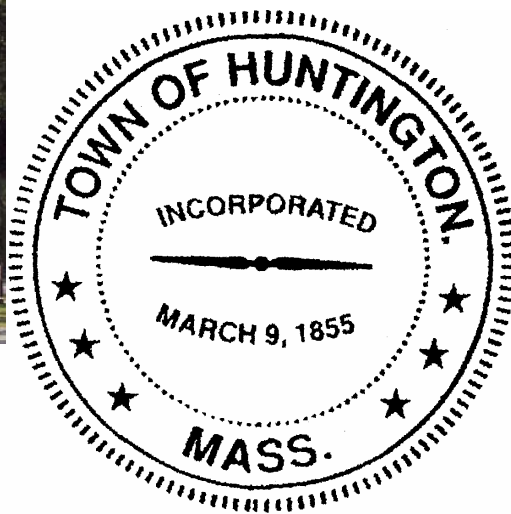


Huntington Vision: Huntington Community Development Plan

Town of Huntington, Massachusetts



Wayne Feiden, AICP, **F**eiden Associates,
Planning and Environmental Consultants
www.Feiden.org or Huntington@Feiden.org

Huntington Vision: Huntington Community Development Plan, 2003

Town of Huntington, Massachusetts

Huntington Vision: Huntington Community Development Plan reflects the consensus of numerous town boards (Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board, Conservation Commission, and Open Space Committee) and the dozens of residents who participated in community forums. At our numerous community workshops and board meetings our planning process was open and inclusive and attempted to ensure that all viewpoints were represented.

This plan is intended to help guide future planning and policy initiatives. Our Vision and planning, however, is a **process**, not a onetime effort. We commit to continue to work with our residents to ensure a future we all can embrace.

Visioning and Workshop Sessions	Format
Kick-off Planning Session (3/13/02)	Steering Committee*
What Should Huntington's Vision Be? (4/3/02)	Community workshop
Planning Session (5/1/02)	Steering Committee*
Did we get Huntington's Vision Right? (5/22/02)	Community workshop
Final Planning Session (5/29/02)	Steering Committee*
Community Development Plan Kickoff (1/22/03)	Steering Committee*
Land use and housing (2/26/03)	Steering Committee*
Economic development and natural resources (3/19/03)	Steering Committee*
Open Space, resource protection and housing (5/20/03)	Community workshop
Natural resources, housing, economic development, transportation (6/24/03)	Community workshop
CD Plan--Working meeting (9/24/03)	Planning & Selectmen
CD Plan--Working meeting (10/22/03)	Steering Committee*
Transportation Final Workshop (10/30/03)	Community Workshop

*Steering Committee members participated during Planning Board and Select Board meetings.

This plan was developed using funds provided pursuant to Massachusetts Executive Order 418. All of the conclusions, however, are those of the Town of Huntington and its consultants



Wayne Feiden, AICP, **F**eiden Associates,
Planning and Environmental Consultants
www.Feiden.org or Huntington@Feiden.org

Huntington Vision: Huntington Community Development Plan

Huntington Community Development Steering Committee

Al LaFrance, Select Board Chair
Tracey Kellam-Masloski, Select Board
Jim Watkins, Select Board
Cathy Brisebois, Select Board (retired 2003)
Steve Hamlin, Planning Board Chair & Jacob's Ladder Trail
Mike Brisebois, Planning Board
Ed Grabowski, Planning Board & Open Space
Linda Hamlin, Planning Board & Jacob's Ladder Trail
Palma Luppi, Planning Board
Earl Health, Planning Board
George Webb, Zoning Board Chair
Ellen Davis, Zoning Board
Richard Newberry, Zoning Board Immediate Past Chair
Lou Bryda, Zoning Board
Ruth Pardoe, Open Space Com. Chair
Jeff Penn, Open Space Committee & Jacob's Ladder Trail
Cathy Grabowski, Conservation Com.
Miriam Watkins, Conservation Com. & Open Space Committee
Dianna Sliwa, Administrative Assistant
Marilyn Newberry, Community Development Plan Liaison



Consultants

Wayne Feiden, AICP, Feiden Associates, Planning and Environmental Consultants
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (Transportation Element)

Cover photos

Jeff Penn

Funding (provided pursuant to Massachusetts Executive Order 418 process)

Executive Order 418 Interagency Work Group (project and funding coordination)
Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Construction
Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
Massachusetts Department of Economic Development

Regional Planning Agency

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)—Coordination of EO418 Scope and Product through EO 418 Interagency Work Group, Project Review, and Transportation Element

***Huntington Vision:
Huntington Community Development Plan***

Table of Contents

Huntington Vision	5
Executive Summary and Action Plan--Putting it all Together	7
Community Development Plan Implementation Strategy	7
Open Space and Resource Protection.....	11
Open Space and Resource Protection.....	12
Goals and Objectives.....	12
Future Planning Needs	14
Huntington Build-Out Analysis	15
Huntington Zoning by-laws	18
Huntington Subdivision Rules and Regulations.....	19
Huntington General By-Laws	20
Water Budget Analysis (waiver granted).....	20
Water Quality Analysis (waiver granted).....	21
Open Space, Scenic, Cultural, Historic and Archeological Resources	21
Housing.....	24
Goals and Objectives.....	24
Housing Inventory and Demographics.....	26
Housing Needs Report.....	29
Homeownership Rate	30
Housing Supply and Demand Comparison	30
Goals and Objectives.....	33
Investment/Grant Actions.....	34
Transportation Actions	35
Current and Future Economic Inventory	35
Journey to Work Summary	38
Huntington Tax Base and Finances.....	38
Transportation: Route 112 and 20 Corridor Study	40
APPENDIX—Community Input from Visioning Workshops.....	41

Huntington Vision

We, the residents of Huntington, envision preserving the rural way of life, accepting growth as it happens but channeling that growth to preserve our rural character.

Our future must preserve our rural character, natural and built environment, scenic vistas, hillsides, rivers, and historic quality.

New development is inevitable; even though many of us might wish that it not be so. We share a positive vision, however, of accommodating growth consistent with the character of our community. We must ensure that future development can meet a simple charge: development must enhance our community and not detract from it.

New development should fit into, rather than displace, nature. It must be thoughtfully laid out, designed, and built. We seek not “cookie-cutter” development but a “design-with-nature” approach. Quality development that enhances our community will be welcome.

We do not embrace large-scale development. We can, however, embrace projects and housing that preserve distant and close vistas. Development can blend, not necessarily hide, housing into the woods and not in our fields or on our ridges. Development can create structures with well- designed proportions and detailing that enhances the architectural integrity of our community. We can do this without driving up the cost of housing.

Even as we direct new development towards appropriate growth, we need to take measures to revitalize housing, especially in our historic village areas, downtown and Norwich Hill. Revitalization will enhance our community and our economy, and preserve some of our best and most affordable housing stock.

We need to maintain the ability of our residents and our children to afford to stay here. We believe, that in our community, it is generally more effective to preserve existing affordability, from rental housing in and near downtown to inexpensive housing throughout our community, than to sponsor subsidized affordable housing projects.

We are not afraid of increasing the diversity in our community, including a diversity of housing options. We can best do this by maintaining our older housing, especially the rental stock near downtown that provides some of our most critical affordable units, and by allowing on-going production of well-designed housing that meets a diversity of housing needs, such as those of the elderly and single households. For at least the medium term, our supply of housing will remain affordable to our residents because our inventory of land and housing is high enough to avoid artificially inflating the market.

