

SUSTAINING HARVARD

Visions from the Past

Planning for Harvard: Comprehensive Plan (1969)

Had Charles W. Eliot II composed a millennium vision statement when he wrote the town's first master plan in 1969, he would have imagined a place similar to today's Harvard. "Visioning" was not in vogue in the 1960s, but there is no doubt that Eliot had a vision for Harvard. During his 20-month engagement with the Harvard Planning Board, he saw many possibilities for what planners now call sustainable development: clean water, single-family homes mixed with smaller housing units, compact villages surrounded by large, connected tracts of open space, and a planned business district that required no new roads. Eliot's vision did not include losing 1,400 acres of forest to new development, yet he predicted that Harvard would absorb more homes than were actually built after 1970. When his firm conducted an inventory of Harvard neighborhoods in 1968, there were only 14 houses scattered across a 356-acre area west of Upper Bowers Brook. If he were alive now, Eliot would not be surprised to learn that the same area has 68 more homes. However, he might see the conversion of 190 acres of land to 68 house lots as evidence of flawed zoning. In Eliot's vision of Harvard, the 68 single-family homes (or more) were probably inevitable, but not at the expense of open space.

The renowned landscape architect was not opposed to development. In fact, Eliot cared deeply about historic preservation, housing quality and neighborhood design, and while he advocated for publicly controlled conservation areas, he also saw development as a possible opportunity to save land. Accordingly, Eliot recommended Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning so that some of Harvard's new neighborhoods could replicate the form and atmosphere of its historic villages: dignified homes nestled together, unified by a common area and surrounded by open space. He believed in such techniques as PUD because in Eliot's mind, buildings, land and natural features ought to work harmoniously toward the goal of a balanced community. Eliot recognized that Harvard's poorly drained soils would make village development a difficult pursuit, but he saw potential in several places. He respected Harvard's preference for large-lot zoning and supported it – to a point. Eliot thought Harvard should consider more varied, land-based regulations, "down-zoning" (smaller lots) in some areas and "up-zoning" (larger lots) in others. If his ideas had taken hold in Harvard, a number of subdivision plans filed in the last 30 years would have been designed differently, and half of the 190 acres that became large house lots might be contiguous, protected open space today.

The problems to be faced are [not] all related to "growth," but reflect the original or basic, physical characteristics of the area, the history of the community, and the investments and commitments already made for its development. We build on foundations already established -- but sometimes have to rebuild or reinforce the foundations, and change the superstructure for new or changed uses. Planning must therefore be directed toward the correction of past mistakes or present trends, and toward the prevention of future errors and seizure of opportunities for desirable change.

Charles Eliot, *Planning for Harvard* (1969)

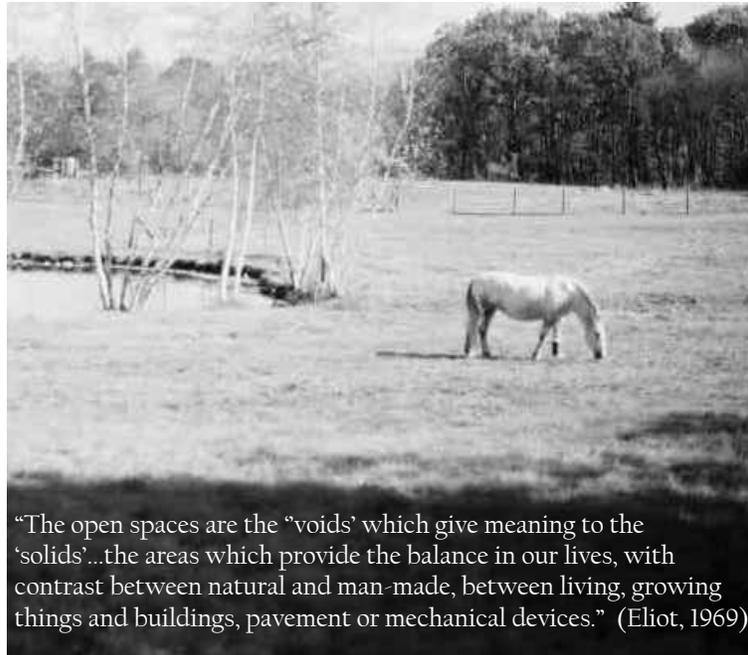
Though Harvard residents never warmed to the principles of PUD, they responded quite differently to Eliot's thoughts on public open space. In 1968, Harvard owned less than 300 acres of land and most of it was used for municipal services and school buildings. By the time Eliot finished the *Planning for Harvard: Comprehensive Plan*, town meeting had voted to purchase 94 acres of conservation land and

four years later, the Harvard Conservation Trust (HCT) was born. Since the early 1970s, the Harvard Conservation Commission and HCT have acquired or obtained restrictions on more than 2,000 acres of open space. Their combined holdings, along with land owned by the state and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, mean that 21% of Harvard's land area will never be developed. Harvard's 1969 *Comprehensive Plan* helped to inspire these investments and they are consistent with Eliot's vision.

Eliot would probably be struck by the town's very short supply of affordable housing, but it is difficult to know what he anticipated. Ironically, the state legislature enacted Chapter 40B the same year that Eliot finished Harvard's master plan. The

interests, motives and principles that formed the impetus for Chapter 40B have been forgotten in three decades of angry debate about low-income housing in Massachusetts. Very few people realize that Chapter 40B is a misnomer for "comprehensive permit law." Chapter 40B is actually the state's regional planning law. In 1969, at the end of a decade when policymakers worried about the state of the nation's cities, tools like comprehensive permits became part of a larger effort to restore urban areas by reducing the unequal distribution of wealth in metropolitan regions. Legislators who amended Chapter 40B by adding Sections 20-22 – which they dubbed the "Anti-Snob Zoning Act" – were informed by the prevailing wisdom of their day. Conversant in urban economics and a strong supporter of regional planning, Eliot agreed with the law's objectives but he was troubled by the rubric of "anti-snob zoning." He believed that large-lot zoning serves a purpose, and that a town like Harvard would be best served by using such promising techniques as PUD to change the mix and cost of homes, thereby gaining control over its housing destiny.

Harvard differs from Eliot's expectations in a few other ways. Though he understood why residents wanted to keep local services in the Town Center, Eliot questioned whether Harvard would be able to accommodate a more intensive school complex there. He suggested additional land purchases in the Town Center so that Harvard would have enough area to qualify for school construction grants as elementary and high school expansions became necessary. Since he imagined Harvard with more village nodes and a bustling business district north of Route 2, Eliot also encouraged the town to purchase land on or near Ayer Road and hold it in reserve for a future school site. As for Ayer Road itself, Eliot saw many opportunities to strengthen Harvard's tax base, including a hotel and shopping center just north of the Route 2 interchange. He also saw problems in Harvard's C District zoning, namely that it promised a commercial strip replete with scattered, uncoordinated business and industrial development. Eliot's vision of Ayer Road called for a controlled mix of intensive and light business development interspersed with variable-density housing. As one who valued Harvard's independent streak, Eliot thought the town should take matters into its own hands and create a local non-profit development corporation to implement the master plan for Ayer Road instead of waiting for private developers to make a move. Harvard adopted his proposal to downzone a section of the C District, but the larger vision – and the principles it embraced – never materialized.



"The open spaces are the 'voids' which give meaning to the 'solids'...the areas which provide the balance in our lives, with contrast between natural and man-made, between living, growing things and buildings, pavement or mechanical devices." (Eliot, 1969)

Harvard's Pastoral Landscape.

