services.

Provide hazardous materials control services.

Reduce fire insurance rating.

Develop a Master Plan and Capital Improvement Plan to address future needs and plans of the Fire Department.

Emergency Dispatch

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has the most advanced 911 services in the country. It requires all cities and towns to have enhanced 911 services available through a Public Safety Answering Point. Enhanced 911 services provide the dispatcher with the name, address, and apartment number of the telephone from which the call is placed. The Winchendon Emergency Dispatch Center complies with these requirements and functions as a regional dispatch center because it dispatches for the Town of Royalston as well. Winchendon's elderly residents may also register disabilities with the dispatch center to further enhance emergency services.

There are 5 full-time and 4 part-time employees at the dispatch center. All employees are CPR trained, are first responders, and are trained for suicide watch. Dispatchers also monitor the prisoners at the police station and are qualified to provide criminal history records checks and motor vehicle checks. Because of the dispatchers broad-based training, their presence at the police station eliminates the need for a police officer to 'mind' the station. Emergency dispatch is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Director of the Emergency Dispatch Center conducts extensive public outreach programs to keep the Townspeople informed about 911 services. Each year, children at the Memorial School are taught when and why to use 911. The Winchendon Golden Agers are offered a "911 and the Elderly" annually. Additional programs are offered at various times at the Clark Memorial Recreation Center.

Enhanced 911 services became available in Winchendon in September of 1996. Statistics of emergency calls received were not reported until 1998 and are shown in Table 7.

The need for emergency dispatch services has increased each year, a trend likely to continue as the Town's population, particularly elderly residents, increases. Technological advances in 911 services, including the ability to specify the exact location of cellular and pay telephone calls, and calls originating from room telephones within a large building, may further increase the demand for services. Increases in service demands will certainly require adequate funding to provide timely upgrades in equipment and additional personnel needs. While the Commonwealth pays for all 911-associated equipment, the Town is responsible for department computers, radios, toning equipment, and personnel.

Table 7 Emergency Dispatch Statistics

| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 (up to 8/21) |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Computer Aided Dispatch Calls | 10,122 | 11,500 | 6,980 |

Emergency Dispatch Goal

Provide the best quality emergency services possible.

OBJECTIVES

Stay abreast of technology advances.

Continue public outreach programs to keep Townspeople informed about emergency services that are available to them.

Education

There are presently four public schools and one private school in Winchendon.

Marvin School

Located at 89 Ash Street, the Marvin School is presently home to the public preschool and pre-kindergarten programs. Current enrollment is 90 students. There are four classrooms, each with a capacity of 25 students, and three spaces for therapy. There are playground equipment and a ball field on the premises. The building is in excellent repair, although it will need a new heating system and a new roof at some point in the future. Useful life of the building is fifty or more years.

Memorial School

Located at 32 Elmwood Road, the Memorial School houses grades kindergarten to grade 3. Current enrollment is 561 students; maximum capacity is 800. This building has recently had a new roof, heating system, carpets, and exit doors. There are plans to replace the windows due to leaking seals. Funds for these repairs and other improvements will come from the existing operating budget, owing to savings resulting from the new heating system. Useful life expectancy of the building is forty to fifty years.

Toy Town

The Toy Town elementary school is located at 175 Grove Street and houses grades 4, 5, and 6. Current enrollment is 485 students; maximum capacity is 500. Administrative offices for the school department are also located in this building. The building has a new roof, floor tiles, windows, and plumbing. The heating plant is aging, although functioning well. Replacement will be needed at some point in the future. Useful life expectancy of the building is forty to fifty years.

Murdock Middle/High School

The Murdock Middle/High School is located at 3 Memorial Drive and houses grades 7-12. It is the newest of the school buildings. As such it needs only routine, regular maintenance. Present enrollment is 813; maximum capacity is 1,000. Useful life expectancy of the building is fifty or more years.

Class sizes have remained fairly constant for the past several years, averaging between 130 and 150 students. The New England School Development Council (NESDEC) does not project any increase in enrollment in the next 5-10 years, however we have been increasing enrollments beyond their predictions for the last three years. Per pupil expenditures will continue to increase as the cost of living increases and educational demands are imposed by legislation and the Department of Education. Total Per Pupil Expenditures through 1997 are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8
Expenditures**

Total Per Pupil

| | <u>DISTRICT</u> | | <u>STATE</u> | |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | <i>1993-4</i> | <i>1993-4</i> | <i>1997-8</i> | <i>1997-8</i> |
| All day Programs | \$3,675 | \$5,084 | \$5,235 | \$6,361 |
| Regular Education | 2,969 | 4,229 | 4,369 | 5,221 |
| Special Education | 5,617 | 7,674 | 7,666 | 9,873 |
| Bilingual Education | 0 | 0 | 5,539 | 7,106 |
| Vocational Education | 0 | 0 | 7,843 | 9,052 |

Expansion of facilities due to increased enrollment should not be necessary in the next five years. However, there has been much discussion regarding establishment of a full-day kindergarten program. If this is established, then there will be a need for additional classroom, recreation, and support space. Ten classrooms, a multipurpose room, and several small support rooms could be added to the Marvin School to accommodate this need.

The Town also owns two other former school buildings, the Poland and Streeter schools, on Park Street. The ground floor of the Streeter School is being leased to the veteran's services; the Poland is empty, but secured.

Discussions have been held regarding relocation of the school department's administrative offices to the Streeter School and moving the veterans to the Poland School. Both buildings will require renovations prior to occupancy by any future tenant.

Strengths of the overall teaching program include:

- an excellent teaching staff,
- an updated and "user friendly" curriculum,
- a professional development program for continual professional growth, a teacher evaluation program to recognize areas of strength and address areas that need improvement, and
- teacher induction and mentor program.

The school curriculum is now linked and aligned with the State Frameworks. The schools' standards now exceed the state requirements in all subject areas. An extensive professional development program has resulted in a teaching staff now better able to teach reading/writing/thinking skills across the curriculum.

The school department's special education program is also considered a strength of the school system. The program has an excellent staff that works to recognize individual special needs and ways in which to remediate them.

Weaknesses of the teaching program include:

- getting more staff linked to the technology of their discipline/grade level,
- insufficient diversity in the curricula offerings,
- insufficient diversity in the teaching staff, and
- lack of awareness by some of the teaching staff of the strengths of the program and the students.

The Department of Education does not require specific student-teacher-administrator ratios, although they do recommend parameters for optimum ratios. The school department tries to limit primary grade class sizes to under 25 and closer to 20. In the intermediate grades and middle school class sizes average 25-27. High school class sizes vary. Depending on the subject, they can range from as low as 15 to as high as 35 or 40. The school department is in line with recommendations for the number of administrators and support staff.

The school department has established a working relationship with several of the local institutions of higher education including Mount Wachusett Community College, Keene State College, and Fitchburg State College. The school department is also an active member of the Fitchburg State Professional Development Center and advisory councils at Fitchburg State College and Mount Wachusett Community College.

Every student from grade 1 through grade 8 is exposed to computers. Training ranges from learning the keyboard to more advanced training such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and Access. Internet access is being introduced to students in library/media center, computer lab, and from individual classrooms. The school system is working toward preparing students for employment in a technological work force. Telecommunications facilities, including high speed internet access, are becoming available in the Town with the passage of the wireless communications facilities' zoning bylaw.

Planning efforts are directed toward ensuring that the Town is able to provide adequate, safe, and appropriate space for the education of its present school age population and for the needs of its projected population. Planning must also address the quality of the educational services provided to its students, with an understanding of the future destinations of its graduates. The school department acknowledges its role in the preparation of students to be contributors toward future employment opportunities within the Town. Employers often look at the educational achievements of a town's high school graduates in consideration of their location. Labor force requirements have changed from agricultural, to industrial, to service and technological jobs. Our graduates need the skills to succeed in this high-tech, college-dependent economic environment.

Education Goals

Provide the highest quality education possible to every student.

Provide safe, appropriate space in which to educate every student.

Promote financial responsibility.

OBJECTIVES

Raise Winchendon public school test scores, i.e. MCAS, SAT, etc., into the top 25% of the Commonwealth in the next seven years.

Establish a late bus route to allow students greater access to after school activities.

Maintain effective disciplinary policies.

Maintain the structural integrity and value of the school's properties.

Develop, implement, and maintain an exemplary curriculum that prepares our students for the future.

Develop, implement, and maintain a program for gifted and talented children.

Library Facilities

Public library services are available at the Beals Memorial Library on Pleasant Street. The library currently houses 35,000 total volumes (2,500 reference volumes, 10,000 children's volumes; 22,500 adult volumes); five (5) public access computers; computer software; videos; records; and magazines. Access to additional volumes is available through the Interlibrary Loan Service that the library provides. Circulation statistics for FY99 are shown in Table 9.

Table 9 Library Statistics

Circulation FY99

| | | | |
|----------------|--------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Adult Total | 15,620 | | |
| Books-on-tape | 1,041 | <i>Children's Programs</i> | 66 |
| Videos | 4,992 | | |
| CD-ROMs | 103 | <i>Registered Borrowers</i> | 2,590 |
| CDs | 182 | | |
| Films, Records | 10 | | |
| Braille | 72 | | |

On the second floor of the building there is an auditorium that is equipped with a small stage, a public address system, a grand piano, and a small conference room.

The library offers several children's programs, free Internet access, home deliveries for the housebound, and assistance with reference and genealogy questions. The library also offers passes to various museums in the Commonwealth.

The Town built the library in 1913 with a donation of \$25,000 and a lot from Charles L. Beals. It is on the National Historic Register. Since that time, it has had little more than routine maintenance. The building needs new wiring; new heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems; exterior drainage to alleviate basement leakage; new windows; insulation; sprinkler system; and asbestos and lead paint removal. The building is not handicapped accessible, which is in violation of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Lack of suitable space has precluded further expansion of existing collections and services. The second floor facilities are underutilized due to restricted access.

Library Goal

Provide up-to-date library services to the Town.

OBJECTIVES

Make the library handicapped accessible.

Address building code violations.

Automate library systems as needed.

Provide access to the Town's GIS.

Upgrade and expand the software offered on the public access computers for both children and adults.

Develop a plan with which to address anticipated increases in minimum requirements, which will become applicable to the library when Winchendon's population reaches 10,000.