As our town grows and diversifies, so will the need for affordable, quality social services. We need to build on the foundation that exists in the form of the Hampshire Community Action Commission, New Beginnings Domestic Violence Prevention, Gateway Food Pantry, Council on Aging, Huntington Health Center, Southern Hilltowns Adult Education Center, and school-based services.

We love our small rural downtown, and we envision an expanded role for downtown as one of our primary community focal points and visitor destinations. In order to bring people downtown and build our identity, we will expand commercial, cultural, and social service activity in our commercial district, Stanton Hall, the Town Common, and along the Westfield River. Creation

of the Huntington Village Park on the West Branch of the Westfield River is a key first step that we can take to revitalize our village. We seek to expand the commercial and civic activity in our downtown in order to create jobs and expand our tax base.

In addition to downtown, we see other opportunities to enhance our community character, stimulate positive community development, and end slums and blight. Other community focal points, such as North Hall, the library, a reused Murrayfield School (possibly as a community center or town hall), Westfield River greenways, improved river vistas, and other new opportunities, could all help define our community, encourage activities compatible with our vision and our economic needs, and contribute to the quality of life. These activities can build on our rich assets and history, while complementing our regional identity as a first-class cultural and outdoor recreation area.

Targeted open space acquisitions can also be used to complement our community identity, create focal points, and channel development.

To maintain and improve our quality of life, we need to expand the economic activity in our community. We want economic activity that is compatible with our rural community. Our revitalized downtown and community focal points will help, but we need to do more. Commercial activities that take advantage of our outdoor recreation and natural resources, such as a new restaurant on the river, canoe rentals, a bed-and-breakfast, also build jobs, our tax base, and enhance our identity. Traditional and artistic home occupations and businesses, when designed to avoid intrusion on the community, employ our residents and provide the best incubators for the businesses that will expand in the future.

We want to work to minimize conflicts between residents and traditional land-based businesses. As a rural community, however, we do not want to exclude all of those traditional businesses that support our residents, bring dollars into our community, and provide raw materials. Some traditional land-based businesses, such as agriculture and forestry, create minimal conflicts and we will work to ensure that restrictions never threaten these businesses. Other traditional businesses, such as earth removal, are more problematic to their neighbors. We are committed to examining each case fairly on its own merits, consistent with town bylaws.

We need work together as a community to maintain our high quality of life. We are always stronger when we work together. Our community must always include a wonderful natural and built environment, excellent education and alternative education systems, and strong and appropriate human services.

As we move forward to implement this vision, we will strive in everything we do to find the balance that works for us between preservation and property rights and between quality of life and traditional practices. We intend on regulating as necessary but not over-regulating. As part of this, we recognize the necessity of keeping open and expanding the community dialogue in order to create cooperative compromises and solutions to our challenges.

Executive Summary and Action Plan--Putting it all Together

Goals, objectives, actions, and relevant findings are found within the open space, housing, economic development, and transportation section of this plan.

In addition to the goals and objectives identified throughout the plan, Huntington identified goals and objectives that cut across multiple areas.

Overarching Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Make planning an on-going process.

Objective 1-1. Establish an on-going process to ensure that the Community Development plan is updated regularly or expanded into a full comprehensive plan.

Objective 1-2. Improve the town's information systems to make planning easier, including improving the electronic version of the Assessors' mapping to make the mapping more useable for planning purposes.

Goal 2. Work with state and federal officials to seek funding for sustainable development planning and implementation.

Objective 1-1. Support regional efforts to obtain a fair share of state funding for transit services to serve elderly and low-income residents.

It is important that town residents understand that Huntington and the Huntington Planning Board is committed to planning as an inclusive on-going process. Huntington's needs and opportunities will evolve, and planning must be on-going to achieve those goals.

Likewise, sustainable development patterns, which are advocated at every level of government, are only achievable when state and federal policy and funding is reasonable to fund state and federal mandates and is fairly distributed. As an example, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts collects a state-wide sales tax of 1% which is dedicated to transit, but all of these funds go to Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), the regional transportation agency that serves the Boston metropolitan area. This formula provides absolutely no funding for Huntington and the regional transportation agencies in western Massachusetts.

In each section of this plan, actions are identified to help achieve the identified goals and objectives. The major actions are summarized below, along with a possible implementation strategy. Other actions are included within each section of the report and are not summarized below.

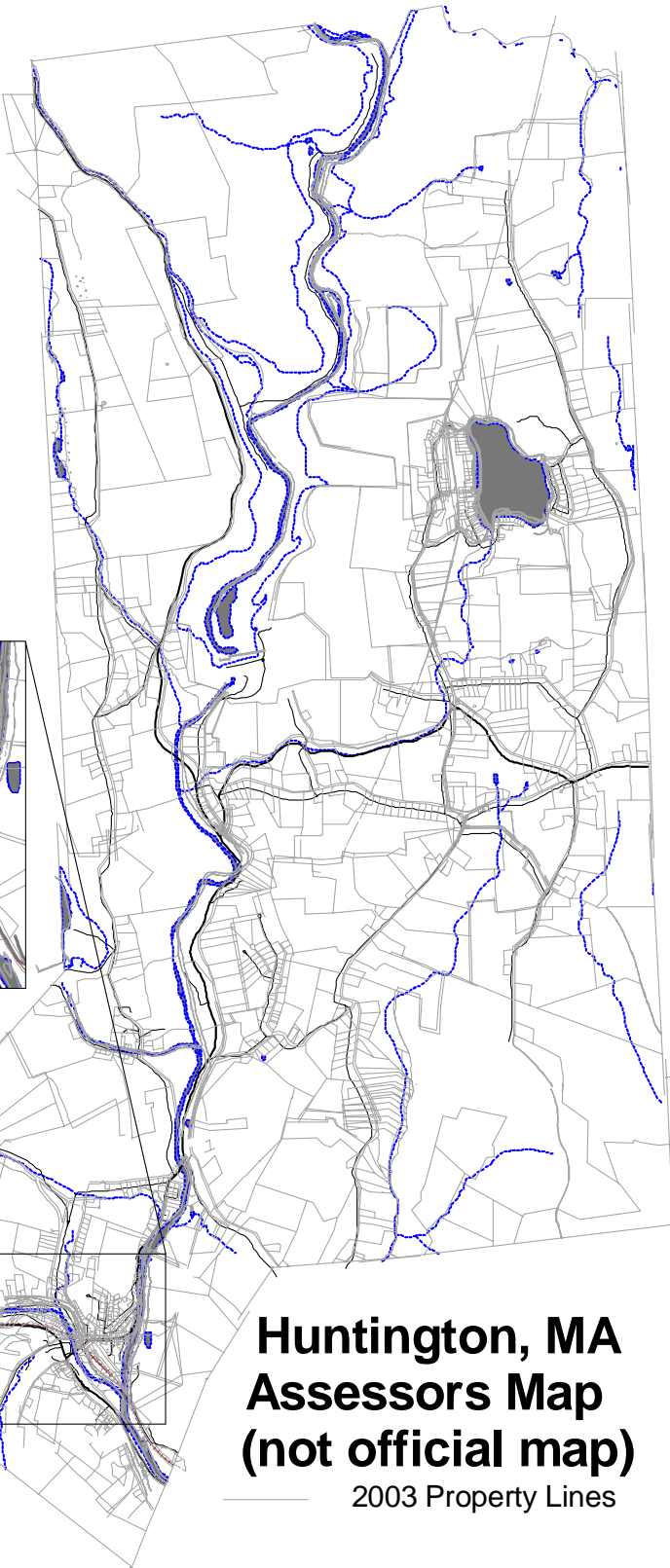
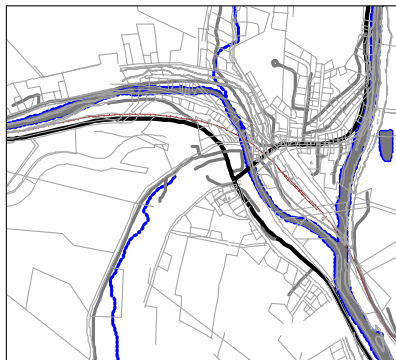
Community Development Plan Implementation Strategy