Harvard Town Plan (1988)

Twenty years later, the Town Plan Committee and Michael Oman of Connery Associates worked for 18 months to update the *Comprehensive Plan*. Much like Eliot’s work with the Planning Board, Oman’s task was to help the Town Plan Committee articulate a set of coherent rural development principles to guide Harvard’s future. Oman, the Town Plan Committee and about 40 subcommittee members did a considerable amount of work that culminated in the *Harvard Town Plan*. At least two aspects of the *Harvard Town Plan* are striking in comparison to the *Comprehensive Plan*: first, what it reveals about the extent to which Harvard had grown since the late 1960s, and second, the similarity of its recommendations to those made by Eliot. Though the two plans differ in several ways, records maintained by the Town Plan Committee show that the *Comprehensive Plan* had accurately foreseen a number of potential problems in Harvard – problems Eliot tried to avert in proposals that were implemented only in part, or not at all. Thus, it fell to the Committee and Oman to identify solutions that might be more palatable in the climate of the late 1980s.

As the Planning Board had done in the 1968, the Town Plan Committee surveyed Harvard households about a variety of issues and relied on the results as a measure of public opinion. The results of the 1968 and 1985 surveys suggest that despite the passage of time, residents shared very similar values and beliefs about the town. They cherished Harvard’s clean natural resources, rural atmosphere and farms, and generally they took a dim view of apartments and industrial development. However, the *Harvard Town Plan* hints at deep differences of opinion about affordable housing, business development, or “change” of any kind.

Not surprisingly, the greatest opposition to change came from Harvard’s newest residents: people who, for the most part, had paid dearly to buy a home in town at the peak of a growth wave. Though most of the survey respondents offered the same perspective on Harvard’s desirability, regardless of how many years they had lived in town, longer-term residents were more inclined to favor such community attributes as a “broad socio-economic mix” and “managed” rather than “no” growth. Divisions like these are so common in small towns that usually they would seem

On the “C” District

This kind of strip zoning is also detrimental to the safety and efficiency of the main traffic artery because the numerous scattered entrances and exits, parking stops, etc., which are created to serve business developments, interfere with the free and safe movement of through traffic. (Eliot, 1969)

Harvard’s commercial district and the town’s expectations for its ultimate development are clearly in a state of limbo...If the zoning is not changed, the town will certainly experience...a fundamental change in the town’s character, alteration of the future development path of the town, increased traffic... (Town Plan Committee, 1988)

On Housing & Village Development

The returns from the Questionnaire in answer to the question, “What is right about Harvard?” repeatedly referred to the Common and its surroundings as a physical expression of neighborliness, and as a “way of life” that should be safeguarded and emulated.

Perhaps the existence in that area of a greater number of two, three and four-family dwellings than in all the rest of Harvard is significant...the fact suggests that new growth in Harvard might be guided and organized in new “villages” or groupings of mixed dwelling types around a common or surrounded by common land.” (Eliot, 1969)

Notwithstanding the findings of the 1969 Eliot Plan, Harvard’s growth since then has neither been guided toward areas identified as more appropriate nor away from those areas rated moderate or severe. Overall lot sizes have increased, but no provision has been made for greater density in the areas identified in the Eliot Plan as being appropriate for greater development...

[Harvard] must articulate a vision of the type of development that is realistic and develop regulations, incentives and restrictions that will guide growth in a manner consistent with this vision. (Town Plan Committee, 1988)

insignificant, but Harvard's people never had a chance to work through the tensions that come with a period of intensive growth. Two years after the *Harvard Town Plan's* adoption by the Planning Board, the U.S. Army confirmed its intent to close Fort Devens.

The Town Plan Committee adopted goals that largely reiterated the first master plan but took a different stance on the C District. In contrast to the village shopping center and hotel that Eliot had in mind, the Town Plan Committee envisioned a sharply reduced scale of development on Ayer Road and devoted several pages of the *Harvard Town Plan* to a subcommittee's analysis of retail and office space needs for a town of Harvard's estimated future population (10,000). The subcommittee argued that 650,000 ft² of commercial development would be adequate to meet local needs for goods, services and jobs. Accordingly, they proposed several measures to curtail the C District's growth potential, including a major reduction in the amount of development that could occur on each parcel and district-wide, and rezoning some of the land for residential use. Reminiscent of what happened in the late 1960s, residents accepted a few of the Town Plan Committee's ideas for the C District but stopped short of addressing the larger, more important points – development performance standards, better site plan review criteria, design review and village center zoning. Possibly, town meeting thought the proposals went too far. However, by enacting land use controls on a piecemeal basis, residents have unwittingly contributed to the worsened state of affairs on Ayer Road.

The *Harvard Town Plan* made seven assertions:

- Development regulations should account for the carrying capacity of land and natural resources.
- Residential development should provide more types of housing than single-family homes.
- Three major assets in Harvard warrant extraordinary protection: groundwater, the Town Center and the Bare Hill Pond watershed.
- Open space protection is central to the quality of Harvard's natural resources, the maintenance of its rural character, and the continuation of agriculture.
- If developed to its full potential, the C District would be incompatible with Harvard's town character and municipal capacity.
- Streets should be maintained for safety, but there should be no widening or significant alterations to the "country road" quality of Harvard's rural areas.
- Managing growth requires adequate administration, timely communication, and collaborative efforts by government and the private sector.

These conclusions formed the basis for 29 specific proposals. Eight were fully or partially implemented. Other than acquiring open space, Harvard has found it very difficult to act in its own growth management interests.

Visions from the Present

The current Master Plan Steering Committee's vision statement and goals were also inspired by public commentary. A "Phase I" master plan visioning process (Spring 2001) supplied opportunities for residents to describe what they want Harvard to be, to explore the town's assets and confront the conditions that threaten its future. The transcript of their words is compelling, not only for the strong community-centered values it reflects but also for what it reveals about historic obstacles to master plan implementation in Harvard. For example:



Bare Hill Pond (2002)

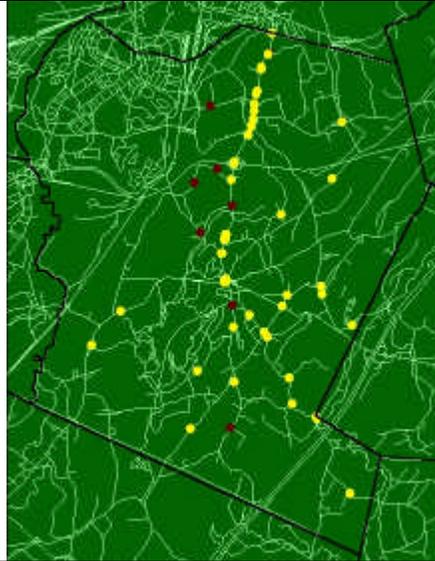
- Harvard needs better information on natural resource limitations in order to (1) support an effective public education program, (2) identify "land use patterns considered sustainable," and (3) "develop a management plan and strategy for Bare Hill Pond."
- A safe and adequate water supply is a critical priority for Harvard, one that requires a "town-wide perspective...to protect water quality and quantity regionally as well as locally." Toward that end, the town should "closely analyze all wetland projects and increase the size of buffer zones to wetlands where necessary to protect against fragmentation, critical habitat loss, and water quality impacts."
- Make effective use of existing studies – notably, *Harvard's Rural Landscapes* (1997) – and incorporate the *Open Space Plan* into the Master Plan. Harvard needs to "...define different types and values of open space that direct preservation efforts," and "preserve Fruitlands and vistas to the west."
- The two village centers and commercial area are assets for building a sense of community. Harvard needs to "create mixed-use village centers [with] services, amenities, and gathering places," "direct development toward a village pattern" and "create a village atmosphere in the commercial district" with "strong design guidelines and site standards to support town character."
- Save the orchards by providing "[zoning] flexibility...to help with the viability of agricultural operations," "legal and monetary incentives," APR's or "a local Farmers Market for the regional market area."
- Manage growth impacts such as traffic and infrastructure demands by helping "boards and commissions prepare well-founded and supportable decisions on development" and "prepare the town [to respond] to a Chapter 40B project."
- Participate in regional decision-making through such means as a "town strategy for responses to Devens based on Harvard's goals," identification of "potential benefits and negatives associated with Devens," and public education "before any long-term commitments."