Health Care Facilities

"Access to adequate health care is essential for the survival and growth of a small town. A lack of health care facilities and personnel will discourage new businesses from moving to the community and may force some existing businesses to leave."
(The Small Town Planning Handbook; Daniels, Keller & Lapping; 1995)

Winchendon's primary source of health care is the Winchendon Health Center, which is located at the site of the former Winchendon Hospital. The Center opened in 1982 as a satellite facility to the Henry Heywood Hospital in Gardner offering health care and outpatient services to Winchendon and surrounding communities.

Currently there are five Board Certified Family Practice Physicians practicing at

the Center. The Center also employs three registered nurses, two licensed practical nurses and two per diem registered nurses. Primary care services are offered to patients of all ages.

Services include prenatal/obstetrical care, minor surgery, patient education, health promotion, and preventative services. Equipment available at the Center include cardiac monitor, cardiac defibrillator, cardiac pacemaker, EKG, cryotherapy, tympanograph, sigmoidoscope, pulse oximetry and oxygen therapy.

The closest emergency medical services are at the Heywood Hospital in Gardner. There are also hospitals located in Athol, Worcester, Fitchburg, and Leominster.

At present, the Center is able to meet the service demands of the area. Ongoing feasibility studies are routinely conducted to evaluate the need for possible future expansion.

At present there are two dental practices in Winchendon. Services offered are comprehensive, although some procedures require referral to practices outside of Winchendon. Winchendon also has one optometrist and one chiropractor.

Health Care Facilities Goal

Ensure sufficient medical care is available in town to meet the health care needs of the residents.

OBJECTIVES

Maintain communication with the Winchendon Health Center to maintain awareness of their future expansion needs and emerging needs for specific types of practices.

Create an inventory of available medical facilities ready for use by doctors or dentists.

Determine approximate number of townspeople who are trained medical technicians, nurses, and nurse-practitioners. Make this information part of the medical facility inventory.

Solid Waste Disposal

The Town has a drop-off transfer station on River Street. At the station are recycling containers for glass; steel and tin cans; aluminum cans and foil; plastics #1 and #2; newspaper; mixed paper; corrugated cardboard; scrap steel; nonferrous scrap metals; tires; compost; CRT's; waste oil; universal wastes (i.e. fluorescent bulbs and mercury-bearing units ballasts); batteries; and paint collection on Saturdays. There are also areas for construction and demolition

(C&D) and bulky wastes. The Town transports materials taken in for recycling to a materials recovery facility in Keene, NH. Hauling costs the Town \$120/ton.

Composting of leaves, grass, and small brush is done at the site and is made available to the public at no charge. The Town's recycling rate is currently 39%. (The average statewide recycling rate is approximately 35%.) Facilities are open to Winchendon residents only, although nonresidents may seek permission from the Winchendon Board of Health. Hazardous household wastes are collected at an annual, one-day event organized by the Board of Health. The Board would like to build a permanent station at the transfer station to allow four to six collections per year.

Three DPW employees and a solid waste manager run the transfer station.

The transfer station is provided as an alternative to the previous 13-acre landfill that was closed and capped in 1999. There are another 50+ acres at the site that have been site assigned by DEP. The Town is still finalizing the application for landfill expansion. There is no guarantee that the application will be approved. However, the Town is much in favor of pursuing a new landfill as a means of reducing solid waste disposal costs and as a source of much needed revenue for the Town.

Solid Waste Disposal Goal

Provide sanitary, environmentally responsible disposal of solid waste.

OBJECTIVES

Continue to expand recycling and composting efforts.

Increase revenues from recycled materials.

Develop a capital improvement program to continue upgrading and improving the solid waste disposal facilities.

Construct a permanent hazardous household waste collection facility at the transfer station.

Municipal Water Supplies

Winchendon's public water supplies come from Upper Lake Naukeag in Ashburnham. The water is pumped from the Lake at the main pumping station there at approximately 1,000 gpm. (There is a second pump at the station that allows for relief/repair of the primary pump, or to provide additional pumping capacity when demand is high.) It is chlorinated and then passes into a 12-inch diameter main, through which it travels along Lake Road to Sherbert Road, across country through the woods until it comes out on North Ashburnham Road. It

continues on through the Town Forest to the site of the former Prentiss Meadows pumping station. There the line splits and goes in two directions - one goes on through the Town cemetery and out onto Glenallen Street, proceeding north to Elmwood Road and ending at the storage tank on Murdock Hill. The second line crosses the Millers River to Spring Street and continues on toward Town. The line turns at Water Street and proceeds up High Street to the second storage tank at Old Centre. The combined storage capacity of the tanks at Old Centre is 1,566,000 gallons. Storage capacity at Murdock Hill is 1 million gallons.

Winchendon and Ashburnham are currently jointly constructing a State-mandated filtration plant at the Lake. Once the plant comes online, water will be filtered before being chlorinated and sent on into the distribution system. The estimated date of completion for this project is February, 2001.

Distribution System

Water is distributed by gravity through lines that range in size from 16 inches to ¾-inch at the outermost reaches of the system. As water is drawn down through the system, the pumps at the Lake come on and refill the storage tanks as needed.

Current Levels of Use

The safe yield determined for Upper Lake Naukeag is 1.7 million gallons per day (365 days per year). At present, Winchendon draws an average of 710,000 gallons per day. Ashburnham draws an average of 250,000 gallons per day. Approximately 700 Ashburnham residents draw from Winchendon's water mains before the mains cross into Winchendon. On peak demand days, e.g. the hotter days of summer, demand rises to over 1 million gallons per day, close to the safe yield level. On these peak demand days, the Lake is stressed. The water system serves approximately 2000 customers (homes and businesses) or about 5,600 residents.

Location of Water Lines - see map

Age and Condition of the System

The pump station at the Lake was built in 1950. It continues to function well. The distribution pipes, however, are approximately 80 to 100 years old. There are places in the line where tuberculation has reduced the interior diameter of the pipes from 14 inches to 8 inches. This reduces the amount of water that can flow through the pipes and in turn causes the pumps to work harder. The quality of the water suffers as well due to the accumulated material inside the pipes, often resulting in discolored water being delivered to customers.

Ability of the present system to support future development

The present system cannot be extended easily because of the size of the pipes at the extremities of the system. Given its present expanse, it is unlikely that extension would happen in the near future. However, water demand in Winchendon is expected to rise to 730,000 gallons per day by 2010; Ashburnham's demand may rise to 320,000 gallons per day. (*Greater Gardner Sustainable Growth Management Plan, 1999*) Since present peak demands are already close to the maximum safe yield for the Lake, the Town will need to pursue development of alternative sources for public water. Two sites have already been identified - one at Whites Mill Pond and the other at Mill Glen Pond. Neither site will yield sufficient water to replace our existing water supplies. However, each may provide water to a smaller, localized area as a supplement to the main system.

Municipal Water Supplies Goal

Provide clean drinking water to town users.

OBJECTIVES

Develop a capital improvement plan for the timely improvement of the distribution system.

Continue to pursue development of viable alternative sources of drinking water that will serve the needs of projected population increases and to serve as insurance against possible loss of our existing water supplies.

Protect our aquifers from contamination.

Maintain a balanced water budget, so that water is withdrawn from and returned to the same watershed.

Municipal Wastewater Treatment

Winchendon's wastewater treatment facility was built in 1974. It was designed to treat an average flow of 0.5 million gallons per day (GPD). However, it has been operating overcapacity at 680 million gdp since the day the plant went online. An extended aeration form of an activated sludge process provides sewage treatment. Treated effluent is filtered, chlorinated, dechlorinated, and discharged into the Millers River. Residual sludge is dried and landfilled.

Age and Condition of the system

The treatment plant is 26 years old and has not been upgraded since the day it went online. The pumps, aerators, grinders, blowers, etc. are now beyond their useful life and are wearing out. Maintenance alone will not keep them functioning properly and their replacement parts are very expensive. The treatment

technology is now outdated as well. The facility needs new settling basins, a diffused air system, and a sludge facility, among other things.

The collection system is also old. In places the line is cracked and there are many unsealed pipes. Groundwater infiltrates the system and adds to the excess volume flowing into the treatment plant. There are 34 combined storm/sewer manholes. During storm events, when large volumes of water suddenly surge into the system, these combined storm/sewer manholes may be unable to maintain separation. The storm water ends up in the sewer line and ultimately at the treatment plant, where it either adds to the excess volume or it may actually overwhelm the system causing raw sewage to be discharged into the Millers River. In addition, treatment systems are damaged due to the sudden and complete loss of bacteria and must be replaced before treatment can be resumed.

Another difficulty is the presence of "Combined Sewer Overflows" or CSOs. These are pipe constrictions, known as venturis, placed in the collection system that are designed to prevent the storm water surges described above. When a surge event is encountered, excess inflow is diverted to a secondary discharge outlet. Unfortunately, the older CSOs, such as those in Winchendon, discharge the flow directly into the Millers River, untreated. More modern CSOs prevent this by collecting, holding, and releasing the surge when the flows have subsided or by diverting the surge to some form of secondary treatment before discharging it. There are two of the older type CSOs still functioning in Winchendon.

Ability of present system to support future development

Because the plant is undersized for present flow rates, there is no capacity available for future development at the present time. The future of the plant itself is also under debate due to recent actions by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These include changing the expiration date on the Town's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and changing the standards for allowable discharges into the Millers River.

The NPDES permit regulates discharges from the treatment plant. Winchendon's NPDES permit requires removal of 80% of the Total Suspended Solids (TSS) and 80% of the Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) from the discharge. However, the EPA has adopted more stringent standards regarding discharges from treatment plants, which will have to be taken into account when negotiating a new NPDES permit.

The EPA has also made all NPDES permits within a single watershed expire in the same year in an effort to improve regulatory efficiency. In so doing, Winchendon's permit will expire two years earlier than originally stated.

Therefore the Town is in need of negotiating a new NPDES permit for a treatment plant that will treat the actual volume of septage to a higher discharge standard and will eliminate the remaining CSOs. EPA mandated improvements to the

treatment plant could cost the Town \$12 - \$15 million. This could put the Town into receivership if forced to borrow this amount of money at the Town's present debt load.