Task (see full plan for details)	By Whom	Time Period
Zoning Revisions 1. Create the tools to address large subdivision and retirement home projects. 2. When subdivisions or other large-scale residential development does occur, encourage development patterns that are attractive, in keeping with the town's character, and preserve open space (open space residential development)	Planning Board, Zoning Board, with Selectmen and Open Space Committee. Technical assistance from PVPC, Highland Communities	Short to medium term

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Avoid significantly increasing the cost of traditional non-project housing. 4. Allow accessory apartments for families and affordable housing. 5. Create ridge-top development standards. 6. Tweak home occupations language to encourage arts, tourism, and compatible uses. 7. Allow eco-tourism uses throughout town by special permit. 8. Address the zoning at the intersection of Routes 20 and 112. 9. Use business zoning to better define and encourage the community's vision. 10. Adopt environmental performance standards. 11. Use an easier to read format and tables in the zoning ordinance. 	<p>Initiative or other regional planning resources, Feiden Associates</p> <p>Hold informal public meetings on changes before formal process</p>	
<p>Subdivision Revisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create tools to address large subdivision and retirement home projects. 2. Revise rules to create projects consistent with the town vision. 3. When subdivisions do occur, encourage development patterns that are attractive, in keeping with the town's character, and preserve open space (open space residential development). 	<p>Planning Board with Selectmen, assistance from PVPC, HCI or other regional planning resources, and Feiden Associates</p>	<p>Medium term</p>
<p>Historic Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a town-wide comprehensive historic preservation plan 	<p>Historic Commission, with Planning Board, Open Space Committee, Selectmen, and assistance from PVPC</p>	<p>Medium to long term</p>
<p>Water Supply and Water Quality Planning <i>(An analysis of these areas was not included in this plan. The town and the Commonwealth waived this analysis to allow a focus on other planning issues.)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct water supply planning to ensure clean and ample water for downtown economic development and all water users. 2. Conduct water quality planning to preserve and enhance the quality of storm water runoff to preserve the downtown quality of life and the quality of the Westfield River. 	<p>Water Supply: Water and Sewer Commissioners and Fire Department, with Selectmen</p> <p>Water Quality: Planning Board and Conservation Commission, with Selectmen and Public Works.</p>	<p>Medium to long term</p>
<p>Future Planning Needs</p> <p>Examine disused roads and discontinue those roads that are not appropriate for development</p>	<p>Planning Board, working with Selectmen and Public Works</p>	<p>Medium to long term</p>

Housing Rehabilitation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rehabilitate village/downtown housing 2. Rehabilitate low-income housing 3. Link rehabs to C. 40B inventory credit. 4. EO-418 Housing Certification 	Selectmen with Planning Board, PVPC, Hilltown CDC and possibly other non-profit partners	Medium term
Public Outreach/Community Actions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish annual or other routine “what do we need to do now” public forum planning meeting, co-sponsored by PB. 2. Consider using periodic public forums to expand the plan into a full comprehensive plan. 3. Use the Town web site, www.huntingtonma.org/, and public access cable television channel to post and televise major planning events. 4. Develop a strong constituency to oppose closing the Route 112 Bridge (“green bridge”) without a nearby temporary bridge or at least a pedestrian bridge during the planned bridge reconstruction. 5. During the Route 112 bridge reconstruction increase the vibrancy and draw of downtown. 6. Build a downtown Huntington sense of community through cleanup and beautification. 7. Organize more art and performance activities in Huntington Center and in North Hall. 8. Build an outreach to downtown Huntington residents to include them in downtown civic life and find mutual solutions to problems 9. Conduct an outreach effort to encourage local businesses, especially downtown business, home occupations, and eco-tourism, to take advantage of the Hilltown CDC’s small business assistance programs. 10. Form a Huntington village association, building on current work of Huntington business owners, (e.g. the current Christmas on the Green). 	Planning Board with other town boards, the Police and the Hilltown CDC	Short to long term
Information Systems Actions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update and maintain the Assessors’ maps as seamless geo-referenced electronic files to allow planning analysis and easier future map maintenance. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The town’s electronic Assessors’ maps (CAD) look accurate but are not geo-referenced and contain significant errors. This data was imported into a geographic information system for this plan (ArcView, Mass State Plane NAD 1983) to facilitate planning. The GIS files are useable for viewing on full GIS systems and free GIS viewers, but are NOT useable for geographic analysis. The conversion process geo-referenced parcels and maintained the 	Selectmen and Assessors	Short to medium term

<p>accuracy of the parcels, but it did not correct existing errors. The lack of registration of parcels along roads and the overlap of parcel lines (see Assessors Map below) clearly demonstrates the limits of the town's data.</p> <p>b. Improving these maps could potentially be done in coordination with HCI's efforts to provide GIS maps to the Hilltowns and/or it could potentially be grant-funded through MassGIS's competitive grants program.</p>		
<p>Investment/Grant Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obtain grants to rehabilitate village housing and low-income units throughout town. 2. Solicit grant and outside funding for increased visual and performance arts. 3. Support existing social service agencies. 4. Consider requesting EPA Targeted Site Assessment money for former commercial and industrial sites near downtown Huntington to encourage future investment. 5. Improve the downtown off-street parking lot and address related drainage problems. 	<p>Selectmen with Planning Board, PVPC, Hilltown CDC, Council on Aging, Huntington Health Center, Gateway Regional and other partners</p>	<p>Medium term</p>
<p>Transportation Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The town should especially focus on where improvements that can be done in conjunction with the planned 2004 Route 20 repaving. 2. Develop a town consensus on where to locate a future Mass Pike exit close enough to improve access to Huntington but not so close as to harm the town's character. 3. Minimize road signage but improve signage that channels interest in Huntington Center. 4. Request a PVPC journey-to-work analysis. 5. Request that Blandford Hill Road be reclassified from a collector road to a local street and that Bromley Road be reclassified from a local street to a collector road. 6. Request downtown improvements for Route 20 and 112. 7. The town should lobby state and federal officials for increased regional transit funding. Transit improvements are needed to serve elderly and low income residents. In the current fiscal environment, neither Huntington nor the regional transportation agencies can afford to fund any transit improvements. 8. Petition MassHighway to allow parking on Route 20 and 112 near downtown. 9. Request PVPC perform a downtown parking study. 	<p>Selectmen and Planning Board working with PVPC and MassHighway</p>	<p>Short to long term</p>



Huntington, MA Assessors Map (not official map)

2003 Property Lines

Open Space and Resource Protection

This open space and resource protection element examines Huntington's open space and natural resources. It complements, and does not replace, Huntington's Open Space Plan.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Preserve Huntington's rural character, pristine environment, community historical, geological, and other focal points, open space, and outdoor recreation-based amenities. Four focal points should be:

- **Ecological resources, especially rare and critical wildlife habitat and corridors**
- **Open space greenways along rivers and waterways.**
- **Vistas and viewshed protection**
- **Open space that enhances the quality of life, especially in Huntington Center**

Objective 1-1. Use Huntington's Open Space Plan as the blueprint for open space acquisition and preservation.