All of these statements express reasonable expectations for Harvard. Moreover, except for the inclusion of Devens on today's list of issues, all of these statements echo the yearnings of previous Harvard master plans. Curiously, the town's approach to land use regulation, public policy and self-governance remain inconsistent with or unable to fulfill its stated preferences. Though zoning is essential to growth management, it cannot be relied upon as an exclusive means of master plan

implementation. If town officials and residents want better information so they can defend their environmental assets or make sound permitting decisions, they must invest in the human resources required to obtain, analyze, report and manage that information. If they want to safeguard Harvard from a large, unwanted Chapter 40B development, they have to initiate ways to create a base of qualifying low-income units, as the town of Lincoln did. If they want productive agriculture, they must come to terms with the economic realities of farming and remove barriers to *profitable* farms. If they want to control traffic, they must take the kinds of pro-active steps that Harvard pursued with Cisco Systems, but they must also recognize ways that Harvard has caused many of its own traffic problems and be willing to address them.

During Phase II of the master plan process, residents had more opportunities to say what they want for their town. At one session, participants reiterated their desire for a vibrant, walkable Town Center, a new village district on Ayer Road, and residential alternatives to meet both affordability and senior housing needs, identifying possible opportunity areas on town maps. At another session, anxiety over the disposition of Devens made it very difficult for participants to talk about Harvard's future. The people of Harvard have good reasons to be anxious about Devens. However, allowing Devens to dwarf issues that existed in Residential Harvard long before the base closed is tantamount to submitting the town's destiny to MassDevelopment. Disputes over the fate of Devens have so polarized Harvard that at times, the town seems paralyzed by its own ambivalence. It would be very unfortunate if Harvard acquiesced again to a path of well-intended but fragmented policies. The town may not have absolute control over what happens to one-fifth of its land area today, but it has considerable untapped power to control what happens over the remaining 80 percent.

In the absence of policies to realize goals of recurring importance to Harvard, private landowners, developers, homebuilders and town boards have had no choice but to comply with rules that foreclose opportunities to engage in protective land development. Meanwhile, Harvard has spent substantial sums of public money to buy open space, relying entirely on the labor of citizen volunteers to carry out conservation land projects that are often complicated and time-consuming. As new homes spread incrementally and randomly across Harvard's land, they fracture what had been undisturbed, contiguous open space, replace it with domain that is inhospitable to wildlife, and alter the rural landscape. It is little wonder that residents sense such urgency to buy open space. Unless the Harvard Conservation Trust (*also* citizen volunteers) can work out an alternative, public spending is the only technique in Harvard's open space and growth management toolbox. The Master Plan Update rests on a single assertion: the toolbox needs more resources.



Daytime Accidents in Harvard, 2000. (Harvard Police Department)



"C" District, Ayer Road (2001)

Comprehensive Development Policy

Harvard wants a sense of community and place, and a sustainable future. These are appropriate and attainable goals, but they require creative approaches to land use and an undivided will to achieve them. Though Harvard is one of the state's most beautiful and well-preserved communities, a number of factors place the town's customs, rural features and high quality of life at risk. An obvious internal factor is the stress that new development has placed on Harvard's fields and forests, its fiscal condition and the scenic character of its roads. Another internal factor involves the challenge of traffic management on long, rural byways that must meet the dual – and often contrary – functions of through roads and neighborhood streets. Often, the town seems to have difficulty resolving policy conflicts that stem, in part, from different perceptions of what it means to live in Harvard. In addition, as Harvard develops and its home prices climb far beyond the reach of most people, the community that could once rely on volunteers for a variety of civic functions is destined to confront two problems: a diminishing pool of residents with time for voluntary public service, and the eventuality that town government's payroll will grow. Harvard longs to retain its working farms and orchards, yet few residents realize that 40-50 years ago, the town had 1,500 more acres of agricultural land than exists today. Finally, Harvard's commitment to conservancy is evident in a nearly peerless record of accomplishments to protect land and water resources, but ironically, its zoning regulations exacerbate the loss of open space.

External factors also underlie many of the tensions that exist in Harvard today. Chief among them: Devens. During the Master Plan process, residents questioned whether Harvard should be trying to update its Master Plan given all of the uncertainties associated with Devens. Indeed, Devens is so much on the minds of local officials and townspeople that it acts as a barrier to useful dialogue about the state of "Residential Harvard." However, other external factors affect Harvard and they raise equally if not more important planning concerns. For example, the Cisco Systems development in Boxborough stands as a potential traffic threat, but the more compelling point about Cisco Systems is what it symbolizes for Harvard's region. Along with the redevelopment of Devens, Cisco Systems foreshadows profound change in the developed character of many small towns on the outermost edge of I-495, including Harvard. Changing and contradictory state policies also affect Harvard's future. Title V's recognition of new and emerging wastewater technology, the contested terrain of Chapter 40B, and the implications of state aid formulas for the "new Harvard" – that is, Harvard minus 7,500 military personnel and family members who counted as town residents a decade ago – create conditions that Harvard must contend with in the near-term, regardless of Devens. Moreover, like their counterparts across the Commonwealth, Harvard town officials have to sort through ways to manage growth despite serious weaknesses and omissions in the state zoning law.

Integration Concepts

The proposals and recommendations of the Master Plan seek to translate Harvard's community vision and goals into a coherent, planned course of action. The Master Plan elements are unified by their consistency with these five concepts:

- Realizing Harvard's vision does not require pitting one master plan goal against another. Building a stronger economic base and providing for a mix of homes should respect and protect the town's critical natural resources, open space and historic built assets. Regulations designed for sustainability enlist development as a partner in protecting public interests.
- Harvard's landscapes differ by location, form, shape, features and historic period. Zoning and other policies should support and respect these differences. A homogenous approach to zoning all but guarantees a homogenous outcome.
- Village centers, such as the Town Center, support life and community. Mixed-use and compact in design, with common open space and places to walk or socialize, villages help to direct development toward established areas and away from agricultural land and forests.

- Harvard does not want to establish an industrial base or promote the development of large commercial areas. Strategies to manage the town's fiscal future must be tailored to complement all of the major goals of the Master Plan, including: altering the mix of housing, allowing for more economic use of land in designated village areas, acquiring open space, and minimizing new road construction.
- Responsibility for Master Plan implementation rests with many town officials and departments, not only the Planning Board. A permanent master plan implementation committee with representation from key town boards and other citizen volunteers, equipped with adequate staff support, is essential for carrying out the Master Plan, monitoring outcomes, and setting in motion steps that will need to be taken for future master plan updates.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Plan is the centerpiece of the Master Plan. It reasserts a number of key findings and recommendations in Harvard's previous master plan reports and supplements them with proposals that account for new information and different conditions.

Concepts

The Land Use Element of the Master Plan emphasizes six concepts:

- Land use regulations should clearly express what the town wants, and to be effective, they must be fair and applied consistently by permit granting authorities. Toward these ends, boards with jurisdiction over development need compatible policies and a shared understanding of the Master Plan.
- Development – within Residential Harvard and at Devens – must be engaged as the town's ally in protecting environmental, scenic and cultural resources.
- Agriculture brings economic, cultural, scenic and fiscal benefits to Harvard. Every effort should be made to preserve the town's farms and orchards.
- Single-family residences, farm homes, summer cottages and estates have played an important role in defining Harvard's visual and social character. Policies to encourage a broader mix of residential land uses and provide for affordable housing should emphasize design compatibility with Harvard's established architectural and landscape traditions.
- Villages are essential to Harvard's rural ambiance and to building a sense of community among residents. Policies to preserve, enhance and develop village areas should encourage housing choice, the provision of goods and services, and safe, convenient access to community institutions. Harvard's established villages have unique settlement patterns, built assets and open space resources. Land use regulations must be tailored to respect the elements of place in each village.
- New development on land that currently generates more revenue than community service costs should provide a comparable or greater fiscal benefit, when compatible with other goals of the master plan.