Alternative strategies are being explored. One is to reduce the flow to the design level of 0.5 million gpd by removing the excess water in the system. (Repairing pipes and seals and removing fugitive water from roof drains, sump pumps, etc., is already taking place and will continue indefinitely.) A second alternative may be to connect to Templeton's treatment plant, which is running far below capacity. Feasibility studies for this alternative are already underway.

Municipal Wastewater Treatment Goal

Provide wastewater treatment efficiently within existing service areas.

OBJECTIVES

Evaluate the available alternatives for providing municipal wastewater treatment. Choose the most cost-effective alternative that will comply with EPA's regulations. Secure the necessary funding. Obtain the NPDES permit. Proceed to completion.

Develop a capital improvement program to provide regular upgrades and maintenance of the municipal wastewater treatment and collection systems.

Eliminate sewage discharges to the Millers River from private residences.

Enforce the Sewer Regulations.

Parks and Recreation

An inventory of Town-owned parks is shown in Table 10.

| Name | Location | Amenities |
|---------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| GAR | Murdock/Park/Grove | Band Stand, Benches |
| Doughboy | West/School | Benches |
| Veteran's | Front/Pleasant | Picnic Tables |
| Bentley Field | Murdock Ave | Ball Fields |

The Town does not own any recreation areas. There are, however, ball fields, swing sets, playground equipment, and basketball courts at the schools.

Table 11 School Recreational Sites

Memorial School Toy Town Elementary School

Playground equipment
Basketball hoops

Murdock Middle/High School

Swing sets
Athletic field
Outdoor track

Marvin School

Playground equipment
Swing sets, Ball fields

Additional recreational opportunities are available at the Wendell P. Clark Memorial Recreation Center, a nonprofit center equipped with an outdoor track, a playground, swing set, outdoor basket ball and tennis courts, an indoor skating rink, indoor swimming pool, and gymnasium. "The Clark", as it is locally known, offers athletic instruction in a wide variety of fields and hosts many recreational and holiday events throughout the year. Other recreational opportunities available in Winchendon are shown in Table 12.

Table 12 Recreation Opportunities Located in Winchendon*

Birch Hill Reservoir and Wildlife Management Area

4,221 acres in Winchendon, Templeton, and Royalston
Hiking, fishing, camping, canoeing, swimming
6.5 miles of bike trails
30 miles of gravel roads and multi-use trails
Cross-country skiing, ice fishing, snow shoeing, dogsledding
Bird watching, hunting
Historic sites including King Phillips' Rock, old foundations, a well site, remains of a mill dam and Birch Hill Dam
State-designated Wildlife Viewing Area

Otter River State Forest

12,788 acres on the boundary between Winchendon and Templeton
State-designated Wildlife Viewing Area
100 campsites, 2 swimming beaches, playing field, picnic areas
Hiking, camping, fishing, picnicking, hunting, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling
Seasonally staffed, supervised programs

Lake Denison Recreation Area

Non-motorized boating, hiking, horseback riding, swimming
Cross-country skiing, snowmobiling
Fishing, hunting
150 campsites

Seasonally staffed, supervised programs
Wilder-McKenzie Nature Trail

**Greater Gardner Sustainable Growth Management Plan, 1999*

The Town owns several small parcels of land on Whites Mill Pond, which the Planning Board has recommended be developed as low-impact recreation areas. They would be suitable for non-motorized boating access, picnic areas, and wildlife observation. The Community Development Office has applied for a grant with which to develop 6 acres on Webster Street as a neighborhood park.

The Town is also in the early stages of developing a skateboard park. Land identified for possible location of the park is at the former Poland and Streeter Schools, opposite the GAR Park.

The Public Works Department maintains the Town's parks. In response to a growing demand for recreational activities, the Town has adopted a new bylaw to create a Recreation Commission. The Commission would have charge of all playgrounds, parks, and recreation facilities of the Town that are not under the control of the School Department. The Commission would be responsible for facilities and maintenance, recreation programs, and long range planning.

Parks and Recreation Goals

(Note: These Goals and Objectives are taken directly from the Town of Winchendon Open Space & Recreation Plan, updated 1998.)

Enhance the recreational potential of the Town's water resources, including Lake Monomonac, Whitney Pond, and the Millers River.

Develop a linked system of open space and recreation facilities.

Improve and expand the scope of recreational facilities and programs for all Winchendon residents.

Integrate recreation and conservation activities as appropriate.

OBJECTIVES

Provide public access to major water bodies in Town.

Identify and target future land acquisitions or easements to provide public access to major water bodies in Town.

Develop and maintain recreational improvements, such as a Town beach, the North Central Pathway, and a landing at Lake Monomonac.

Target future land acquisitions that serve as linkages.

Identify and implement non-acquisition means of linkage such as conservation easements.

Establish a trail system on Town land, possibly through a youth summer work program.

Develop a park for teen skateboarding, inline skating, and non-motorized biking.

Continue to work with the Clark Memorial to improve existing recreational facilities.

Continue to develop a neighborhood playground system to improve availability and access for users, especially children.

Continue to expand the availability of athletic fields and other facilities, including a fitness course, while keeping maintenance within a limited budget.

Continue to reassess needs of residents (including elderly persons and persons with handicaps) for additional activities, and develop specific programs to meet these needs.

Identify funding sources for developing recreational facilities.

Dams

The Town owns the Lake Monomonac or Main Dam, the Red Dam, and the Whitney Pond Dam. The dams at Lake Monomonac were used in the past to impound water for use by industries downstream. The Whitney Pond Dam was constructed for power generation. Today, these dams serve as mainly recreational facilities and for flood control purposes.

Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 253, section 46, all dams are visually inspected by the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management Office of Dam Safety on a schedule established by state regulations. Dams classified as High Hazard are inspected every two years. Results of field inspections are reported to the Town in an inspection/evaluation report. These reports inform the Town of the condition of the dam and make recommendations for necessary repairs or alterations. As dam failure can result in substantial property damage and loss of life, it is vitally important that the Town pay close attention to these recommendations.

“It is important to note that the condition of a dam depends on numerous and constantly changing internal and external conditions, and is evolutionary in nature. It would be incorrect to assume that the present

condition of the dam will continue to represent the condition of the dam at some point in the future. Only through continued care and periodic inspections can there be any chance that unsafe conditions be detected."

DEM, Office of Dam Safety

Lake Monomonac Dam

The Lake Monomonac or Main Dam is an earth embankment type dam that is 333 feet long, 13 feet high and 28± feet wide at the crest. The dam was built around 1923. There is an emergency spillway located approximately 3,000 feet to the west of the dam near Route 202. The spillway was constructed simultaneously with the dam and acts as an overflow mechanism when the water level in the lake rises above elevation 1047.7 feet, mainly during spring runoff. The dam has no instrumentation. On December 2, 1975, the dam experienced a partial embankment failure. To stabilize the failing dam, a sand-gravel cofferdam was constructed on the upstream side. The outlet was closed and was replaced by a 30-inch diameter cast iron siphon pipe with a control valve. These measures were intended to be temporary so as to allow the Town time to accumulate financial resources sufficient for the permanent repair of the dam. According to Department of Environmental Management (DEM) standards, the Main Dam is classified as large size and High Hazard.

Improvements to the emergency spillway were made in the mid-80's with money received from the state. The culverts under Monomonac Road West were moved and replaced with the larger culverts that are still there today. The larger, centrally located culverts have eliminated the annual washout of the road.

Red Dam

The Red Dam or Lower Pool is located about 200 yards south of the Lake Monomonac Dam. It is believed that the Red Dam was the first dam built at Lake Monomonac, but became secondary when the Main Dam was built. The Red Dam creates Mirror Pond, a pool that has been providing back-pressure to the Lake Monomonac Dam.

When Weston & Sampson inspected the dam on March 4, 1996, they described a 310-ft. long earthfill embankment dam, 15 feet high, and 10 feet wide at the crest. They found the embankments heavily vegetated on both faces and there was substantial erosion of the dam crest. The masonry face of the training walls deteriorating and there was water seeping through the side training walls, indicative of a seepage problem.

Because no records were available describing the construction or maintenance of the dam, W & S were unable to determine the stability of the dam. They further stated that based on information derived from an earlier investigation of the dam, the dam "will not sustain the flow of the required design storm and will most probably fail due to overtopping under such a storm." (*Proposal, Red Dam Improvements, May 31, 1996*) Weston and Sampson judged the dam to be unstable in

the condition in which they observed it. According to DEM standards, the dam is intermediate in size and has a High Hazard classification.

Since the time of the Main Dam failure in December 1975, the Town has grappled with the lack of funding to make the necessary repairs. Estimates to repair the Main Dam, the Red Dam, and the emergency spillway ranged up to \$1,116,000. (*SEA Proposal, Dec. 1979*) To save the Town a substantial amount of money, the engineering firm of Weston and Sampson proposed repairing the Red Dam to where it would serve as the primary impoundment structure for Lake Monomonac. The Lake Monomonac Dam would serve as the water control structure during reconstruction of the Red Dam (water control structures typically account for a substantial portion of the construction costs), and would then be converted to a causeway after the Red Dam is completed. This plan would also eliminate the need to drawdown the water in the lake, which would be necessary during any reconstruction work on the main dam. Improvements to the Red Dam were to include construction of a new cross-section of the dam and a new spillway. Since the Red Dam and the Main Dam serve the same watershed and are only 200 yards apart, this plan was agreed to.

On September 21, 1998 Town Meeting approved borrowing \$424,000 to proceed with the proposed project as described by Weston and Sampson in 1996. As of this writing, the work on the Red Dam has been completed. The conversion of the main dam should be completed in the spring of 2001. Since the Red Dam is rated as a High Hazard Dam, Chapter 253 Rules and Regulations require an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) be prepared before the end of the construction. (*Jerzy Pietrzac, DEM Office of Dam Safety, Oct. 2000 telephone interview.*) Weston and Sampson is also including an Operation and Maintenance Program with the EAP.

Every year the Town lowers the level of the water in the Lake by two feet on or about October 15th. This allows for minor repairs of docks and retaining walls. The flashboards are replaced in the spring to bring the water level back up to 1047.26 feet, which is also the top of the spillway.

The annual drawdown is regulated by an Order of Conditions from the Winchendon Conservation Commission. The Order is renewed every three years. The current Order is valid until June 2003.