Objective 1-2. Create tools to implement the Open Space Plan

Objective 1-3. Revise zoning regulations to address new threats to open space, especially as a result of new development pressures and the Commonwealth's relaxing the minimum percolation test requirements for septic systems.

Objective 1-4. Protect built features, including stone walls and historic structures

Objective 1-5. Encourage greater use of Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B tax incentives to keep land open

Objective 1-6. Create a town-wide comprehensive historic preservation plan.

Objective 1-7. Examine disused roads and discontinue those roads that are not appropriate for development.

Goal 2. Enhance Huntington's environment

Objective 2-1. Improve surface and drinking water protection and quality

Objective 2-2. Examine Huntington's land use and historical land use to understand environmental threats to water supplies and surface waters.

Open Space and Resource Protection Actions

1. Continue town discussion of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and consider adopting it, as well as other methods to fund open space acquisition. Any property tax surcharge, even the relatively small one associated with CPS, is difficult to fund, especially given what may be competing demand for future Property 2 ½ overrides. Given the state matching funds, however, and the ability of CPA funds to leverage other grants, CPA is one of the most effective mechanisms for open space and historic preservation (along with affordable housing). If CPA is adopted, the option of exempting the first \$100,000 of property from CPA surcharge seems critical.

If the town decides that CPA is not the best route, the town could consider a dedicated Property 2 ½ override to fund open space acquisition and other community development goals. This route gives the town more flexibility to identify its own needs, but does not allow the CPA state match.

The town could also fund open space acquisition from its own available funds, especially in years when there is adequate free cash to otherwise lower tax rates below the state levy limit.

Estimated Revenue from CPA in Huntington*

Exemptions Adopted	1% Surcharge	2% Surcharge	3% Surcharge
None	\$17,368	\$34,737	\$52,105
\$100,000 of residential property	\$3,372	\$6,743	\$10,115
\$100,000 residential and Low/moderate income residents	\$2,672	\$5,343	\$8,015

*Source: Highland Communities Initiative, TTOR, Fiscal Year 2003 analysis

Estimated Annual Cost to Homeowners if CPA is adopted in Huntington*

	For Residential Properties Valued at:			
	\$100,000	\$200,000	\$300,000	\$500,000
1% surcharge, no exemptions	\$17	\$34	\$51	\$85
2% surcharge, no exemptions	\$34	\$68	\$103	\$171
3% surcharge, no exemptions	\$51	\$103	\$154	\$256
1% surcharge, \$100,000 exempt	\$0	\$17	\$34	\$68
2% surcharge, \$100,000 exempt	\$0	\$34	\$68	\$137
3% surcharge, \$100,000 exempt	\$0	\$51	\$103	\$205

*Source: Highland Communities Initiative, TTOR, Fiscal Year 2003 analysis

2. Better use the Conservation Commission's Conservation Fund to allow outside donations of conservation funds and make it easy for the Conservation Commission to move fast on purchases.
3. Examine Huntington's land use history and identify the risks of hazardous waste releases that could harm waterways and water supplies.
4. Improve planning and open space partnerships with The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR), TTOR's Highland Communities Initiative (HCI), The Nature Conservancy, the Hilltown Land Trust, as well as existing partnerships with the Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway Advisory Board, the Westfield River Association, and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for joint resource protection actions.
5. Improve the visibility of open space preservation efforts by preserving parcels that are critical to preserve views and viewsheds, especially ridge-top parcels.
6. Existing efforts to preserve and improve open space along the river adjacent to Huntington Center (especially the Jacob's Ladder Trail Enhancement/HCI funded Woolen Mill property project) are especially important to Huntington's efforts to define its center and character defining features.
7. Working with the state, provide opportunities for a public or quasi-public swimming beach, with provisions for adequate patrolling to prevent the significant trash, garbage and diaper accumulations that occur at the state parks, roadside rest areas, and other areas with public access to the river. Such a beach will build the outdoor-based character of the community and divert some of the misuse and trash dumping that currently occurs because of a lack of properly supervised recreation opportunities.
8. Consider whether Norwich Center, Murray Field, or any areas of town should be nominated for national historic designation (in addition to the current downtown historic district).
9. Create a town-wide comprehensive historic preservation plan, probably as a standalone plan. If desired, especially if the emphasis was on stonewalls and other scattered historic resources, the plan could be a section of the open space and recreation plan. A historic preservation plan can further identify character-defining and otherwise significant historic, cultural, and archeological features and create strategies to preserve those features.

Zoning and Subdivision Actions

1. Create a ridge-top zoning by-law to preserve character-defining vistas. This should be done by regulating how ridge-top properties can be developed in ways that allow properties to be developed without harming the vistas that add to the value of property everywhere in Huntington. Standards should allow the development of ridge-top properties and the development of views from ridge-top development.
2. Zoning should ensure that new development blends in with the existing natural and built environment.
3. Open space residential development/creative development zoning by-laws need simplification and revisions to greatly enhance the quality of any major new development that comes to Huntington.
4. Revise the subdivision regulations significantly to ensure that new development and roads blend in with the existing natural and built environment. Road width, radius, grade, dead-end and cul-de-sac standards, fire flows, and other key features need to be better addressed.
5. Adopt Site Plan Approval Standards to be ready to address large projects that could have the ability to change the character of a portion of town, such as a large second home development or a medium size franchise development at the corner of Route 20 and Route 112. Although development of this site would be a challenge, and would almost certainly require some difficult land assembly, it could be a key potential commercial site, and possibly the only site that would acquire a high-traffic retail or restaurant franchise.
6. Review and, if necessary, revise zoning requirements to address the state's pending relaxation of minimum percolation test requirements for septic systems. Although this relaxation is consistent with adequate environmental protection, it will open up more land to development.
7. Consider adopting more stringent environmental performance standards with minimum standards. This may be important if special permit uses are liberalized in residential areas and potentially could allow less stringent dimensional standards in some areas, especially the Central Business district. The standards could include:
 - a. Allowable sound/noise emissions
 - b. Allowable lighting levels (especially for commercial projects)
 - c. Other emission standards
 - d. Minimum landscaping requirements (especially for commercial projects)
 - e. Minimum design standards for commercial projects.
8. The zoning tables and formatting could be simplified to make the by-laws easier to read and understand.
9. The vision for the Central Business and Business districts should be clearer and included in the zoning. For example, only single-family homes are allowed by-right in the Central Business District, even though arguably the town should be encouraging mixed-use buildings and not single-family uses.
10. Huntington should fully examine the zoning recommendation from the Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway planning process and implement the ones if considers relevant to its needs. This planning effort is being coordinated by the Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway, Inc., and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)

Future Planning Needs

1. Huntington should continue to plan to ensure an adequate water supply to serve domestic and fire fighting needs within the public water service area with a dependable and clean water supply.

2. Huntington should ensure that water quality in its downtown area and in all areas adjacent to the Westfield River is not degraded.
3. Huntington should examine the status of its entire apparently discontinued and abandoned road to understand the status of the roads and formally discontinue any roads that are not appropriate for future development.

(See also recommended changes to accessory apartments in the housing section and changes to home occupations, eco-tourism, and business districts in the economic development section. See also maps in the Map section of the Action Plan.)

Huntington Build-Out Analysis

Over a long time period, a staggering amount of development is possible in Huntington. If this development occurred, it would dramatically change the look and feel of the town.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's 2001 build-out analysis, using a methodology established by the Commonwealth, is based on known environmental limitations and current town bylaws and state laws. It is, however, a broad-brush analysis that underestimates development constraints, and therefore overestimates ultimate build-out.