The continued relevance of past plans and new proposals to address Harvard's community vision and goals call for a reassessment of current land use policies. Table 4-1 compares the allocation of land to Harvard's existing zoning districts to the recommended allocation of land to zoning districts in the Land Use Plan. The Land Use Plan makes no change to the geography of Harvard's existing zoning districts. Rather, it promotes the strategic application of overlay districts to achieve development and

preservation objectives in areas that warrant additional measures. It also promotes changes to the regulations that apply in existing zoning districts, as described below. Map 4-A (Land Use Policy Map) is a conceptual representation of the existing and proposed zoning districts.

Table 4-1: Existing Conditions and Proposed Land Use Plan

Existing Conditions		Land Use Plan	
<u>Zoning</u>		<u>Zoning</u>	
A-R	13,376.15	Agricultural-Residential	13,376.15
B	3.76	B District	3.76
C	442.86	C District	338.43
Watershed Protection-Flood Plain	244.60	<u>Overlay Districts</u>	
Watershed Protection-Flood Hazard	1,641.25	Community Commercial District	104.32
		Town Center Overlay District	468.19
Other Jurisdictions ¹	3,526.49	Still River Village Overlay District	213.05
		Residential Compatibility Overlay District	1,462.77
Total	17,349.25	Agricultural & Historic Landscapes Overlay District	5,107.69
		Bare Hill Pond Watershed Protection District	1,821.64
		Groundwater Protection Overlay District	1,579.80

1. Devens, Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge.

Zoning Recommendations

Agricultural-Residential District

Harvard remains committed to a vision characterized by single-family residences and farms: the intended goals of the Agricultural-Residential District. The Land Use Plan does not anticipate a fundamental change in this policy. Rather, it seeks to reinforce the goals of the A-R District by supplementing the town's basic density, dimensional and use regulations with flexible development incentives. Proposed modifications to the A-R District are described below.

Allow the following uses as of right:

- Single-family (detached) residence
- Agricultural uses, including exempt and "home farm"

Allow the following uses as of right, subject to site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Special regulations and incentives to set back and cluster single-family homes on Approval Not Required (ANR) lots, serve them with a common driveway and place a conservation restriction over open space visible from the road (also known as "backlot development").
- A newly described "Mini-Subdivision" bylaw that permits a small, flexible plan subdivision to limit clearing, grading and excessive disturbance to land and natural features.

Allow the following uses as of right, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Municipal uses
- Educational, institutional and religious uses

Allow the following uses by special permit, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Conservation Cluster (to replace existing cluster bylaw), governed by development regulations that incorporate these features:
 - No minimum parcel size
 - Flexible setbacks that consider building size, height and massing
 - Mix of residential use types, such as detached single-family homes and townhouses
 - At least 50% of the site to be permanently protected open space, emphasizing the importance of open space linkages
 - Public access easements to connect open space trails on adjacent conservation land or lands of conservation interest
 - A density bonus to encourage cluster design
 - Reasonable pre-submission requirements so that the application process does not act as a regulatory disincentive

- Additional incentives to include housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households, housing suitable for the elderly or persons with disabilities, or “green” (sustainable) building design
- Conversion of existing single-family residence or accessory building to multiple-residence use, for a maximum of three dwelling units per structure. When a conversion results in more than two dwelling units, at least one must be affordable to low- and moderate-income households.
- One accessory apartment in an owner-occupied single-family residence

B District

- No change to existing regulations; see also, Town Center Overlay District.

Community Commercial Overlay District

Replace substantial portions of the existing C District on Ayer Road with a Community Commercial District (CC) that fosters mixed-use development, pedestrian-friendly design, clear site plan and parking requirements. The purposes of the Community Commercial District are to meet the town’s needs for goods and services, provide a pleasant, safe village environment for residents of Ayer Road and surrounding neighborhoods, and enhance property values throughout the area. As such, Harvard’s zoning regulations should encourage an inviting mix of residential and commercial uses and discourage development that is incompatible with or inappropriate for a village business zone. To achieve the goals of the master plan, the regulations must account for the realities of attracting new investment to an area with pre-existing improvements. An effective set of use and dimensional rules will likely include methods such as those listed below.

Allow the following uses as of right:

- Conversion of existing single-family residence to a two-family use with no visible change to the exterior except where required to comply with means of egress regulations of the Massachusetts Building Code.
- One accessory apartment in an owner-occupied single-family residence

Allow the following uses as of right, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Conversion of existing structure to an inn or bed-and-breakfast establishment
- Expansion and alteration of existing residence for conversion to multiple-residence use (up to three units) or to a mixed-use (residential and commercial) structure, provided that the commercial use is allowed as of right. When a conversion results in more than two dwelling units, at least one must be affordable to a low- or moderate-income household.
- Licensed pre-school or day care center
- Municipal uses
- Post office

Allow the following types of commercial uses as of right up to an agreed-upon size threshold, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Professional, medical and dental offices

- Banks and similar financial institutions
- Personal services establishments, e.g., travel agents, dry cleaning and tailoring shops, barber & beauty shops
- Retail establishments
- Studios and galleries
- Business service establishments, e.g. secretarial services, photocopying services
- Specialty food service establishments, e.g., catering, deli, specialty food market
- Indoor eating establishments
- Farm stands
- Accessory uses

Allow the following uses by special permit only, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Commercial uses allowed as of right that exceed the size threshold
- Commercial greenhouse
- Nursing homes, other long-term and convalescent health care facilities
- Small indoor recreation, athletic and entertainment facilities, e.g., fitness center, theatre
- Indoor eating establishments that also provide take-out service
- Accessory uses
- Development that combines multiple-residence and allowed commercial uses, i.e., planned unit development.

Eliminate the existing one septic system-per-lot requirement in order that package treatment plants or communal septic systems may be developed where possible.

Revise the existing floor-to-area ratio (FAR) to enable more intensive use of commercial land where soil conditions permit.

Modify existing site standards as appropriate, taking into account such elements as parking requirements, pedestrian access, landscaping, and open space.

C District

The *Harvard Town Plan* (1988) proposed segmenting the C District so that it could support a variety of non-residential development in a more orderly manner. Though the Town Planning Committee's ideas differed from those of Eliot in the *Comprehensive Plan* (1969), Eliot also conceived of the C District in terms of sub-areas for different classes of commercial and light industrial development. The Master Plan Update reinforces the importance of providing land on Ayer Road to meet the needs of businesses that may not be appropriate for a village business zone but are nonetheless viable local enterprises that need space for their operations. The Land Use Policy map represents a plausible

approach to addressing the needs of these and like businesses while redirecting a majority of the C District toward a mixed-use village.

In areas outside the Community Commercial District, Harvard should modify its C District regulations to be consistent with the vision and goals of the Master Plan. The regulations should account for these considerations:

Allowed uses as of right, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Sports-related recreation/entertainment

Allowed uses by special permit, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Kennel and/or veterinary services
- Media outlets (including broadcast stations, newspapers, publishing, printing)
- Mortuaries
- Construction/building supplies and sales (plumbing, electrical, carpentry, etc.)
- Landscaping services
- Farm machinery sales and service
- Small engine equipment sales and service
- Auto repair garages/body shops/auto accessory sales and installation
- Accessory storage facilities that are clearly incidental to a permitted principal use

Town Center Overlay District

During Phase I of the Master Plan process, residents agreed that Harvard should “plan for and manage the Town Center as the center of community spirit and government.” They envisioned the Town Center as a “pedestrian-oriented” place with opportunities to shop and engage in civic, cultural and community activities. To provide a Town Center that fulfills these expectations, Harvard needs compatible zoning and other community development policies that support a diversity of land uses. The A-R District is not designed to achieve these ends. Accordingly, the Land Use Plan calls for a Town Center Overlay District (TCO) that encourages a mix of residential, commercial, municipal and institutional land uses and promotes a scale of development appropriate for Harvard Center. As suggested conceptually on the Land Use Policy Map (4-A), the Town Center Overlay District applies to areas that will retain their A-R and B District identity. This means that requirements associated with each district will apply where the overlay district regulations are silent.