Whitney Pond Dam

The Whitney Pond Dam is located directly east of the downtown at the junction of the North Branch and the Millers River. The dam impounds water from the Millers River and creates Whitney Pond. It is an "earth embankment and gravity cut stone spillway structure". (*DEM Inspection Report, 1998*), 25 feet high and 887 feet long. There is a 92-ft. long stone masonry spillway. There is approximately 13 feet for freeboard between the top of the ungated masonry spillway and the crest of the embankment. (*1998 DEM Inspection Report*) The crest of the left embankment varies in width and serves as the roadway for two converging lines of railroad tracks.

There are two railroad bridges that span the spillway. According to DEM standards, this dam is a large size dam and is rated High Hazard. There is no Emergency Action Plan or Operation and Maintenance Program for this dam. There is no instrumentation at this dam.

The latest inspection report for this dam (August 17, 1998) states the dam is structurally stable, but has substantial potential for overtopping by over 6 feet in the ½ PMF storm event.

(PMF refers to the Probable Maximum Flood, the test flood for spillway adequacy. As this is an event of "Biblical proportions", spillways design standards are based on the ½ PMF for practical reasons.) The Report recommends the following remedial measures be "attended to at" our "earliest opportunity".

1. Remove trees and brush on the upstream and downstream slopes of the embankment. Fill any stump holes created thereby with compacted granular fill.
2. Replace missing stones and repair downstream end of right spillway masonry training wall.
3. Backfill the erosion gullies on the upstream and downstream slopes with crushed rock fill less than 6 inches in size.
4. Remove deteriorated footbridge at crest of spillway.
5. Replace missing stoplogs at spillway crest and secure the area from vandalism with fencing.

(Note: This area has been secured with fencing and a locked gate. However, vandalism continues to be evident.)

The total estimated cost of these remedial measures was \$65,000 to \$86,000 in 1998 dollars.

Dams Goals

Maintain the Town's dams in a safe condition.

OBJECTIVES

Implement the remedial measures of the state inspections within the mandated time frames.

Develop Emergency Action Plans for both dams.

Establish operations and maintenance program for both dams.

Keep better records of construction and repairs.

Establish instrumentation to keep flow records.

Circulation

(The circulation element provides an inventory of existing and proposed circulation and transportation systems.)

An adequate circulation and transportation system allows for easy and efficient movement of people and goods through the Town, to points within the Town, and connects the Town to the outside world. Winchendon is situated at the geographic center of New England. It is a gateway to northern New England via Route 12 and Route 202 and conversely a "port of entry" for those traveling south into Massachusetts. *(Economic Development Strategy, 1996)*

Access to the nearest limited access highway, Route 2, is reached in Westminster via Route 140 and through Templeton via Route 202.

The major traffic artery through Winchendon is Route 140 to Route 12 north. The second major artery is Route 202. Glenallen Street from Route 12 to Winchendon Springs also gets a lot of traffic. Another road that is important is River Street to Royalston. Of lesser importance are High Street, Old Baldwinville Road and Otter River Road as an access out of town and also as a main route for the many residents in that area.

Another road that helps bring out of town people in is Robbins Road. The last important road corridor is Central Street, Elmwood Road and Forrestall Road. This corridor pulls many people out of Winchendon for shopping in Rindge, although the Central Street/Elmwood Road portion provides the main access to two of Winchendon's schools.

Roads

Winchendon is served by two state numbered highways (Routes 12 and 202) that provide links to New Hampshire, Vermont, and other communities in the region. Route 140 is a state numbered road, but is under the Town's control. Roads are classified as local, major/minor collectors, and principal/minor arterials.

Winchendon Road Inventory

Principal arterials 9.39 miles

- Front Street (Route 202)
- Gardner Road (Route 140)
- School Street (Route 12)
- Spring Street (Route 12)

Minor arterials 1.05 miles

- Spring Street (Route 12)

Major collectors 11.21 miles

- Baldwinville State Road (Route 202)
- Central Street (Route 202)
- Glenallan Street (Route 202)
- Main Street (Route 202)
- Maple Street (Route 202)

River Street (Route 202)

Minor collectors 10.20 miles

Central Street
Elmwood Road
Front Street
Glenallan Street
Hall Road
High Street
Old Baldwinville Road
Teel Road

Local Roads 86.07 miles

Total 117.91 miles

Administrative System*

Unaccepted 4.05 miles
Massachusetts Highway
Department 12.24 miles
Town Accepted 93.04 miles
State Park 5.47 miles

Total 114.80 miles

*MassHighway Road Inventory, January 30, 1997

Road Maintenance

The Town's road reconstruction/maintenance policy, which was adopted in March of 1999, makes the Town responsible for "maintaining safe and effective public highways for use by the general public". The policy requires implementation of the "Road Surface Management System (RSMS)", a computer based tool for aiding in the development of a five-year program for the maintenance, repair and reconstruction of the Town's roads. The five-year program is to be updated annually by the Town Manager and the Superintendent of Public Works and is to be included in the annual budget. Implementation of this policy is projected to begin in January, 2001, following completion of the data input to the RSMS. DPW will thereafter strive to achieve and maintain all roads at 75% of their best condition (0% being their worst condition, 100% being best condition). At present, there are 38 streets in Town that are in poor condition (*i.e. those in need of major*

reconstruction), sixty-four streets in fair condition (*i.e. in need of extensive repair of old surfaces*), and 65 streets in good condition (*i.e. only normal maintenance is needed*). Roads in need of major reconstruction will require capital improvement funds, while those requiring only maintenance are eligible for Chapter 90 funds. Resurfacing of and related work to Glenallan Street from Maple Street to the New Hampshire State line and improvements to the bridge over the North Branch of the Millers River are proposed for Fiscal Year 2001 on the FY 2001-2006 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The related work will include drainage improvements and realignment of portions of the road to improve sight distances. There will be a 12-ft. travel lane and a 10-ft. breakdown lane. The intersections at Maple Street, Monomonac Road West, and Mill Circle will also be improved.

The Town would like to turn control of Route 140 back to the State. If acceptable to all parties, the Town will pay for the cost of engineering the reconstruction of the road (approximately \$100,000) and the State will assume all future responsibility for the road, including its reconstruction and all future maintenance and plowing.

Intersections

Intersections of concern to the Town are at Blair Square (Central/Spring and Front Streets), the square at the top of Tannery Hill (River/School and Front Streets) and the Route 12/Route 140 intersection. According to the draft TIP FY 2001 - 2006, a traffic signal is to be installed at the intersection of Routes 12 and 140 during fiscal year 2002. Blair Square and School Square are both complicated intersections that have been studied by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC, 1995). Improvements in traffic flow and safety could be improved with the following changes:

Blair Square

- Eliminate the on-street parking between 70 and 100 Front Street to create two full lanes on Front Street; one lane would be for southbound traffic going straight through, while the other lane would be dedicated for southbound traffic turning left onto Central Street.
- Remove the islands. Replace with painted directions on the road surface.
- Erect a STOP sign on Central Street at the intersection with Front Street.
- Improve visibility from Central Street across Front Street by relocating the radio station satellite dish and installing a mirror on the Spring Street side of the United Parish yard.

Top of Tannery Hill

- Create two full lanes on Front Street north; one lane to be dedicated to northbound traffic turning left onto Tannery Hill, the other for northbound traffic flowing through onto School Street.

- Make Front Street a one-way street between the intersection with School Square and the intersection with the top of Tannery Hill. Traffic would be limited to southbound only.

Since these two squares involve a state-owned highway, any plans for improvements will require state approval.

Traffic Flow

Heavy traffic flows exist on several of the Town's roadways, most notably Route 202 and Route 12. Route 202 flows from the Templeton town line through the downtown and along Maple Street to the New Hampshire border. It is the heavy flow through the downtown that has caused the greatest concern, particularly the volume of large trucks. Opinion is divided as to whether rerouting traffic away from the downtown to relieve congestion would be a detriment to the downtown businesses. It would be worthwhile for the Town to hire a traffic consultant to resolve this issue.

Traffic along the Glenallen Street corridor between Spring Street and Maple Street, across the Glenallen Street Bridge, and through the Glenallen Street/Spring Street intersection is also of concern with the coming Veterans' Cemetery and the commercial development taking place in neighboring Rindge, New Hampshire. The Veterans' Cemetery is projected to open in May of 2002. The entrance to the Cemetery is on Glenallen Street on a curve just below the crest of a hill. Sight distances are poor and traffic is known to travel above the posted speed limit. According to the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) (*ENF, 2000*) 360 vehicle trips per day could be generated by the Cemetery. Most of these trips will be funeral corteges that will arrive at the Cemetery at pre-planned times. The balance will be spontaneous visitors and employees. The Town will need to address these issues through the curb cut permit. The Town has also appealed to Mass Highway and MRPC to make this corridor an urgent priority for improvements for FY2001 and 2002.

Parking

Public parking in the downtown is available on both sides of Central Street, on Pleasant and Front Streets, and behind Town Hall. The lack of available parking has been repeatedly cited as a hindrance to business development in the downtown. Solutions to the shortage could include maximizing space on Central Street by delineating the spaces on the ground, and by purchasing land as it becomes available for creation of public parking, such as Belletetes has done with the conversion of the former Pineault warehouse to expanded parking areas. The Town may also wish to pursue cooperative agreements with landowners to provide parking.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are available throughout the downtown area and extend as far out as Winchendon Springs and Waterville. They vary in size and condition from the newly reconstructed five-foot wide sidewalk on Tannery Hill to those that are barely two feet in width, deeply cracked or collapsed, and sprouting grass. Sidewalks are an important facility to the Townspeople. (*Planning Board survey, 1999*) Those that exist need regular maintenance and repair. The number of people walking on roads where no sidewalks are available is increasing and the Town should consider extending them. At the present time the Town does not have a sidewalk repair/maintenance/reconstruction program.

Bridges

There are twelve bridges in Winchendon - the Town owns nine, three are owned by the State. (*Table 13*) The above ground portion of each bridge is inspected every two years by the State; inspection of the underwater portion is done approximately every 3-4 years. Inspection reports are forwarded to the DPW Superintendent. Each bridge has its own inspection schedule dictated by the State.