The PVPC/Commonwealth build-out analysis does not make any projection as to when any community would actually achieve build-out. In Huntington's case, build-out would be many years in the future.

In spite of these limitations, however, the build-out analysis should serve as a wakeup call to the community concerning the direction that development could eventually take in Huntington.

Huntington Planning Board members have also expressed a desire for better information on the municipal fiscal impacts of development. Research by the American Farmland Trust (www.Farmland.org) and others indicates that, on the average, residential development do not generate enough taxes and state and federal aid to cover required municipal services to serve that development. Private farms, forests, commercial, and industrial uses, however, do generate more than enough funds to cover the municipal services to serve this development. The Highland Community Initiative (HCI) is currently working with the American Farmland Trust (AFT) to do a more detailed analysis for the HCI region, including Huntington.

See also Huntington Composite Development and Partial Constraints Map below. This map shows development constraints and potential new development.

Huntington Build-Out Analysis

Additional developable area	10,069 Acres
Additional housing units	3,014 dwelling units
Additional residents	8,500 residents
Additional commercial/industrial floor area	7,870,952 square feet
Additional school children	1,718 school-age children
Additional residential water demand	637,536 gallons plus
Plus commercial/industrial water demand	590,321 gallons
Additional municipal solid waste (Non-recyclable solid waste)	4,360 tons/year (3,102 tons/year)
Additional roadway	68 miles

Source: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 2001 Build-out Analysis (MA EOEA methodology)

Methods

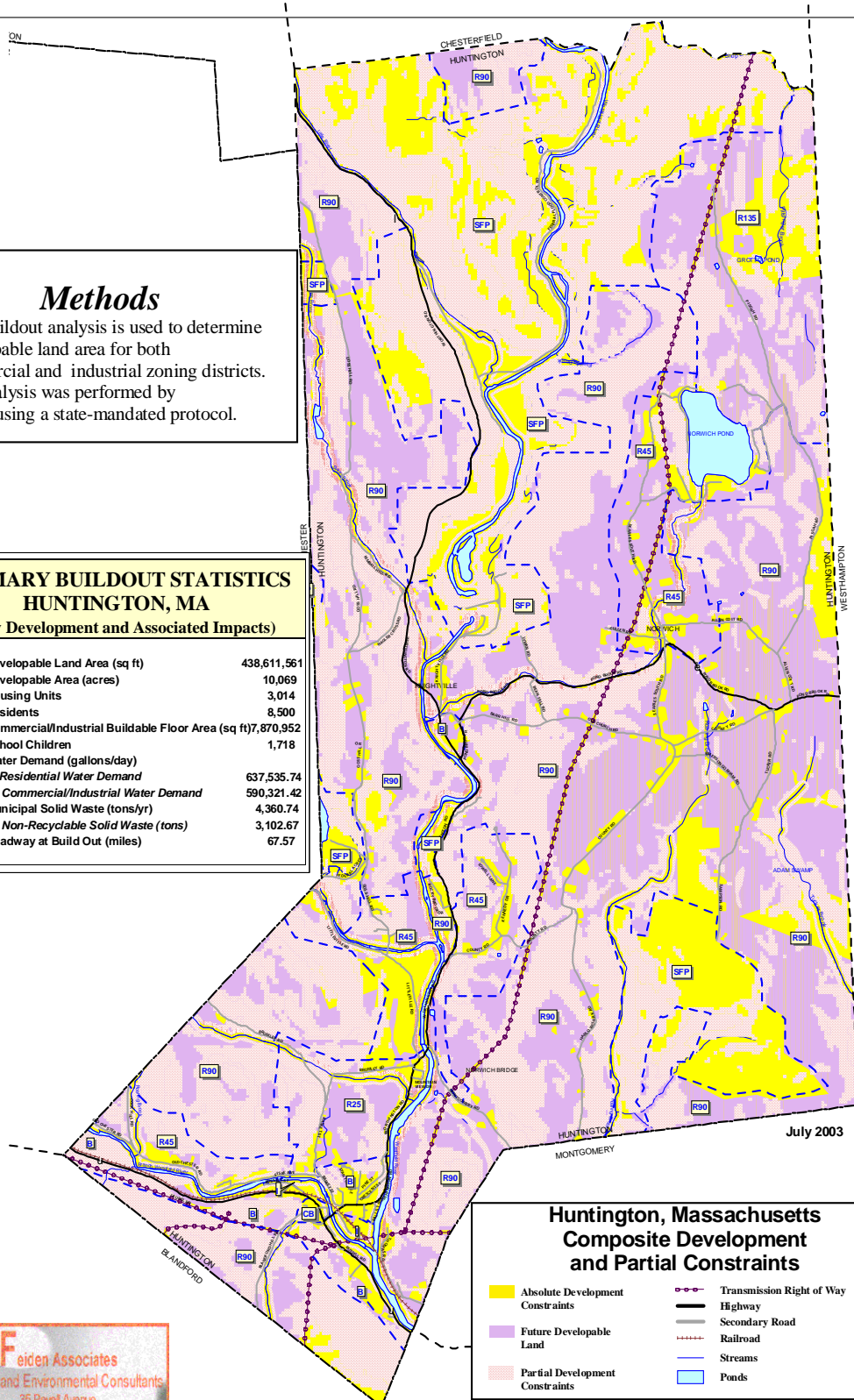
This buildout analysis is used to determine developable land area for both commercial and industrial zoning districts. The analysis was performed by PVPC using a state-mandated protocol.

SUMMARY BUILDOUT STATISTICS HUNTINGTON, MA (New Development and Associated Impacts)