Buildings contained within the Harvard Center Historic District will still be subject to the Historical Commission’s purview, but the Harvard Planning Board will also have design review responsibilities under the proposed Town Center Overlay District. The following outline explains the basic regulatory structure for this zone.

Allow the following uses as of right:

- All uses allowed in the underlying districts

Allow the following uses as of right, subject to site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Single-family to multiple-residence conversions, up to a maximum of three units, with no change in gross floor area and no visible change to the exterior except where required to comply with the Massachusetts Building Code. When a conversion results in more than two dwelling units, at least one must be affordable to a low- or moderate-income household.
- One accessory apartment in an owner-occupied single-family residence

Allow the following uses as of right, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Residential conversions to predominantly residential (>60%) uses mixed with a commercial use allowed as of right
- Municipal uses
- Institutional uses
- The following commercial uses, up to an agreed-upon amount of commercial floor area per building or per retail unit:
 - Specialty retail
 - Personal service establishments
 - Banks or similar financial institutions
 - Professional offices
 - Galleries
 - Live-and-work space for artists
 - Small-scale performance space

Allow the following uses by special permit, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Alteration and expansion of existing residential uses for conversion to more intensive residential uses, e.g., single-family to multi-family residence with an increase in overall floor area. When a multiple-residence conversion results in more than two units, the third must be affordable to a low- or moderate-income household.
- Retail establishments other than specialty retail
- Indoor eating establishments
- Preparation and sale of specialty foods
- Commercial uses allowed as of right when they exceed the size threshold for uses as of right.
- Any allowed or exempt use that seeks a waiver from the town's parking regulations in exchange for payment of a fee toward a public parking fund

Still River Overlay District

Though also a recognizable village, Still River's development pattern, historic mix of land uses and open space resources differ from Harvard Center. Zoning regulations to preserve Still River's unique village form, natural and cultural resources and substantial forested areas need to reflect these conditions. The Land Use Plan recommends that Harvard establish a Still River Overlay District (SRO) to encourage residential, institutional and agricultural uses, promote historic preservation, maintain open space and protect scenic views. A limited mix of commercial uses would also be appropriate for Still River Village, especially if carried out in the context of mixed-use development. The following regulations to guide Still River Village's future development appear below, and they would apply to the Still River Overlay District shown on the Land Use Policy Map.

Allow the following uses as of right:

- All uses allowed in the underlying district (A-R)
- Allow the following uses as of right, subject to site plan approval by the Planning Board:

Single-family to multiple-residence conversions, up to a maximum of three units, with no change in gross floor area and no visible change to the exterior except where required to comply with the Massachusetts Building Code. When a multiple-residence conversion results in more than two units, at least one must be affordable to a low- or moderate-income household.

- One accessory apartment in a single-family residence

Allow the following uses as of right, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Residential conversions to predominantly residential (>60%) uses mixed with a commercial use allowed as of right
- Municipal uses
- Institutional uses
- The following commercial uses, up to an agreed-upon amount of commercial floor area per building or per retail unit:
 - Professional offices
 - Galleries
 - Live-and-work space for artists
 - Post office

Allow the following uses by special permit, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Specialty retail
- Specialty foods
- Indoor eating establishment

Adopt regulations that provide reuse and conversion flexibility for historically significant buildings in order to encourage preservation. The Planning Board may waive the affordable housing requirement for conversions undertaken to prevent the demolition of a historically significant building that is under a six-month demolition delay period.

Residential Compatibility Overlay District (RCO)

The proposed Residential Compatibility Overlay District (RCO) applies to two areas in Harvard: land in the A-R District around Harvard Center and portions of the Community Commercial District. Its purposes are to encourage a greater diversity of residential uses and age-restricted housing in or adjacent to established developed areas with access to goods and services. Since accessory apartments and multiple-residence conversions are already proposed for the Town Center Overlay District and the Community Commercial District, they are not reiterated in the following outline of RCO development policies.

Allow the following uses by right:

- Uses allowed in the underlying districts

Allow the following uses by special permit, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- “Over-55” (age-restricted) housing
- Assisted living facilities
- Congregate housing (e.g., shared cooking facilities)
- Planned residential development, controlled mix of single-family, multi-family and townhouse units, on a minimum parcel size of five acres

Special considerations:

- Provide density and design incentives to encourage RCO development
- Require all over-55 and planned residential development submissions to include a minimum of 10% affordable housing units, and negotiate a set-aside of units affordable to middle-income households
- Establish open space, architectural design and site standards to assure the compatibility of assisted living facilities to surrounding land uses.

Agricultural & Historic Landscapes Overlay District (AHLO)

Allow the following uses by right:

- Agricultural production, normal agricultural practices and agricultural accessory uses
- Farm-related dwelling units
- Backlot development incentives to separate residential from agricultural uses and preserve agricultural views from the road (e.g., specialized setback regulations for new residences on lots that abut an active agricultural use)

Allow the following uses by right, subject to site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Residential subdivisions requiring approval under the Subdivision Control Law, to be laid out according to “farm-sensitive,” flexible-plan development regulations and site plan standards for development in the HLO district.

Allow the following uses by special permit, subject to design review and site plan approval by the Planning Board:

- Planned residential development for a controlled mix of single-family, multiple-residence and townhouse units on larger parcels (e.g., over 10 acres)
- “Over-55” housing, which may be developed as small single-family homes, townhouses or multiple-residence buildings
- Conference centers
- Indoor eating establishments
- Agricultural-retail business (to be defined by the Zoning Bylaw)

Create special development regulations to respect the significant natural and built features of HLO areas:

- Ridgeline and scenic view shed protection
- Views from the road
- Significant trees and stone walls
- Soils suitable for farming
- Historic farm homes and agricultural outbuildings
- Review for archeological resources
- Preservation of agricultural land, e.g., 50% or more of a proposed site, configured to permit continued farming. Preserved farmland may be retained by the farm owner but shall be protected by means of a permanent conservation restriction conveyed to the town, the Harvard Conservation Trust or another non-profit land trust.

Special considerations:

- Provide density and design incentives to encourage HLO development
- Require all single-family subdivisions of more than 10 lots and all planned residential or age-restricted housing submissions to include a minimum of 10% affordable housing units, and negotiate a set-aside of units affordable to middle-income households

Bare Hill Pond Watershed Overlay District

Adopt a Bare Hill Pond Watershed Protection Overlay District to assure that Harvard’s zoning regulations effectively address issues such as non-point pollution, nutrient loading, biodiversity, sedimentation, and recharge. Special regulations for development in the watershed should account for best management practices, erosion control, slope restrictions, and a very low maximum

impervious coverage ratio. Companion Board of Health regulations will also be necessary. Alternative wastewater technologies and controlled package treatment facilities may be more beneficial to watershed management than widely dispersed individual septic systems.

Groundwater Protection Overlay District

Adopt a Groundwater Protection Overlay District to assure that Harvard's zoning protects interim and approved "Zone II" areas of DEP water supplies. DEP has produced a model groundwater protection bylaw that Harvard should adopt and apply to all areas so designated on the Land Use Map. Harvard should give serious consideration to adopting a two-acre minimum lot size in designated "Zone II" areas.

Watershed Protection-Flood Plain and Watershed Protection-Flood Hazard Overlay Districts

The Master Plan Update recommends no specific changes to the town's W and WFH regulations at this time, though they should be streamlined and updated to be more like the Wetlands Protection District and Flood Plain District bylaws in use by many Massachusetts communities today. For planning, regulatory administration and enforcement purposes, however, the town needs improved wetland maps and a clear representation of regulated areas on the Zoning Map. The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs has updated all of the DEP Wetlands Conservancy Program maps, which are very detailed, and most of the state is also available in 1:5,000 color orthophotos.