Table 13 Winchendon Bridge Inventory

| <u>Bridge #</u> | <u>Street Location</u> | <u>Water Course</u> | <u>Year Built</u> |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| W39001 | Harris Road | Tarbell brook | 1940 |
| W39004 | Glenallen Street* | Whitney pond | 1939 |
| W39005 | River Street | Millers river | 1958 |
| W39006 | Brown Street* | Millers river | 1964 |
| W39007 | River Street* (Centerville) | Millers river | 1932 |
| W39012 | Spring Street* | Hunts pond | 1930 |
| W39013 | High Street | Hunts pond | 1973 |
| W39015 | Royalston Road North | Tarbell brook | 1980 |
| W39018 | Glenallen Street | N. Branch Millers river | State |
| W39035 | Spring Street | Millers river | State (under construction) |
| W39036 | Monomonac Road West | N. Branch Millers river | 1977 |
| W39039 | Spring Street | Millers river | State |

* Denotes George M. Whitney bridge

Routine maintenance and repair work are done as needed and are funded through the Town's operating budget. The repair and maintenance of the George M. Whitney bridges are subsidized by a trust fund. Major reconstruction costs can be funded by Chapter 90 funds; however, the funding must be shared with road reconstruction costs. Therefore, a Capital Improvement Program should be established to provide matching funds for any major bridge work that might arise. Establishment of a Capital Improvement Fund in no way jeopardizes the Chapter 90 allocations to the Town's bridges is reimbursed through the Accident Recovery Program and through the Town's own insurance coverage. At the present time, none of the Town's bridges is in need of major reconstruction or rehabilitation. The Glenallen Street bridge over Whitney Pond (#W39004) will need to be widened with the expected increase in traffic from the pending Veterans' Cemetery. Removing the sidewalk rather than actually reconstructing the bridge may accomplish the necessary widening and would be much less expensive. The sidewalk could be reconstructed on the outside of the bridge as a caged catwalk. As this bridge is a Whitney Bridge, the cost of the widening would be subsidized by the trust fund.

Railroads

Railroad services move passengers, as tourists, business people, and commuters, and freight, as supplies for manufacturing and finished products. The availability of rail services can have a serious impact on the type of manufacturing that can take place within a town, the mobility of people without automobiles and the number of residents that can commute to their jobs.

Neither freight nor passenger rail services are available in Winchendon. The Providence and Worcester Railroad Company brings freight services as close as Gardner, while Amtrak provides passenger services in Worcester and Brattleboro, Vermont. The Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority commuter trains are available in Fitchburg.

Taxis

The Winchendon & Ashburnham Cab Company is the only taxi service based in and serving Winchendon. Karl's Automotive offers prearranged airport transportation services to Logan, Bradley, and T.F. Green airports. These services are vital to business and tourist traffic.

Airports

The Gardner Airport in Templeton is the nearest airport to Winchendon. It has a single north-south, 3000-ft. asphalt runway with non-precision instrument approach available. This airport offers flight instruction for general aviation and ultralight aircraft. The airport services business and private flights, but there are no businesses based at the airport. At the present time, this airport is used for

sport and recreation, and not for movement of goods or freight. This facility has recently come under new management and has immediate plans to expand their available services. This could prove to be an important transportation link for Winchendon by providing transportation to prospective business travelers.

The Fitchburg Municipal Airport is a general aviation facility. It handles approximately 85,000 flights per year on 2 asphalt runways (4,511' and 3,502' long). There are two Fixed Base Operators and one small charter service located at Fitchburg Airport. This facility provides major and minor aircraft repairs, storage, tie-downs, flight instruction, and charters. The charter service is directed toward corporate and business travel. *(MRPC 1997 Regional Transportation Plan)*

Buses

The Vermont Transit Company offers services from points in Vermont and New Hampshire along the Route 12 corridor via Winchendon to Gardner, Fitchburg, Newton, and Boston.

Weekday bus services are available in Winchendon that provide transport between Gardner and Greenfield. This LINK service is operated jointly by the Montachusett and Franklin Regional Transit Authorities and is being temporarily funded through a 3-year grant from the Federal Transit Administration that became effective in October 1999. Passengers may connect with the buses at established bus stops along the various bus routes. Residents in outlying areas or those unable to reach bus stops can be accommodated by the Dial-a-Ride transportation services provided by Community Transit Services. It is also possible to reach the commuter rail services in Fitchburg via the LINK buses. It is thus possible to commute to points in Boston from Winchendon using public transport.

After the 3-year grant runs out, each of the towns will have to agree to pay an assessment to continue the bus routes. The total assessment for each town will be based on the number of miles the bus runs in the town. Winchendon, Templeton, and Gardner will all have to agree to pay the assessment to keep the Gardner-Winchendon bus running.

At the present time, there are 300 riders per month on the Gardner-Winchendon route. Most of these riders are from Winchendon. There are 1,000 riders per month on the Gardner-Orange route.

Bicycles & Pedestrians

Bicycle and pedestrian paths offer recreational opportunities and safe places for alternative forms of transportation for both residents and visitors alike. The North Central Pathway is a 16-mile long trail currently under construction linking Winchendon and Gardner. The 8-mile portion in Winchendon is a combination of 7½ miles of Class I Bicycle Path and ½ mile of Class III Bicycle Route. The bicycle

path portion is located on former B & M Railroad beds that the Town now owns. The bicycle route follows ½ mile on the Old Gardner Road. Two miles of the Pathway have been completed in Gardner; 3 miles in Winchendon, the section paralleling Route 140, are scheduled to be constructed in the Spring of 2001. The engineering design for a 1.3 mile section of the Pathway between the Black Bridge and Glenallan Street should be underway in the Fall of 2000. The Bike Path Committee is currently searching for funding sources to complete construction of the remaining portions of the Pathway.

Winchendon has an abundance of abandoned railroad beds that could easily provide a hub of connecting bike paths to Fitzwilliam, Troy, and Keene, New Hampshire, as well as connections to Baldwinville and points south of Winchendon. Development of this resource could provide a wonderful recreational opportunity for area residents and tourists and should be pursued.

Circulation Goals

Provide a safe, reliable, efficient, and attractive roadway network within Town.

Alleviate areas of current and projected traffic congestion and conflict.

Encourage efficient management of parking within the downtown.

Create and review annually a capital improvement budget for circulation related improvements.

Seek regional coordination to mitigate traffic impacts related to traffic on the Route 12/Route 140/Route 202 corridor.

Seek to preserve the scenic quality of the Town's roadways wherever possible.

Develop standards to ensure that commercial and residential development does not adversely impact traffic flow and to maintain acceptable levels of service.

OBJECTIVES

Widen the bridge over Whitney Pond on Glenallan Street.

Finish the Winchendon portion of the North Central Pathway.

Integrate local transportation planning with land use policies.

Adopt a scenic roadway bylaw.

Establish curb cut policies that incorporate sight distance, scenic character, and slope of the driveway.

Enforce the speed limits on all of the Town's roadways.

Maintain an inventory of public parking spaces.

Require traffic and parking impact studies of all major commercial, industrial, and residential projects.

Investigate the possible advantages of membership in the Montachusett Regional Transportation Authority.

Establish roadway "greenbelts" to preserve the scenic and rural character of the Town's roadways and to reduce distractions and exhaust buildup at the roadside. Roadway greenbelts would set development back away from the roadside behind a dense barrier of vegetation.

Limit the number of curb cuts to a specified number per 1,000 feet of frontage where rural character, scenic quality, or poor visibility is established.

Hire a traffic engineer to design improvements for Blair Square, School Square, and downtown public parking.

Implementation

"... to be successful, planning has to be made a meaningful part of our political process. Electing anyone who has not made it clear that he or she stands foursquare for effective community planning is like inviting the fox into the chicken coop. If our communities are not to be bankrupted by wasteful and uncoordinated development, we must have workable, practical plans for the future. If we are not to be overwhelmed by man-made ugliness, inefficient and uneconomical community structures, we must see to it that our plans are implemented and that they work." Herbert Smith, *"The Citizen's Guide to Planning"*, 1993

This element defines and schedules the specific municipal actions necessary to achieve the objectives of each element of the master plan. Scheduled expansion or replacement of public facilities or circulation system components and the anticipated costs and revenues associated with accomplishment of such activities shall be detailed in this element. This element shall specify the process by which the municipality's regulatory structures shall be amended so as to be consistent with the master plan.

Implementation strategies for each objective are written with the following format:

(a) *the year in which implementation of the objective will begin; in some cases, the completion date has been given*

(b) *the agency responsible for implementation of the objective*

(c) *financial strategy that will be required to implement the objective, if necessary.*

Land Use Goals

- Promote good stewardship in the development of the Town's lands.
- Strive to maintain the character of a rural New England town.

OBJECTIVES

1. Current subdivision regulations should be amended to require conservation subdivision design. Clustering of new residential units should be required with residual land

set aside as permanent open space.

2001; (Complete) Fall Town Meeting 2001; Planning Board; funding should come from regular Planning Board budget; may wish to add a small amount of money for training materials from the APA book store and for the Board to travel to existing conservation subdivisions

2. Minimum lot size requirements in the zoning bylaws should be amended to conform to the existing landscape.

2001; Planning Board; (Complete) Fall Town Meeting 2001; funding should come from the regular Planning Board budget

3. Every effort should be made to be creative with the zoning bylaws. Numerous techniques

exist that will allow retention of rural character and open space while also accommodating

projected growth needs and the Town should remain open-minded when considering their

respective uses.

2001; Planning Board, Zoning Board; (Complete) 2002; funding should come from regular Planning Board budget; some printed training materials may be needed

4. Research the Town for suitable sites for growth centers.

2002; Planning Board; funding should come from the regular Planning Board budget; some printed training materials may be needed

5. Balance the amount of residential land use with open space, agriculture, industry, and commercial land uses.

2002; Planning Board; funding should come from regular Planning Board budget

Housing Goal

- Provide a variety of housing options to meet the needs of a population with a wide range of financial means and lifestyle choices.

- Promote high quality new housing construction to ensure durability and lasting value of the town's housing stock.
- Direct the location of new housing construction so as to maintain existing open space & rural character and promote efficient distribution of town services, such as road maintenance, fire protection and school bus routing.
- Promote compact growth centers.

OBJECTIVES

6. Maintain 10% affordable housing inventory. Affordable housing should be available in all forms - detached single family houses, townhouses, condominiums, mobile

homes, and multifamily structures.

The Planning Board will maintain an inventory of the affordable housing stock in Town along with the Winchendon Housing Authority and the assessor's office.