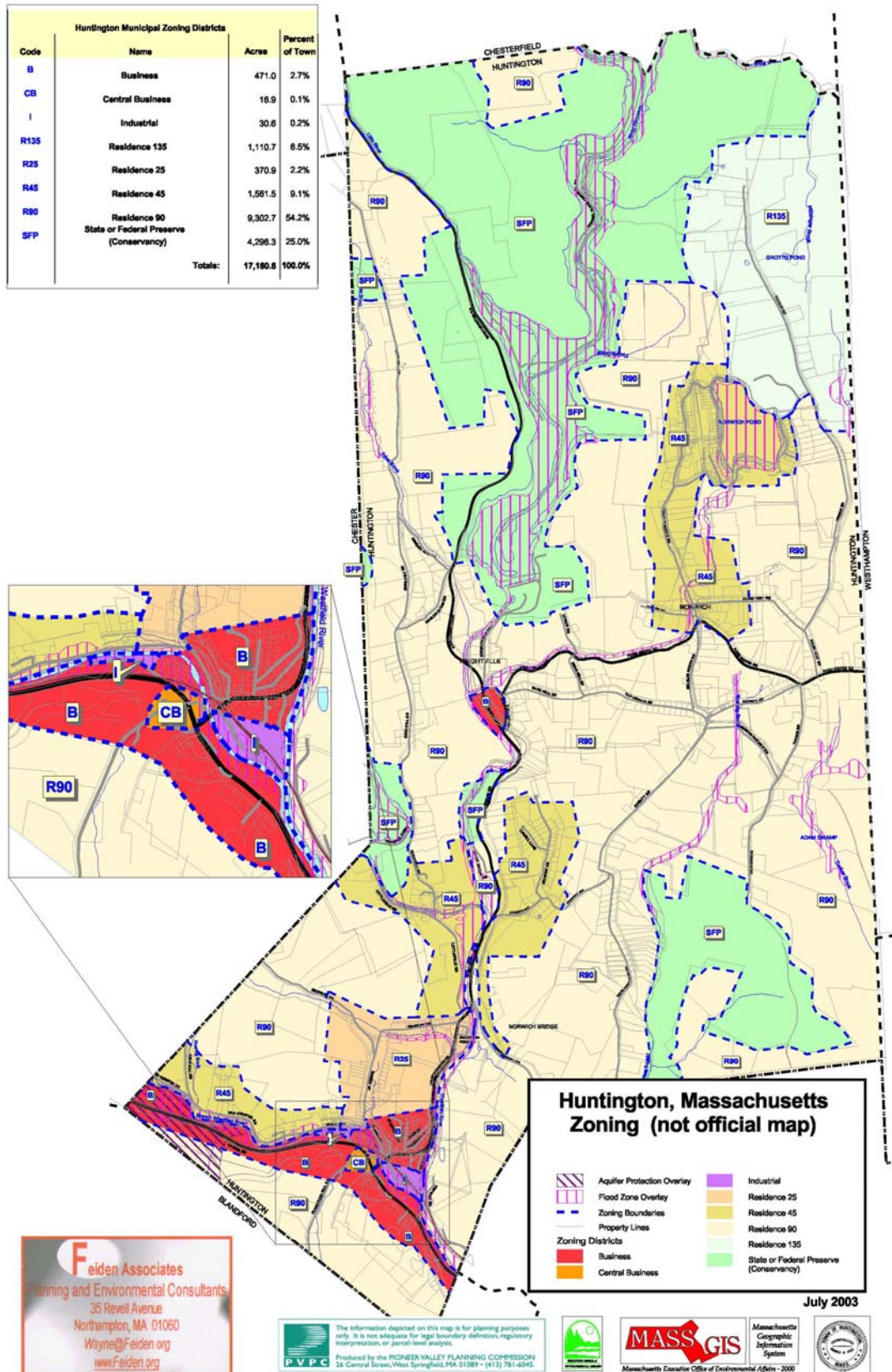
Additional Developable Land Area (sq ft)	438,611,561
Additional Developable Area (acres)	10,069
Additional Housing Units	3,014
Additional Residents	8,500
Additional Commercial/Industrial Buildable Floor Area (sq ft)	7,870,952
Additional School Children	1,718
Additional Water Demand (gallons/day)	
Additional Residential Water Demand	637,535.74
Additional Commercial/Industrial Water Demand	590,321.42
Additional Municipal Solid Waste (tons/yr)	4,360.74
Additional Non-Recyclable Solid Waste (tons)	3,102.67
Additional Roadway at Build Out (miles)	67.57



The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or professional design.
Produced by the PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
26 Central Street, West Springfield, MA 01103 • (413) 781-6845



Huntington Municipal Zoning Districts			
Code	Name	Acres	Percent of Town
B	Business	471.0	2.7%
CB	Central Business	16.9	0.1%
I	Industrial	30.6	0.2%
R135	Residence 135	1,110.7	6.5%
R25	Residence 25	370.9	2.2%
R45	Residence 45	1,561.5	9.1%
R90	Residence 90	9,302.7	54.2%
SFP	State or Federal Preserve (Conservancy)	4,296.3	25.0%
Totals:		17,180.8	100.0%



Huntington Zoning By-Laws

Huntington's zoning was adopted October 15, 1985 and has been amended and corrected periodically since then. The Zoning divides the town into a series of zoning districts and overlay zoning districts (see summary table below and zoning map above).

Zoning District Summary

Zoning District	Location	Basic Issues
Central Business	Huntington Center	Require a special permit for all but single family, permissive dimensional standards
Business	Most of Route 20 Route 112 north of the Route 20	Covers a large area.
Industrial	North-east and north-west of the center	
Residence 25	Just north of downtown commercial area	25,000 sq. ft. min lot size Larger for some uses
Residence 45	Norwich Pond and denser areas away from the center	45,000 sq. ft. min lot size Larger for some uses
Residence 90	Most of the outlying areas of town	90,000 sq. ft. min. lot size. Larger for some uses
Residence 135	Northeast corner of town	135,000 sq. ft. min. lot size Larger for some uses
Open Public Land	State or Federally preserved lands	No future development
Aquifer Protection Overlay*	Small area of public drinking water aquifer	Stricter environmental standards
Flood Zone Overlay*	Floodplain areas adjacent to the river	Stricter environmental standards
River Protection Overlay*	Westfield River and adjacent land	Stricter environmental standards

*Overlays are zones that exist over and above underlying zoning districts. The stricter of the two rules governing those areas apply.

Huntington allows a mix of residential uses in all of its residential districts, consistent with its historic development pattern. Two family and multifamily homes are allowed in most residential areas with special permits. Home occupations are allowed by-right when they have no significant effect on the residential character of an area, and can be allowed with a special permit if they might have a greater effect.

The Planning Board and Zoning Board have extensive on-going internal discussions about what changes are necessary. Recently, these discussions have included ridge-top zoning (discussed below), home occupations (discussed in the economic development section of this plan), and accessory apartments (discussed in the housing section of this plan).

Vistas from and of ridge-tops are some of Huntington's most unique characteristics. Long-time residents, recent arrivals, and visitors all mention this as part of the drawing card of Huntington. These vistas add value to every property and every business in town while the loss of these vistas can hurt everyone's property values.

Past efforts to use zoning to regulate ridge-top development became controversial when residents became concerned that zoning would limit the reasonable ability of property owners to

develop their properties free of unreasonable restrictions. Zoning can be crafted, however, to allow properties to be developed in ways that preserve the most dramatic vistas.

The goal of ridge-top zoning should be to ensure that views are not damaged in a way that harms the whole community regulations. The goal should **not** be to make ridge development invisible, nor to prevent ridge-top property owners from taking advantage of their views.

The zoning allows projects that incorporate **open space preservation**, but does not mandate open space preservation or focus on design. Many communities use stronger zoning language, incentives, and mandates to preserve open space. In some rapidly developing rural areas, open space preserved as a condition of development is more significant than governmental or non-profit open space acquisition purchases.

Some residents do not think that the zoning goes far enough at restricting **cell and telecommunication towers**. Many residents, however, believe that we need to provide continuous and contiguous cell phone coverage.

Environmental performance standards could be added to the zoning to cover such standards as allowable sound levels, emissions, lighting, and landscaping. These standards could be created to provide a greater comfort level that projects allowed by special permit will still not intrude on their neighbors regardless of any action taken by the special permit granting authority.

Dimensional standards in some districts, especially central business, could be less stringent if environmental performance standards provided protection against detrimental impacts.

There is currently no support for **design standards** in the zoning, but there does seem to be some interest in design standards in the Business and Central Business districts, or in design standards for retail sites in a Site Development/Site Plan general bylaw.

Huntington Subdivision Rules and Regulations

Huntington has accepted the state Subdivision Control Act, which leaves it to the Planning Board (not Town Meeting) to adopt Subdivision Regulations. These regulations detail the procedural and substantive standards for approval of subdivisions (generally, division of land when a new road is being created). Most importantly, they define what roads and infrastructure serving a new project will look like.

Huntington's regulations provide some limited detail on construction standards, but they neither focus on what quality development should be nor do they create or imply a vision of what new subdivisions should look like. The current standards would allow roads that are very different from what Huntington has now and may not meet many elements of the community's vision of its future.