Fig. 4-A illustrates the significant differences between previously available wetlands data and the new, higher-resolution images. As an aid to town boards, the building inspector, land owners, developers and the general public, Harvard would be well advised to amend the Zoning Map in two ways: first, to represent regulated wetlands based on GIS data from the DEP Wetlands Conservancy Program, and second, to incorporate by reference the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for the identification of flood hazard areas.

Other Recommended Modifications to the Zoning Bylaw

- The Zoning Bylaw and Zoning Map need to be made more "user-friendly." Harvard should re-codify and adopt a new format for the Zoning Bylaw, giving special consideration to:
 - Streamlining and clarifying minimum lot size, lot area, width requirements, and provide illustrations.
 - Providing a consolidated Table of Dimensional Regulations and Table of Use Regulations.
 - Updating, strengthening and clarifying existing Site Standards, taking into account aesthetics, reasonable parking requirements for each class of land use, pedestrian access, landscaping, and open space, and traffic safety.
- Assign site plan review responsibilities to the Planning Board, and establish a "mini-site plan review" process for small projects, e.g., multiple-residence conversions, minor alterations to existing commercial buildings.
- Adopt a demolition delay bylaw to protect historic buildings from whole or partial demolition. It should be used in conjunction with other zoning techniques to encourage preservation and, where necessary, to make preservation economically feasible. Harvard should adopt regulations that allow, by special permit from the Planning Board, such strategies as using historic buildings for purposes not otherwise permitted, e.g. an office building in a residential district or a rooming house, or as a last-resort measure, relocating a historic building to a lot that does not conform to current dimensional requirements or that already contains one single-family residence.

- Separate from the Zoning Bylaw all requirements that logically belong to the Board of Health or Conservation Commission.
- Remove zoning barriers to the development flexibility created by Title V.

Other Land Use Recommendations

The Harvard Planning Board should retain a qualified team, including an engineer and landscape architect, to undertake a comprehensive review of its Rules and Regulations for Subdivision Control. The subdivision regulations should reflect the major goals of the master plan, where possible, giving particular emphasis to road width requirements that complement Harvard's rural character.

Natural & Cultural Resources Element

Harvard residents benefit immeasurably from living in a community with many natural features and built assets. The town's location on the Nashua River, its beautifully preserved views to Mount Wachusett and Mount Monadnock to the west and north, and eastward to the Boston skyline all contribute to the special sense of Harvard. Bare Hill Pond, the most significant natural feature in Harvard Center, inspires pride throughout the community. Residents also value Bowers Brook and a myriad of smaller streams that traverse the town, for these wetland and water resources provide critical wildlife habitat and hold the key to Harvard's present and future biodiversity.



Working farm in Harvard (2001).

Owing to four decades of work by local volunteers and investments by state and federal agencies, Harvard residents have numerous opportunities to explore the environmental resources in their town because there is a considerable amount of protected open space. In the absence of effective open space zoning, however, Harvard taxpayers have spent a considerable amount of money to defend their land, wetland and water resources from the adverse consequences of growth. As a result, establishing a connected system of open space and trails has been very hard – even though Harvard has one of the strongest open space protection records in Massachusetts.

Surely residents also value the widespread evidence of their town's history in *and* outside of Harvard's two local historic districts, yet the record of Phase I public meetings is silent on that matter of historic preservation. In fact, Harvard's heritage is expressed not only by its historic landscapes, but also its built assets. The town has done well at preserving the architectural integrity of Shaker Village and Harvard Center, and the Historical Commission has clearly tried to articulate a number of unmet preservation needs. However, Harvard needs to adopt the same culture of stewardship toward historic preservation that it has applied to open space protection. There are enough "lessons learned" from the losses experienced by towns close to Boston to make a persuasive case for regulatory and other interventions *now*.

Concepts

The Natural & Cultural Resources Element of the Master Plan emphasizes five concepts:

- Bare Hill Pond is a critical environmental resource that demands a comprehensive approach to management, regulation and enforcement.
- Historically significant residential, institutional, agricultural and accessory buildings, along with their associated settings, are major contributors to Harvard's rural character and they are at risk. Every effort should be made to identify and protect them.
- Wetlands and water resource protection requires coordinated regulations and permitting policies, public education and a commitment to open space acquisition. It is also essential that Harvard diligently monitor MassDevelopment and proposals before the Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC) because the only large, abundant aquifers in Harvard are under the DEC's jurisdiction. Regardless of whether Harvard wants to reclaim its land at Devens, the town has a major stake in the quality of the aquifer system that runs along the eastern boundary of Devens.
- More than two-thirds of Harvard's land area is listed in the Massachusetts Scenic Landscape Inventory. Preserving Harvard's rural landscape and the rural characteristics of town roads requires sensitive regulations, open space acquisitions, and clear policy directives concerning maintenance and improvements to public ways.
- The recommendations in *Planning for Harvard's Rural Landscape: Case Studies in Historic Conservation* (1997) are vital to Harvard's future and they are incorporated by reference in the Master Plan.

Recommendations

Cultural Resources

The Master Plan promotes a multi-faceted approach to cultural resource protection in Harvard. Recommendations that support Harvard's "sense of place" vision and its town character goals include:

- Adopt the zoning proposals for historic preservation outlined in the Land Use Element: (a) a demolition delay bylaw that subjects permits for complete or partial demolition of historically significant buildings to review by the Harvard Historical Commission and, where appropriate, to a delay for up to six months in order to identify feasible preservation alternatives, (b) flexible rules for use conversions, (c) "last-resort" relocation of a building that cannot be preserved or appropriately altered in its original setting.
- Survey & Planning Grants from the Massachusetts Historical Commission should be sought and used for the following inventories, planning studies and resource protection projects, supplemented by funds from the town:
 - An update of the historic property inventories for Still River.
 - Nomination of Still River Village to the National Register of Historic Places and establishment of a local historic district pursuant to M.G.L. c.40C.
 - An inventory and National Register nominations for parcels with more than one residential structure, i.e., estates and historic seasonal residences
 - Implement the recommendations of previous historic property studies to complete inventories and National Register nominations for individual properties and areas (see Appendix G).

Where appropriate, additional local historic districts should be established, including single-property districts as permitted by M.G.L. c.40C.

- Retain the services of a qualified team to develop feasible preservation & reuse strategies for the Harvard town library, the Bromfield House and other town-owned historic buildings.
- Appropriate funds for design, restoration and rehabilitation costs for the Hildreth House and grounds.
- Recognize the importance of historic buildings to Harvard's visual character and commit Community Preservation Act (CPA) revenue accordingly, e.g., 30% of the revenue received in any three-year period.
- Pursue mechanisms to protect Harvard's most visible historic sites, such as Fruitlands and Saint Benedict's, from inappropriate development.

Natural Resources

Adopt and implement the protective zoning regulations outlined in the Land Use Element:

- Through overlay districts, adopt regulations to protect the Bare Hill Pond Watershed and "Zone II" areas around public and private commercial water supplies.
- Reconsider existing zoning methods for controlling development in wetland and flood plain areas, and provide for a clear representation of these resource areas on the official Zoning Map.

In addition, Harvard should:

- Undertake a comprehensive review of town policies that affect the Bare Hill Pond Watershed, including but not limited to zoning, conservation land acquisition priorities, health and wetland regulations, roadway and drainage maintenance practices, recreational uses of the pond, and methods of nuisance aquatic plant control.
- Consider the appropriateness of establishing a Bare Hill Pond Watershed Commission, if necessary by special act of the legislature, and place all policy, regulatory and management responsibilities under its jurisdiction.
- Implement the *Harvard Town Plan* (1988) recommendation to amend the Board of Health's on-site wastewater disposal regulations and require periodic septic system pumping and maintenance. Routine septic system maintenance will be a critical protection strategy in the Bare Hill Pond Watershed because much of its land is already developed.
- Take affirmative steps to assure that all maintenance, repair, repaving and reconstruction projects on Harvard's public ways are consistent with the Master Plan's resource protection and town character goals. Harvard needs formal written policies to guide roadway maintenance projects performed by the Highway Department.
- Strengthen the existing Scenic Roads bylaw so that it includes specific performance standards, a process for compensatory actions, and a clear integration of Planning Board-Tree Warden roles with respect to the Scenic Roads Act (M.G.L. c.40, Section 15C) and the Massachusetts Shade Tree Act (M.G.L. c.87).
- Encourage and support the Devens Enterprise Commission in its important role as administrator and overseer of the Aquifer Protection Overlay District at Devens.