7. Promote mixed use of older, larger houses and commercial structures in the downtown. Mixed use means residential use on the upper floors of the structure and

institutional, government/public service, or commercial uses on the ground floor.

2001; Planning Board; no additional funding should be necessary beyond the Planning Board's regular budget

8. Promote mixed use of existing, unoccupied industrial structures.

2001; Community Development, Planning Board; (Complete) 2003 Spring Town Meeting; Look for State money, grants, and tax incentives

9. Promote upgrading of existing, older apartment buildings to provide for upper end rentals.

2002; Community Development, Planning Board, Building Inspector; (Complete) 2003 Fall Town Meeting; seek State money, grants, and local tax incentives

10. Require strict enforcement of the Massachusetts Building Code. Provide sufficient staff to ensure ample, timely inspections of new construction.

2001; Board of Selectmen; sufficient funding should be made available in the annual Town budget to ensure implementation of this objective.

Economic Development Goal

- Develop an environmentally sound economy that will provide a wide range of economic opportunities and employment for the Town and area residents.

OBJECTIVES

11. Support community development and revitalization efforts of the Community Development office, the Toy Town Partnership, and the Winchendon Enrichment Foundation.
2001; Board of Selectmen; funding should come from the Town's annual operating budget
12. Increase the value potential of the available labor force by providing additional educational and/or vocational opportunities within the Winchendon area.
*2001; School Committee, Board of Selectmen;
(Complete) 2003 Spring Town Meeting; school budget funding*
13. Continue to encourage and support public transportation links to educational, training, and job opportunities.
*2001; Board of Selectmen, School Committee;
(Complete) 2003; before October 2002, the Town will have to decide whether or not they will continue the Winchendon-Gardner bus line. If so, they will need to appropriate funds to pay the assessment.*
14. Develop low impact, environmentally sensitive recreational facilities on Town owned parcels at Whites Mill Pond.
2001; Board of Selectmen; Approximately \$3,000 should be appropriated from free cash at Town Meeting to develop plans for the site; site work should be accomplished by the DPW
15. Clean up Whitney Pond and pursue efforts to develop recreational opportunities at the Pond.
2004; Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Community Development; Private funding should be pursued for the purchase of appropriate parcels of land; septic system discharges should be addressed through the Title V program where feasible; lands appropriate for taking by eminent domain will require appropriation at Town Meeting
16. Improve appearance of the Town's gateways.
2004; Building Inspector, Police Department, Community Development, Planning Board; funding should come from the annual operating budgets of each of these agencies; improvement should come from enforcing zoning laws, appropriate conditions on site plans and licenses, etc.
17. Improve parking availability in the downtown business district through land acquisition, cooperative agreements, etc.
2003; DPW, Planning Board, Community Development, Police Department; town meeting appropriation or grant funds for acquisition of land
18. Restore, protect and provide better access to the Millers and Otter Rivers.

2004; Community Development, Conservation Commission; this objective should be tied to # 15

19. Scrutinize existing industrial lands. Evaluate needs and potential.
2001; Planning Coordinator, Community Development, Board of Selectmen; annual operating budgets for each agency should be sufficient

20. Create an Industrial Park Commission.
2001; Board of Selectmen; no additional funding needed.

21. Improve the Town's bond rating.
2001; Treasurer, Town Manager; no additional funding needed.

21a. Create a web site for Winchendon.
2001; Town Manager, Community Development; funding for the monthly expense of maintaining a web site will come from the existing line item in the Town Manager's budget; several web sites have been created by private individuals and should be linked or merged to provide a central site for the municipality and a single individual or agency made responsible for its maintenance.

Natural Resources Goal

- Preserve and protect Winchendon's natural resources, to ensure their sustainability and continuation of their environmental, aesthetic, and economic values.

OBJECTIVES

22. Utilize all available funding sources, (e.g. EOEAs Self- Help and Urban Self-Help Programs, and the Land and Water Conservation Funds) to preserve, protect, enhance.

2003; Fall Town Meeting; the Town should adopt the Community Preservation Act to enable raising of funds for purchase of Open Space lands.

23. Work to preserve, protect, enhance, or rehabilitate the biodiversity of our local ecosystems.

2001; Conservation Commission, Community Development; (Complete) 2003 Fall Town Meeting; no additional funding needed

24. Work with the Council on Invasive Species to establish a program to control invasive species on municipal lands and throughout the Town.

2001; Conservation Commission, Community Development; (Complete) 2003 Fall Town Meeting; no additional funding to do initial research; establishment of the program may require funding from the Town's operating budget

25. Evaluate the Town's use and storage of salt as a road deicer. Ensure maximum efficiency in its application, minimizing adverse environmental impacts to roadside

vegetation and adjacent wetlands.

2001; Conservation Commission, Community Development;

(Complete) 2003 Fall Town Meeting; no additional funding needed

26. Prohibit deposit of used street sand into the Town's surface waters.

2001; Conservation Commission, Community Development;

(Complete) 2003 Fall Town Meeting; no additional funding needed

Forest Resources Goal

- Preserve and protect Winchendon's forest resources to ensure continuation of their environmental, aesthetic and economic value.

OBJECTIVES

27. Promote measures that encourage owners of large forested tracts to avoid fragmentation or subdivision of forested areas.

2002; Conservation Commission, Planning Board; (Complete) 2003; no additional funding needed

28. Support local, State and Federal programs and funding which will encourage landowners to retain managed forest lands.

2002; Conservation Commission, Planning Board; (Complete) 2003; no additional funding needed

29. Encourage awareness of the Town's urban trees through an "adopt-a-tree" program with the Town's elementary schools.

2001; Conservation Commission, School Committee; no additional funding needed

30. Continue and expand the tree-planting program funded by the Conservation Commission.

2001; Conservation Commission, School Committee; funding through annual operating budgets of both the Conservation Commission and the School Committee

31. Implement forest ecology education in our school system.

2001; Conservation Commission, School Committee; school department budget

32. Ensure sustainable management through replanting whenever cutting occurs for development. Require "Best Management Practices" in all development requiring tree

cutting.

2002; Planning Board; no additional funding needed

33. Encourage compatible uses of forest lands for recreation, tourism and economic benefit where such uses will not impair forest quality or wildlife and/or forest habitat.

2002; Zoning Board, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Health; some printed training materials may be required, which can be purchased through regular operating budgets

34. Avoid the use of single species or nonnative species in development site plans and Town landscaping projects - promote diversity and the use of native, drought resistant species.

2002; Planning Board, Conservation Commission, DPW; no additional funding needed

Agricultural Resources Goal

- Conserve viable agricultural lands for current and potential value as a resource for the production of food, and for their aesthetic and other contributions to economic markets in tourism and recreation.

OBJECTIVES

35. Support efforts to create and promote "agri-tourism".

2002; Toy Town Partnership, Winchendon Enrichment Foundation, Community Development; grant moneys may be available for these efforts

36. Support local agricultural operations through a "buy local" campaign.

2002; Toy Town Partnership, Winchendon Enrichment Foundation, Community Development; see #35

37. Inventory prime agricultural soils and preserve them for future needs.

2003; Planning Coordinator, Conservation Commission; no additional funding needed if existing soil maps and surveys are utilized

38. Form a local land trust to preserve farmlands.

2002; Planning Coordinator; no additional funding needed

39. Promote agricultural education in the school system, raising the level of awareness of food sources and production techniques.

2001; Conservation Commission, School Committee; no additional funding should be needed.

40. Encourage environmentally responsible, sustainable agricultural operations in Town.

2002; Planning Coordinator; no additional funding needed

Earth Mineral Resources Goal

- Ensure that land areas disturbed by earth mineral extraction are restored and that future extraction methods will not result in significant degradation to
- the environmental, aesthetic, or economic value of surrounding areas.

OBJECTIVES

41. Inventory viable gravel and other earth mineral resources in Town.

2002; Planning Coordinator; no additional funding needed

42. Ensure that extraction occurs only in areas where there will be the least conflict with surrounding land uses.

2002; Zoning Board, Building Inspector; no additional funding needed

43. Ensure timely reclamation of extraction sites, for uses which are in harmony with the surrounding land uses.

2002; Zoning Board, Building Inspector; no additional funding needed

44. Restore existing unreclaimed sites to safe, environmentally sound and aesthetically pleasing uses.

2002; Zoning Board, Building Inspector; this objective will require development of an inventory of unreclaimed sites, identification

of current ownership; and legal responsibilities of owners under the law. An estimated \$3,000 for legal opinion of responsibilities

should be appropriated through the Town Manager's budget.

Water Resources Goal:

- Preserve and protect the quality and quantity of Winchendon's present and future water resources.

OBJECTIVES

45. Develop a comprehensive water resources plan which will maintain a balanced "water budget".

2001; Board of Selectmen; ongoing, no additional funding needed

46. Reduce non-point source pollution by reducing the amount of impermeable surfaces in Town and limiting the use of fertilizers on the Town's green areas.

2002; Planning Board, Zoning Board, DPW; no additional funding needed

47. Ensure separation of stormwater and wastewater collection systems to prevent discharges into the Millers River.

2001; Board of Selectmen; (Complete) 2003; State Revolving Fund

48. Reduce road salt usage and provide secure storage of stockpiles to prevent leaching.
2001; DPW, Conservation Commission; annual operating funds if needed
49. Upgrade the wastewater treatment facility to meet current and projected needs.
2001; Board of Selectmen; (Complete) 2003; State Revolving Loan Fund
- 49a. Develop a Capital Improvements Program, ensuring timely repairs and upgrades to the wastewater treatment system.
2001; Planning Board, Town Manager, DPW; funding should come from the users; 3% of current replacement costs should be assessed to the users annually
50. Protect areas which serve as water supplies in the future - particularly land overlying potentially productive aquifers - through acquisition or zoning, and other regulations which restrict incompatible uses.
2003; Planning Board, Board of Health; zoning and regulatory changes can be funded through the Planning Board's annual budget; acquisition costs would have to come from Town Meeting allocation
51. Ensure proper disposal of waste oils at the Town garage.
2001; Board of Health, DPW; no additional funding needed
52. Continue Hazardous Household Waste collection efforts.
2001; Board of Health; no additional funding needed
53. Promote use of native drought resistant plant species in site plans and Town landscaping projects.
2002; Planning Board, DPW; no additional funding needed
54. Finish groundwater mapping, providing a complete picture of the Town's aquifers.
2002; Planning Coordinator; Engineering costs will require a Town Meeting appropriation
55. Ensure that lot sizes reflect the type of soil present and its ability to absorb wastes without polluting water supplies or adjoining waters.
(Complete) 2004; Planning Board, Board of Health; no additional funding needed
56. Conduct an inventory of hazardous waste generators in Town. Ensure the proper disposal of wastes being generated.
2001; Board of Health, Fire Department (ongoing)

57. Ensure that commercial development is properly sited and that hazardous materials and wastes are properly handled

2001; Planning Board, Zoning Board, Building Inspector; no additional funding needed

Wildlife Resources Goal

- Preserve and protect the wildlife resources of our Town.
- Strive to maintain or increase levels of biodiversity in the Towns various ecosystems.