The Planning Board needs to find a balance between roads that fit in with the community, and roads that provide the greatest safety and the lowest maintenance cost. In particular, the Planning Board should consider:

- Allowable road grades. The current standards allow extremely steep roads, which are difficult to plow and erode easily. Stricter regulations would greatly reduce the costs of

maintenance and improve fire safety, without necessarily compromising the character of the community (see discussion on horizontal curves below).

- Horizontal (and vertical) curves. The current standards allow very sharp turns. Typically, this is an area where there is some compromise between strict engineering standards (which require more gradual curves) and the character of the community (which has many sharp curves and where sharp curves may be necessary to pick up elevation without using very steep roads). To the extent that sharp curves are allowed, the standards might require some traffic calming so that the speed of traffic does not create traffic hazards.
- Landscaping requirements. The standards for landscaping requirements, both preservation of existing trees and provision of new trees, could be greatly revised to ensure that developments preserve the wooded character of most residential areas.
- Submittal requirements. The standards provide very little detail on what the Planning Board needs to review applications before it.
- Fees. The fees are very low and do not cover the town's costs in reviewing a subdivision application, even if outside consultants are paid for by the developer to perform technical reviews for the Planning Board.

Huntington General By-Laws

Huntington Town Meeting has adopted other standards that effect how the community grows. General by-laws of special interest to this plan include:

Site development (site plan) approval can be part of zoning or, as done in Huntington, part of general by-laws. In Huntington, this is a process for reviewing proposals, but does not create standards or a vision for what development should look like. Huntington rarely utilizes the process set forth in its by-laws. Although Huntington rarely gets large projects, it might want to consider a more formal site plan approval process (either zoning or non-zoning) to ensure it is ready if a large project comes along. In any case, the by-law should clarify what are the thresholds for multi-department/board review, and they should be followed.

Driveway curb cut standards are primarily about preserving the road, but should include traffic safety and character standards such as maximum width of driveways, frequency of driveways, and consistency with zoning.

Water Budget Analysis (waiver granted)

Huntington is a small rural community with most homes on private wells. There are two small community water systems, one public in Huntington Village and one private at Norwich Hill. Both have adequate capacity, quality, and quantity to serve the foreseeable future. A large portion of Huntington is upon a high yield sand and gravel aquifer in the outwash plain located adjacent to the Westfield River. Water quantity is not a problem except possibly in some very small-localized areas.

Assuming the EO418 Build-Out analysis as a worst-case scenario, corrected to reflect development constraints that were not considered, water needs could still be met, albeit with some public and private investments. The community water systems, with some investments that could be funded by new users, could serve new projected users. The majority of the new users would be in areas with private wells, at low enough density that existing and new wells could serve the needs.

Huntington requested and the Commonwealth approved a waiver of further analysis of water budget. The towns Water and Sewer Commissioners and Fire Department are charged with addressing this issue. That work is beyond the scope of this plan. An adequate water supply is absolutely critical, however, to the economic well being of Huntington Center. Without such a supply, there will be even more pressure on outlying rural areas with private water supplies.

Water Quality Analysis (waiver granted)

Huntington is a small rural community and, except for the small villages of Huntington and the Norwich Hill settlement, has been developed at low density. The vast majority of the town has pervious coverage, and given the amount of permanently protected open space and the rural nature of development, this will not change for the foreseeable future. Water quality is not a problem, except in small-localized areas.

Assuming the EO418 Build-Out analysis as a worst-case scenario, corrected to reflect development constraints that were not considered, water quality would still exceed that of most suburban and urban areas of the state, although some mitigation would be needed to avoid a loss in quality of life at this level of development. The full build-out still creates an average density of significantly less than the current Commonwealth average.

Huntington requested, and the Commonwealth granted, a waiver from the Water Quality Analysis. That work is beyond the scope of this plan. Addressing water quality is critical, however, to the economic well being of Huntington Center and the Westfield River. Preserving the amenities that draw people downtown and to Huntington is critical to preserving Huntington's quality of life.

Open Space, Scenic, Cultural, Historic and Archeological Resources

The Huntington Open Space and Recreation Plan should help the Town in its efforts to acquire or manage conservation and recreation properties. The plan, with its Section 504 handicap accessibility section, will also make the Town eligible for state open space and recreation grants (self-help program), and can serve as the basis of future Natural Resources Community Development Plan and Comprehensive Plan elements.

The Open Space Plan identifies the following goals and objectives (goals and objectives shown below are condensed from the full plan):

Goal 1: Maintain Rural Character

Objective 1A: Identify historic/archeological sites {to} be preserved...

Objective 1B: Create a master plan consistent with the goals of the Plan...

Objective 1C: Minimize impact of new growth and development.

Goal 2: Protect or Acquire Open Space

Objective 2A: Identify land ...to protect our natural resources, wildlife habitat...

Objective 2B: Pursue grants and other funding ...for open space acquisition.

Goal 3: Protect Water Resources and Local Water supplies

Objective 3A: Vigilant application of wetlands and river protection regulations

Objective 3B: Collaborate actively with regional watershed associations.

Objective 3C: Determine if land acquisition is necessary ...{to} protect aquifers.

Goal 4: Provide Recreational Opportunities for All

Objective 4A: Develop small parks and playing fields where needed.

Objective 4B: Identify trails for high, medium and low impact use.

Objective 4C: Increase {community} access to swimming, boating and fishing...

Objective 4D: Determine handicapped accessibility of ...recreational facilities.
Objective 4E: Recreation Committee ...develop a long-range capital plan.
Goal 5: Ensure that the Public is Informed and Concerned About Open Space, Resource Protection and Recreation Needs.
Objective 5A: Establish outreach and education programs...using media...
Objective 5B: Develop education programs for use with community groups
Goal 6: Ensure that the Town Utilizes Sound Management Practices for Effective Implementation of the Open Space Plan
Objective 6A: Encourage coordination with other town committees.

Huntington's natural and historic resources help define Huntington and are a major draw for residents and visitors alike. Historic resources range from buildings to geological features, and from stone walls to places associated with historical events. The *Huntington Open Space and Recreation Plan* defines some of these resources and serves as an action plan.

The two most important natural and historic resources are downtown Huntington and the Westfield River. The Huntington Village Historic District (roughly along East Main, Main and Basket Streets, Russell and Upper Russell Roads) is a National Register Historic District with 149 properties. Downtown is critically important to the identity of Huntington, both because of its historical role and its current role in defining Huntington. Huntington was first settled along the river because the river aided commerce (allowing easy movement of such materials as logs) and because the river forced travelers to stop and change their method of carrying bulk loads.

The Westfield River remains the single most character-defining feature in Huntington, and one with scenic natural and built beauty. The Historical Commission could consider a nomination extending the Huntington Village Historic District further north and/or a separate district to cover Norwich Center.

The Westfield River, and its various branches and major tributaries, was and remains probably the single most critical natural feature in identifying what Huntington was and what it will be. It is classified as a Class B waterway, suitable for boating, fishing, and swimming. In Huntington, the most obvious environmental issue affecting the Westfield River is the trash, garbage and diapers that litter all of the riverbanks adjacent to highway rest areas and areas where the public has access to the river.

...The Westfield River has remarkably outstanding scenic qualities, fisheries and wildlife resources, geological features, water quality, historic areas, wilderness qualities and unique natural recreational and cultural characteristics... {*Memorandum of Agreement for Protection of the Westfield River*, signed by the Huntington Select Board and numerous others.}

Portions of the River are already included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and additional portions may soon be so nominated. Efforts to preserve the Westfield River and make it more a part of the economy and everyday life of Huntington are one of the most character-defining actions that the town is currently taking.