Housing Element

Concepts

The Housing Element of the Master Plan is based on five concepts:

- Housing is Harvard's dominant form of development. Regulations, policies and initiatives that affect housing will have a greater influence than any other land use over the town's future character and fiscal well-being, the quality of its environmental resources and the amount of traffic on local roads.
- Harvard values its tradition as a community of families. As such, single-family homes will continue to be the town's primary residential land use.
- Harvard shares the civic and legal obligation of all communities to assure that at least 10% of its homes are affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Every effort should be made to increase the town's supply of affordable housing at a pace that Harvard can sustain. Harvard should not rely on comprehensive permits alone to meet the 10% standard under Chapter 40B.
- A broader mix of housing types and rental opportunities will be essential to achieving Harvard's "sense of community" vision. Accordingly, Harvard also should strive to produce homes affordable to middle-income households, and housing units that appeal to the elderly and young citizens.
- Residential development that attracts non-family households is important to the town's long-term fiscal stability and the affordability of property taxes to all residents.



Recommendations

The recommendations of the Housing Element include:

- Adopt and implement the residential development proposals outlined in the Land Use Element: flexible conversion and accessory apartment regulations, mandatory inclusion of affordable units in planned residential development and age-restricted housing.
- Adopt and implement a comprehensive strategy to provide housing affordable to a broad range of incomes. The town should provide adequate resources to its Housing Partnership Committee to accomplish these ends.
- Make effective use of zoning, federal and state financial assistance, Community Preservation Act revenue, comprehensive permits, town-owned land, increased organizational capacity, and opportunities at Devens to increase Harvard's supply of lower-income housing at a sustainable pace for the community. Using the town's successful 1990-2000 experience with comprehensive permits as a baseline, work to assure that at least 15% of all new homes produced each decade will be affordable to low-income households.
- Commit an equitable share of Community Preservation Act revenue to address Harvard's affordable housing needs, e.g., 30% of the revenue received in any three-year period.

- Adopt an aggressive strategy to protect Harvard from adversarial comprehensive permits that are poorly designed, unduly burdensome on town and school services, inconsistent with local housing needs or otherwise incompatible with the goals of the master plan.
- Supplement the Harvard Conservation Trust's affordable housing efforts by establishing a public corporation, chartered by a special act of the legislature and with directors appointed by the Board of Selectmen, to develop below-market and low- and moderate-income housing (see also, Economic Development Element).
- Conduct an inventory of town- and privately-owned land to identify parcels suitable for affordable housing units, including potential tear-downs, and work with organizations that have adequate capacity to use these parcels for affordable housing development.
- For clarity and tone, revise the town's guidelines and policies for review of comprehensive permits by the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Remove regulatory and permitting barriers to accessory apartments and multiple-residence conversions, subject to restrictions on unit size, exterior alterations, and adherence to reasonable site plan standards.
- Encourage the development of assisted living and other elderly housing alternatives in order to meet the community's elderly housing needs.

Open Space & Recreation Element

Concepts

The Open Space & Recreation Element of the Master Plan reflects six concepts:

- Government, landowners and developers *share* responsibility for protecting open space.
- The incremental spread of suburban residential development on rural roads presents a serious threat to Harvard's open space – its agricultural landscapes, open fields and large, uninterrupted tracts of forest.
- Open space acquisitions should be targeted to achieve maximum public benefit: protecting wetlands, surface and groundwater resources, connecting existing open space, preserving scenic views and agricultural land, enhancing common space in or near village areas, and protecting historically significant properties.
- The acquisition or acceptance of gifts of land for recreation areas should be planned to serve population centers and to complement plans for future development of public facilities and schools.
- Harvard has a direct stake in protecting open space at Devens, regardless of whether the town decides to reclaim its land.
- Where feasible, all conservation and recreation areas should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

Implement the proposals outlined in the Land Use Element:

- Adopt a workable, effective conservation cluster bylaw to include protected open space in new residential development.
- Protect open space along the roadside by encouraging shared driveways and deep setbacks for homes on Approval Not Required (ANR) lots and obtaining a conservation restriction over the preserved frontage.
- Establish a special overlay district with design guidelines and open space requirements particularized for farmland and view shed protection.
- Implement zoning incentives to direct new development toward established areas

In addition, Harvard should:

- Maintain timely updates of the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* – to articulate unambiguous criteria for choosing land to protect, through various means, to assure Harvard’s eligibility for land acquisition grants from the state, and to assure adequate attention to the town’s recreation facility needs. In addition, the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* process will help Harvard engage in accessibility planning for its conservation and recreation areas.
- Target open space acquisitions toward areas of significant concern, e.g., the Bare Hill Pond Watershed, while continuing to work toward the overall greenbelt concept promoted in the *Comprehensive Plan* (1969) and revised by first *Open Space Plan* (1979).
- Consider establishing an Agricultural Incentive Committee to investigate the merits of an Agricultural Incentive District, and through that process, identify lands eligible for Chapter 61 and Chapter 61A status and promote landowner participation.
- Acquire or accept gifts of land for additional outdoor recreation areas and develop adequate, accessible facilities for all age groups. Land acquired for a future school site should be of adequate size to support a neighborhood playground and a pre-school play lot.
- Review current policies and practices for maintenance of Harvard’s outdoor recreation areas, assuring that costs incurred by the town are offset by adequate user fee revenue.
- Maintain the town’s traditional commitment of tax revenue to the Conservation Fund and increase support for open space acquisitions by allocating an equitable share of Community Preservation Act revenue to address Harvard’s open space needs, e.g., 40% of all revenue received in any three-year period.
- Assert leadership in assuring that the *Devens Open Space and Recreation Plan* is implemented and updated.

Economic Development Element

Concepts

The Economic Development Element of the Master Plan embraces five concepts:

- Providing residents with opportunities to purchase goods and service and work locally is important for the local economy, for building a sense of community, providing public amenities, increasing tax revenue and reducing the amount of auto-dependent growth in Harvard.
- Harvard's established areas are the most appropriate locations for economic development, new and revitalized.
- The vitality and attractiveness of business districts are enhanced by mixed-use development that includes housing.
- The ability to work at or near home is central to a sustainable economic development plan. Flexible work-at-home regulations and opportunities for local entrepreneurs to "move up" to village commercial space will benefit Harvard families and the local economy.
- Agriculture is and should remain a vibrant part of Harvard's economy. Preserving farms is a way to provide jobs, protect open space and enhance local property values.

Recommendations

Implement the applicable zoning proposals of the Land Use Element:

- Encourage "agricultural retail business" in order to support the continued profitability of existing farms in Harvard.
- Provide incentives to maintain agriculture by allowing development of land and existing structures in exchange for substantial farmland preservation.
- Promote diversity in Harvard's economic base through a newly described Community Commercial District that replaces a substantial portion of the existing C District.