OBJECTIVES

58. Establish a Local Species and Habitat Registry, maintained by the Conservation Commission for use in local land use permitting and open space planning.

2001; Conservation Commission; purchase of materials may be necessary

59. Promote subdivision designs, which reduce habitat fragmentation.

2001; Planning Board; no additional funding needed

60. Promote healthy habitats through appropriate land uses, sound waste management practices, and environmental awareness.

2003; Planning Board, Zoning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Health; (Complete) 2005; no additional funding needed

Wetlands Goals

- Preserve and protect the Town's wetland resources.

OBJECTIVES

61. Promote public awareness of wetlands values. Encourage school students to assist in the certification of vernal pools.

2002; School Committee, Conservation Commission; no additional funding should be needed

62. *Ensure development regulations promote wetland preservation and integrity.*

2001; Conservation Commission, Planning Board; no additional funding should be needed

Soils Goals

- Land uses shall reflect the capability of the underlying soils to sustain them.
- Good stewardship shall be employed in the care and improvement of the Town's soils.
- Prime farmland will be preserved for future agricultural uses.

OBJECTIVES

63. Develop and enforce an erosion control bylaw to prevent unnecessary loss and improper movement of soil.

2001; Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Building Inspector; no additional funding should be needed

64. Soil types shall be identified on any parcel to be developed using the most current soils map overlays that the Town owns.

2002; Planning Board, Building Inspector, Zoning Board; no additional funding should be needed

Open Space Goals (Summarized from OS&RP, 1999)

- Conserve open space resources, including agricultural land, forested land, wildlife habitat, and recreational land.
- Protect the rural character and scenic quality of the Town through the preservation of open spaces.
- Link Open Space goals with Natural Resources goals.
- Preserve wildlife habitats and rare plant habitats.
- Support the Recreation Commission.
- Integrate, where possible and/or appropriate, open spaces with recreational activities and facilities.
- Resolve the problem of substandard or nonexistent onsite septic disposal systems, with first priority going to areas in close proximity to the Millers River, Lake Monomonac, and Whitney Pond. Go on to other failing systems that may be near other major bodies of water.
- Finish the North Central Pathway.
- Support the Community Development Office's Title V program.
- Create an active recreation area for such endeavors as skateboarding, roller-blading and biking.
- Implement goals and objectives of the 1999 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

OBJECTIVES

65. Regulate inappropriate land uses to avoid or mitigate loss of water quality or wildlife habitats.

(Complete) 2003; Planning Board; no additional funding should be needed

66. Prioritize open spaces considered for preservation. Criteria should be based on level of contribution to biological and ecological diversity; water supply and water

quality; aesthetics and recreation; community character; and agricultural lands.

2002; Planning Coordinator; no additional funding should be needed

67. Identify scenic roadways and corridors that will aid in the protection of open spaces. Then adopt a local corridor district in the general bylaws and a scenic roadway

bylaw in the zoning bylaws to regulate development along these declared scenic roadways and corridors.

2002; Planning Coordinator; no additional funding should be needed

68. Protect the Town's working farms from development.

2002; Planning Coordinator; no additional funding should be needed

69. Develop a linked system of open spaces and recreation, integrating activities where appropriate.

2003; Recreation Commission, Planning Coordinator; no additional funding should be needed to identify appropriate parcels and activities

70. Seek funding sources and alternative, low-cost means for protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

2003; Planning Coordinator, Community Development; no additional funding should be needed

71. Establish a fund for purchase of (a) tax title lands and (b) development rights on parcels that meet the criteria for open space preservation.

2003; Board of Selectmen, Planning Coordinator; Appropriate \$25,000 at Town Meeting to establish the fund; adopt Community Preservation Act to add to it

72. Modify zoning bylaws to encourage styles of development that will preserve open space.

2001; Planning Board; no additional funding should be needed

73. Modify zoning bylaws to regulate inappropriate uses on lands that are adjacent to surface waters, are located in watersheds to important surface waters, and those that

overlie known aquifers and their recharge zones. The industrial zoning district in the southeast part of the Town is known to overlie the protective district for the city of

Gardner's Crystal Lake water source. This may need to be modified to prevent degradation of this resource. Similarly, the Zone II for some of Templeton's public wells extends into Winchendon. The effects of the overlying zoning should be examined and modified if necessary.

2003; Planning Board; (Complete) 2005; no additional funding should be needed

74. Transfer ownership of the Town forest land on Town Farm Road to the Winchendon Conservation Commission for the purpose of conservation and preservation.

(Complete) 2001 Fall Town Meeting; Conservation Commission; legal expenses should come from Town Manager's legal budget

75. Any new lands that the Town acquires for protected open space or recreation should be transferred to the Conservation Commission.

(Complete) 2001 Fall Town Meeting; Conservation Commission; legal expenses should come from the Town Manager's legal budget

76. Establish a local land bank or community land trust as authorized under the Community Preservation Act.

2002; Planning Coordinator (see #38 and #71)

77. Encourage the Winchendon School system to become involved with the Outdoor Classroom Program offered by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

2001; School Committee; no additional funding should be needed

Police Goal

- Provide reliable, efficient police protection.

OBJECTIVES

78. Develop a capital improvement program to address expansion needs on a regular time schedule.

2001; Planning Board, Town Manager, Police Department; Town Meeting should allocate minimum funds necessary to establish the program

79. Achieve accreditation.

Ongoing (Complete) 2004; Police Department

80. Strive to reduce the amount of time that crimes remain unsolved.

2001; Police Department

Fire Protection Goals

Provide adequate fire protection at acceptable cost.

Reduce fire risks.

Control fire losses.

OBJECTIVES

81. Promote fire safety awareness at all levels of the community.

Ongoing; Fire Department

82. Provide emergency medical life support services.

Ongoing; Fire Department

83. Provide hazardous materials control services.

Ongoing; Fire Department

84. Reduce fire insurance rating.

(Complete) 2004; Fire Department

85. Develop a Master Plan and Capital Improvement Plan to address future needs and

plans of the Fire Department.

2001; Planning Board, Town Manager, Fire Chief; Town Meeting should allocate the minimum funds necessary to establish the plan.

Emergency Dispatch Goal

- Provide the best quality emergency services possible.

OBJECTIVES

86. Stay abreast of technology advances.

Ongoing; no additional funding should be needed

87. Continue public outreach programs to keep Townspeople informed about emergency

services that are available to them.

Ongoing; no additional funding should be needed

Education Goals

- Provide the highest quality education possible to every student.
- Provide safe, appropriate space in which to educate every student.
- Promote financial responsibility.

OBJECTIVES

88. Raise Winchendon public school test scores, i.e. MCAS, SAT, etc., into the top 25% of the Commonwealth in the next seven years.

2001; School Committee; school budget funding as needed

89. Establish a late bus route to allow students greater access to after school activities.

2002; School Committee, Town Manager; annual operating budget for the Town as needed

90. Maintain effective disciplinary policies.

Ongoing; school budget

91. Maintain the structural integrity and value of the school's properties.

Ongoing through the School Department's maintenance program.

91a. Develop, implement, and maintain an exemplary curriculum that prepares our students for the future.

2001; School Committee, Superintendent of Schools; school budget funding

92. Develop, implement, and maintain a program for gifted and talented children.

2001; School Committee, Superintendent of Schools; school budget funding

Library Goal

- Provide up-to-date library services to the Town.

OBJECTIVES

93. Make the library handicapped accessible.

2001; Community Development, Building Inspector (submit report to Planning Board); Private funding and Town Meeting appropriation for necessary costs

94. Address building code violations.

2001; (Complete in 2002) Community Development, Building Inspector (submit report to Planning Board); Private funding and Town Meeting appropriation for necessary costs

95. Automate library systems as needed.

(Complete) 2002; Library Director; funding has already been obtained from the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation for completion of this project

96. Provide access to the Town's GIS.

2002; Planning Coordinator; once the GIS network is established at Town Hall, the Library will provide public access to it

97. Conduct a user survey and improve library collections in the Popular Materials category.

2001; Library Director; Complete in 2001; no additional funding needed

98. Upgrade and expand the software offered on the public access computers for both children and adults.

2001; Library Director; ongoing, no additional funding needed

99. Develop a plan with which to address anticipated increases in minimum requirements, which will become applicable to the library when Winchendon's population

reaches 10,000.

2001; Library Director, Library Board of Trustees; complete plan by 2003; no additional funding needed to develop plan

Health Care Facilities Goal

Ensure sufficient medical care is available in town to meet the health care needs of the residents.

OBJECTIVES

100. Maintain communication with the Winchendon Health Center to maintain awareness of their future expansion needs and emerging needs for specific types of practices.

2001; Planning Coordinator

101. Create an inventory of available medical facilities ready for use by doctors or dentists.

2001; Planning Coordinator; Community Development

102. Determine approximate number of townspeople who are trained medical technicians, nurses, and nurse practitioners. Make this information part of the medical facility

inventory.

2001; Planning Coordinator; Community Development

Solid Waste Disposal Goal

Provide sanitary, environmentally responsible disposal of solid waste.

OBJECTIVES

103. Continue to expand recycling and composting efforts.

2001; Board of Health (ongoing)

104. Increase revenues from recycled materials.

2001; Board of Health, Town Manager, DPW, Landfill Manager

105. Develop a capital improvement program to continue upgrading and improving the solid waste disposal facilities.

2002; Planning Board, Board of Health, DPW, Landfill Manager; Town Meeting should appropriate minimum funds necessary to establish the program.

106. Construct a permanent hazardous household waste collection facility at the transfer station.

2002; Board of Health, Landfill Manager, Town Manager; funding should come from the capital improvements program

Municipal Water Supplies Goal

Provide clean drinking water to town users.

OBJECTIVES

107. Develop a capital improvement plan for the timely improvement of the distribution system.

2003; DPW, Planning Board; funded by users; 3% of current replacement costs assessed to users annually

108. Continue to pursue development of viable alternative sources of drinking water that will serve the needs of projected population increases and to serve as insurance

against possible loss of our existing water supplies.

2002; DPW, Board of Health, Planning Board; see #54

109. Identify and protect our aquifers from contamination.

2001; Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission

110. Maintain a balanced water budget, so that water is withdrawn from and returned to the same watershed.

2001; Board of Selectmen (see #45)

Municipal Wastewater Treatment Goal

Provide wastewater treatment efficiently within existing service areas.

OBJECTIVES

111. Evaluate the available alternatives for providing municipal wastewater treatment. Choose the most cost-effective alternative that will comply with EPA's regulations.

Secure the necessary funding. Obtain the NPDES permit. Proceed to completion.

2001; Board of Selectmen, Town Manager; Complete 2003; A debt exclusion for the cost of the plant will be required

112. Develop a capital improvement program to provide regular upgrades and maintenance of the municipal wastewater treatment and collection systems.

2003; Planning Board, Town Manager; improvements shall be funded by an annual assessment to the users in the amount of 3% of current replacement costs

113. Eliminate sewage discharges to the Millers River from private residences.

2004; Board of Selectmen, Town Manager; (Complete) 2005; refer to #18

114. Enforce the Sewer Regulations.

Ongoing through DPW and the Health Inspector.

Parks and Recreation Goals

(Note: These Goals and Objectives are taken directly from the Town of Winchendon Open Space & Recreation Plan, updated 1998.)

Enhance the recreational potential of the Town's water resources, including Lake Monomonac, Whitney Pond, and the Millers River.

Develop a linked system of open space and recreation facilities.

Improve and expand the scope of recreational facilities and programs for all Winchendon residents.

Integrate recreation and conservation activities as appropriate.

OBJECTIVES

115. Provide public access to major water bodies in Town.

2002; Recreation Commission; funds should come from Community Preservation Act, private funding, and appropriation from Town Meeting

116. Identify and target future land acquisitions or easements to provide public access to major water bodies in Town.

2002; Recreation Commission; same as #115

117. Develop and maintain recreational improvements, such as a Town beach, the North Central Pathway, and a landing at Lake Monomonac.

2002; Recreation Commission; same as #115

118. Target future land acquisitions that serve as linkages.

2002; Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission; same as #115

119. Identify and implement non-acquisition means of linkage such as conservation easements.

2002; Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission

120. Establish a trail system on Town land, possibly through a youth summer work program.

2003; Recreation Commission, Community Development

121. Develop a park for teen skateboarding, inline skating, and non-motorized biking.

2001; Recreation Commission; private funds; town-donated lands; site work by DPW

122. Continue to work with the Clark Memorial to improve existing recreational facilities.

2001; Recreation Commission

123. Continue to develop a neighborhood playground system to improve availability and access for users, especially children.

2001; Recreation Commission, Community Development; funding will pursued through grant money

124. Continue to expand the availability of athletic fields and other facilities, including a fitness course, while keeping maintenance within a limited budget.

2001; Recreation Commission, Community Development; Town Meeting appropriation as needed and funds from regular operating budgets

125. Continue to reassess needs of residents (including elderly persons and persons with handicaps) for additional activities, and develop specific programs to meet these needs.

2001; Recreation Commission, Community Development; no additional funding should be needed

126. Identify funding sources for developing recreational facilities.

2001; Recreation Commission, Community Development; no additional funding should be needed

Dams Goals

Maintain the Town's dams in a safe condition.

OBJECTIVES

127. Implement the remedial measures of the state inspections within the mandated time frames.

2002; DPW, Town Manager; annual operating funds should be sufficient

128. Develop Emergency Action Plans for both dams.

2002; DPW, Town Manager; EAP for the Red Dam is being developed as part of the new construction project; An EAP for the Whitney Pond Dam will require an appropriation by Town Meeting to cover the engineering expenses

129. Establish operations and maintenance program for both dams.

2002; DPW, Town Manager; the engineering expenses in #128 should include the operations and maintenance program for the Whitney Pond Dam; the o & m program for the Red Dam is included in the new construction project

130. Keep better records of construction and repairs.

2002; DPW, Town Manager; this should be covered in the DPW operating budget

131. Establish instrumentation to keep flow records.

2002; DPW, Town Manager; purchase, installation and training expenses should be included in the appropriation in #128; record-keeping should be included in the DPW operating expenses

Circulation Goals

Provide a safe, reliable, efficient, and attractive roadway network within Town.

Alleviate areas of current and projected traffic congestion and conflict.

Encourage efficient management of parking within the downtown.

Create and review annually a capital improvement budget for circulation related improvements.

Seek regional coordination to mitigate traffic impacts related to traffic on the Route 12/Route 140/Route 202 corridor.

Seek to preserve the scenic quality of the Town's roadways wherever possible.

Develop standards to ensure that commercial and residential development does not adversely impact traffic flow and to maintain acceptable levels of service.

OBJECTIVES

132. Widen the bridge over Whitney Pond on Glenallan Street.

2002; DPW; The Town should call on Montachusett Regional Planning Commission to study the available options; funding for the study and implementation should come from Town Meeting appropriation and State assistance if available upon completion of the study

133. Finish the Winchendon portion of the North Central Pathway.

(Complete) 2005; Toy Town Partnership, Community Development; procurement of State and Federal funds will be required

134. Integrate local transportation planning with land use policies.
Ongoing through Planning Board; no additional funding should be required
135. Adopt a scenic roadway bylaw.
2001; Planning Board, DPW; no additional funding should be required
136. Establish curb cut policies that incorporate sight distance, scenic character, and slope of the driveway.
2001; Planning Board, DPW; no additional funding should be required
137. Enforce the speed limits on all of the Town's roadways.
2001; Police Department; no additional funding should be required
138. Maintain an inventory of public parking spaces.
2002; Planning Coordinator, Community Development; no additional funding should be required
139. Require traffic and parking impact studies of all major commercial, industrial, and residential projects.
Ongoing through Planning Board; funding comes from the applicants for each project
140. Investigate the possible advantages of membership in the Montachusett Regional Transportation Authority.
*2002; Board of Selectmen; no additional funding should be required unless/until the Town decides to become a member of the MART.
Annual membership costs will come out of the Town's annual operating expenses*
141. Establish roadway "greenbelts" to preserve the scenic and rural character of the Town's roadways and to reduce distractions and exhaust buildup at the roadside.
Roadway greenbelts would set development back away from the roadside behind a dense barrier of vegetation.
2002; Planning Board; no additional funding should be needed
142. Limit the number of curb cuts to a specified number per 1,000 feet of frontage where rural character, scenic quality, or poor visibility is established.
2002; Planning Board, DPW (see #136); no additional funding should be needed
143. Hire a traffic engineer to design improvements for Blair Square, School Square, and downtown public parking.

2004; DPW, Board of Selectmen; appropriation by Town Meeting

Amendments

This plan may be added to or changed from time to time by a majority vote of the Planning Board and shall be public record. The Planning Board shall, upon completion of this plan, or any change or amendment to this plan as produced under M.G.L. Chapter 41 section 81-D, furnish a copy of this plan or amendment thereto, to the division of municipal development, office of local and regional planning of the executive office of communities and development.

Master Plan 2001

Acknowledgments

Written by:

deForest Bearse

Planning Coordinator

Town of Winchendon

Photographs:

Not shown here to allow for quick download
Shown in actual Master Plan

Maps were reproduced with the Town's GIS

A very special thanks to all the others who helped make this project a reality for the Town of Winchendon.

TOWN OF WINCHENDON



Planning Board

Telephone (978) 297-0085
Facsimile (978) 297-1616

109 Front Street
Winchendon, Massachusetts 01475-1758

To the Citizens of Winchendon,

It is our pleasure to submit to you this first Master Plan in 25 years. This Plan represents the values and goals of you, the citizens, as expressed to us in our charette, survey, and workshops. It is our hope that we have captured your vision accurately.

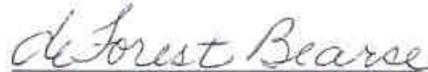
Master Plan 2001 is a short-range (5 years) living, working plan. Its brevity and simplicity is intended to enhance its utilization and implementation by the Town's land use boards, governing bodies, volunteers, and citizens. The Planning Board will annually review it to keep it current.

The primary message of this Plan is **responsibility** – with our land, our resources, our finances, and our wastes. It is our greatest hope that this Plan will become the "most dog-eared document at Town Hall"; that it will be present at all meetings of all Boards and that consulting this Plan will become completely second nature. Working together in an orderly and responsible, i.e. a planned, way, we will assure ourselves and our future generations of a community that is sustainable and of the highest quality.

We congratulate you for supporting this vital work. We look forward to watching the future unfold through implementation of this Plan.

Sincerely,


Michael J. McRae, Chairman


deForest Bearse, Vice Chair


Ronald Chaulk


Mary Martorella


Gretchen Renaud

TOWN OF WINCHENDON

Office of
Board of Selectmen



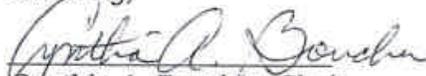
109 Front Street
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Friday - 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon
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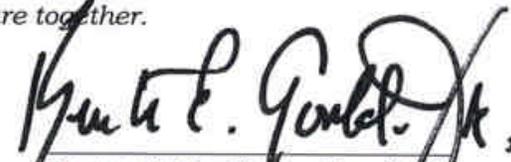
To the Citizens of Winchendon,

The Board of Selectmen hereby formally adopt and endorse the Master Plan 2001 as presented at their regular meeting on February 26, 2001. We hereby commit to its implementation through the actions of our land use boards, volunteers, citizens, and our own actions. We look forward to a bright and sustainable future together.

Sincerely,


Cynthia A. Boucher, Chair


Lorenzo J. Sordani


Burton E. Gould, Jr., Vice Chair


Keith R. Barrows


John H. White