In addition, Harvard should base its approach to economic development on these considerations:

- Encourage development that provides positive fiscal impacts while assuring that new or expanded commercial growth supports the major goals of the master plan.
- Explore the potential for shared (communal) septic systems and package treatment facilities in the Community Commercial District, or for connecting to sewer facilities at Devens.
- Establish a public corporation, chartered by a special act of the legislature and with directors appointed by the Board of Selectmen, to carry out economic development and housing consistent with the goals for the Community Commercial District on Ayer Road, and redevelopment/preservation of historically significant private and public buildings (see also, Housing Element). Forming a public corporation and charging it with lead responsibility for development on Ayer Road north of Route 2 may be key to Harvard's eligibility for state or federal grants to help finance the cost of installing sewers or a package plant.
- Establish an Agricultural Incentive Committee and charge it with three tasks:
 - Explore the merits of creating Agricultural Incentive Districts in Harvard.

- Act as an agricultural liaison/advocacy arm of town government.
- Plan and oversee events to promote Harvard's farms and orchards, e.g., a farmer's market program.
- Monitor the ongoing development of Devens, working closely with MassDevelopment to assure consistency with the *Devens Reuse Plan* and compatibility with the major goals of this master plan.
- Explore opportunities at Devens to expand and diversify Harvard's economic base.

Community Facilities & Services Element

Concepts

The Community Facilities and Services Element of the Master Plan reflects five concepts:

- The Town Center is Harvard's most important community facility. Plans for future development must respect the Town Center's finite capacity so that its land, buildings, circulation system and natural resources are not overwhelmed by a disproportional or an intensity of use that cannot be sustained.
- Schools should be located in or near mixed-use areas that are both convenient and safe for pedestrian and bicycle access, particularly in small towns that rely on school facilities for community meeting space and outdoor play areas.
- Harvard's municipal buildings are dignified, historic structures that befit the character of the town. Their continued use for civic purposes is consistent with the vision for Harvard Center, and the Master Plan should encourage strategies to achieve that end.
- A community that is home to all ages and a broad range of household sizes and incomes must provide services to meet the needs of a diverse population. Harvard must have adequate capacity – volunteers, personnel, space and funding — to manage and deliver town and school services.
- Opportunities for regional collaboration in such areas as purchasing, public works, public safety and public health services, planning, and resource protection should be explored whenever possible.



Hildreth House

Recommendations

- As Harvard continues to grow, the town should be prepared to find suitable land for a new school outside the Town Center – possibly north of the Town Center on or near Ayer Road, or on Ayer Road north of Route 2 in or adjacent to the C District. Salerno Circle may also provide a future school site if the town wants to reclaim land in that area *and* resolves access constraints to Devens.
- Develop a comprehensive public realm plan for the Town Center, considering open space, parking, circulation, pedestrian amenities and the unique access needs of community institutions. This recommendation should be implemented before or concurrently with the development of zoning for the Town Center Overlay District.
- Make all municipal and school buildings, sidewalks, parks and recreation facilities accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Address the wastewater disposal needs of the Town Center and Still River by appropriating funds for the design, development and construction of package treatment plants, communal septic systems or other options appropriate to each village. Harvard's community vision is unrealistic without a solution to wastewater disposal problems that exist in both villages. The town should explore opportunities to connect as much of the Town Center as possible to the package plant that serves the school complex.
- Establish a permanent Town Buildings Committee and charge it with responsibility to review all municipal facilities and identify and plan for space, location and programmatic needs of all town departments. The Committee's charge should also include developing a major maintenance and capital improvements plan for Harvard's historic public buildings. Appropriate funds as needed for code analysis, structural, mechanical, accessibility and other design services to support the Committee's work.
- Regularly evaluate Harvard's procedures for costing municipal services and adjust fee schedules as required to obtain adequate revenue from local receipts.
- Establish a Town Government Study Committee to review the adequacy of Harvard's existing form and structure of government to meet local needs. In the near future, attention should be given to:
 - A formal consolidation of traditional public works functions under a Department of Public Works
 - Establishing a Department of Planning and Community Development and hiring a full-time planning director to coordinate the responsibilities and personnel of the Planning Board, Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, and other town committees with policy or advisory roles in development and resource protection.

Circulation & Traffic Element

Concepts

The Circulation & Traffic Element of the Master Plan is guided by four concepts:

- Harvard's vision of sustainability calls for realistic, safe and accessible opportunities for non-vehicular travel in and between its villages, community service and commercial areas. Land use regulations to encourage village development must be complemented by public and private investment to build, maintain and promote a reasonable system of pedestrian facilities within village centers, and by public investment in facilities to connect village centers.



Impressions from the road in Harvard.

- Directing growth toward established areas will help to reduce overall traffic and encourage residents to park, walk to and patronize a variety of shops and services. However, Harvard's residential development is already widely dispersed throughout the town. Reducing the number of trips generated by low-density development will help, but it is not enough to alter in a substantial way either the speed or volume of traffic on Harvard's rural roads.
- Resident and non-local drivers have a shared responsibility for traffic safety in Harvard. Street classification policies, traffic calming techniques, public education and consistent police enforcement are available techniques for making Harvard roads safe for vehicular and non-vehicular users. The town needs to identify acceptable ways to control traffic and achieve resident buy-in.
- A pro-active, assertive role in regional transportation planning and major development review is very important. Establishing and maintaining credibility with other communities and regional organizations will be important for Harvard's ability to advocate for traffic management improvements that respect the town's character.

Recommendations

- Create and authorize a "working group" to coordinate the development of a community-based traffic management program. The recently appointed Traffic Safety Advisory Committee might fill this role. Public participation and support are essential to the success of any traffic management program because residents will be required to accept the same limitations, inconvenience and enforcement consequences as non-local drivers.
- Establish an agreed-upon road classification system that guides priorities for investing in signage, roadway, intersection and traffic management improvements.
- Review posted speed limits for consistency, appropriateness, visibility and effective placement of signs. In many sections of Harvard, speed (more than volume or congestion) appears to be the primary traffic problem that Harvard needs to address.
- Adopt consistent standards for signage and pavement striping for each class of road to communicate roadway conditions and shape appropriate driving behavior.

- Consider traffic-calming strategies for rural roadways, such as but not limited to:
 - The targeted use of pavement striping to narrow travel lanes on roads where traffic speeds are often problematic.
 - Use gateways as effective agents to convey Harvard's seriousness about enforcing traffic laws. Attractive, strategically located "welcome" signs that double as a warning to drivers should be mounted at all entries into Harvard.
 - Placement of mobile "speed alerts" along roads with a high incidence of speeding problems and within 300 feet of gateway signage.
 - Raised intersections at problematic locations, particularly along Bolton Road, Stow Road and Slough Road.
 - Speed tables (similar to long speed bumps) at two or three locations along Prospect Hill and Still River Road, and Littleton County Road.
- Support the Harvard Police Department in its efforts to enforce traffic laws. Though the population of Harvard is small, the town is fairly large and its circulation system is comprised of long, winding roads. Harvard cannot expect to manage traffic effectively without adequate police personnel and equipment.
- Ayer Road north of Route 2 poses a unique set of challenges for Harvard. More appropriate site plan standards and a different approach to zoning for the entire area should help to improve traffic safety through new development, but the issues on Ayer Road are more complicated than zoning alone can address. Moreover, the problems exist today and they are serious enough to warrant immediate attention.
- Harvard needs a corridor study for Ayer Road in order to examine and choose the most effective roadway improvements, intersection controls and traffic calming measures to manage speeds, reduce accidents and discourage truck traffic. A corridor study is also essential for planning pedestrian and bicycle access improvements within the district. A special planning committee comprised of area residents, business property owners, representation from the Harvard Planning Board, Police and Highway Departments, and MassDevelopment should be formed to act as the citizen advisory committee for this effort. A corridor study may be instrumental in helping Harvard obtain competitive standing for implementation funds through the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- Harvard needs to begin planning for a bicycle path system that encourages non-vehicular travel between the Town Center, the Community Commercial District and Devens. Though residents of neighborhoods near the closed access routes to Devens are understandably concerned about opening roads for vehicular access, a bicycle and pedestrian access system would facilitate travel between these two sections of Harvard without the impacts of traffic volumes or speed. Toward this end, the town should explore transportation planning opportunities with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission.