The *Scenic, Cultural, Historic, and Archeological Resources* map (see Map section of the Action Plan), prepared for the Huntington Open Space Planning Committee by PVPC, September 2001, helps identify many of Huntington's natural and historic resources. In addition to downtown and the Westfield River, individual buildings, stone walls, and historic features all over

town help define Huntington's character, and can be highlighted in building an amenity rich strategy to keep the community desirable for its residents and its visitors.

Housing

This housing element examines the dynamics of Huntington's housing market and recommends goals and objectives to meet community needs. Related housing actions are also in the Open Space and Resource Protection and, to a lesser extent, in the Economic Development sections.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Enhance Residential Neighborhoods and Housing.

- **Continue ongoing development of new homes, while limiting development that could harm the character of Huntington.** The Town can absorb housing consistent with historical trends but not poorly designed large housing projects and their service demands.
- **Maintain the current wide market-range of housing.** Huntington's diverse market-rate housing serves the needs of those in many income brackets. Many median-income households can often afford to live in Huntington market-rate housing. This is impossible in many communities in the Commonwealth.

Objective 1-1.Ensure that regulatory requirements allow on-going growth, while creating the tools to limit adverse impacts. Huntington residents are not anti-growth but do not want unbridled growth.

Objective 1-2.Ensure that regulatory requirements encourage creative development patterns consistent with the town's vision, including flexible open space residential development. Zoning should encourage development patterns that preserve open space, vistas, farmland, and critical habitat.

Objective 1-3.Ensure that regulatory actions do not significantly inflate the cost of housing for local residents. In achieving community goals, regulatory systems should not significantly increasing the cost of traditional non-project housing and creating new barriers or impediments to lower end market-rate housing. To achieve these goals, however, there probably will be increased costs for large housing projects.

Goal 2. Improve Housing Quality in Huntington's villages, especially downtown.

- This housing provides some of the most affordable housing and desperately needed housing. It must be maintained, however, so that it can contribute to the villages' vitality.

Objective 2-1.Rehabilitate village and downtown housing. Consistent with the objective below, village and downtown housing should be rehabilitated to enhance the villages, especially downtown. Investment in housing should be aimed at improving living conditions, preserving downtown housing, and preserving existing affordable housing. Along with financial investment, both good management and careful tenant selection are important to minimize problems and tenant conflicts.

Goal 3. Improve housing that is affordable to town residents.

- This serves local needs, protects the town from poorly planned subsidized housing projects, and immunizes the town from any undesirable projects that could otherwise be imposed under Massachusetts Anti-Snob Zoning (Chapter 40B).

Objective 3-1.Rehabilitate and repair low-income homes throughout Huntington.

Objective 3-2.Consider allowing accessory apartments to meet family needs AND create affordable market-rate housing without creating the need for affordable housing "projects."

Objective 3-3. Continue and expand social services necessary for low and moderate-income residents.

Objective 3-4. Ensure that the town gets credit for all affordable housing projects, rehabilitations, and accessory apartments under Chapter 40B.

Zoning Actions

1. Revise zoning and subdivision regulations to address discrepancies between moderate growth and the build-out that the zoning currently allows. This is especially critical to create the tools the town needs to address large subdivision and retirement home projects.
2. Revise subdivision regulations to create the type of development the town wants.
3. Revise zoning and subdivision regulations to encourage creative subdivisions (also known as open space residential development)
4. Review all proposed regulatory changes to avoid significantly increasing the cost of traditional non-project housing and creating new barriers or impediments to lower end market-rate housing.
5. Consider allowing accessory apartments by-right or by special permit within or attached to single family homes if:
 1. A relative, by birth or marriage, of the homeowner lives in the accessory unit; OR
 2. The accessory unit will be affordable, as defined under MGL Chapter 40B and with the provision for the town receiving credit for the unit under 40B; AND
 3. The property owner lives in either the primary unit or the accessory unit; AND
 4. The maximum size is limited (e.g. 800 or 900 square feet).

Investment/Grant Actions

1. Work with property owners, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), and non-profit partners to rehabilitate village and downtown housing as well as low-income units throughout town.
2. Link housing rehabilitation programs to credit for affordable units under Massachusetts Anti-Snob Zoning (Chapter 40B), which, under Chapter 40B, can help maintain local control of development decisions which could otherwise be lost to the Boston-based Housing Appeals Board.
3. Annually certify Huntington under the Commonwealth's EO-418 Housing Certification. As part of the certification process, hold annual meetings with the Hilltown Community Development Corporation (Hilltown CDC), PVPC, and non-profit housing developers in the area to discuss joint strategies consistent with these goals and objectives.
4. Work with PVPC, the Hilltown CDC, Hampshire Community Action Commission (Hampshire CAC), Huntington Health Center, Chester/Huntington Domestic Violence Prevention Services, Gateway Regional, Huntington Council on Aging, Southern Hilltowns Adult Education Center, and other providers to ensure the continuation and expansion of health and social services for low and moderate-income residents. These services include, but are not limited to, those that provide referrals, elder support, supplemental food, housing assistance, education and vocational education, and health.

See also Housing map at the end of this housing section. This map shows the two areas which workshop participants expressed concerns about, ridge-top development done in such a way to hurt distant vistas, and large scale development in an area on the southeast portion of Huntington.

Housing Inventory and Demographics

Although clearly primarily rural, Huntington is also increasingly a suburban community, especially in terms of commuter patterns to employment centers in Springfield, Westfield, Northampton, Amherst and elsewhere, but also, to some degree, in terms of land use development patterns.

Huntington's housing is developing at a relatively rapid pace, with a 15% increase in housing over the past decade. This is driven by two factors; a 9.4% increase in population and a 5% decrease in the number of persons per household. Both of these trends are reflected in nationwide trends. With more people in town and fewer people per dwelling unit, there are strong pressures for more dwelling units.

Huntington's population growth is higher than most communities in Western Massachusetts. This growth rate is not at all unusual among many of the rural hill towns of Hampshire and Hampden counties, some of which have rates of growth over twice that of Huntington. This rapid growth rate is due, in large part, to the high quality of rural life, lower price housing, and easier commutes to employment centers than possible from many other rural areas

Huntington's population demographics are not dramatically skewed from those of Massachusetts or Western Massachusetts. The percentage of racial minorities (white persons not of Hispanic/Latino origin) in Huntington (4%) is significantly less than the Commonwealth (18.1%), but not dramatically different than that in other rural areas of Western Massachusetts. The ratio of women in Huntington (50.4%) is essentially the same as for the Commonwealth as a whole (51.8%). This even balance reflects the relatively low elderly population, which is generally heavily skewed towards women, in Huntington. The median age (36.9) is also essentially the same as for the state (36.5). (All figures and definitions are per US Census 2000.)

Huntington Housing Units and Affordability

	Current	Ten Years Ago
Year Round Housing Units ¹	847 units	735 units
Subsidized Housing Units ²	60 units (7.08%)	31 units (4.22%)
Vacancy Rates	13.5% (6.8% for state) including seasonal and second homes 4.1% (3.3% for state) excluding seasonal and second homes	
Seasonal and second homes	9.4% (3.5% for state)	
Homeownership Rates	78.1% (61.6% for state)	
Median Priced Home ¹	\$105,830 (2001)	
Ranking of Housing Cost ³	309 (Of 351 cities and towns. Actual ranking is lower because communities without available data were not ranked.)	
Median Priced Home Sales ⁴	130,500 (based on 15 sales Jan-April 2003) 141,000 (based on 14 2002 sales) 101,000 (based on 10 2001 sales)	

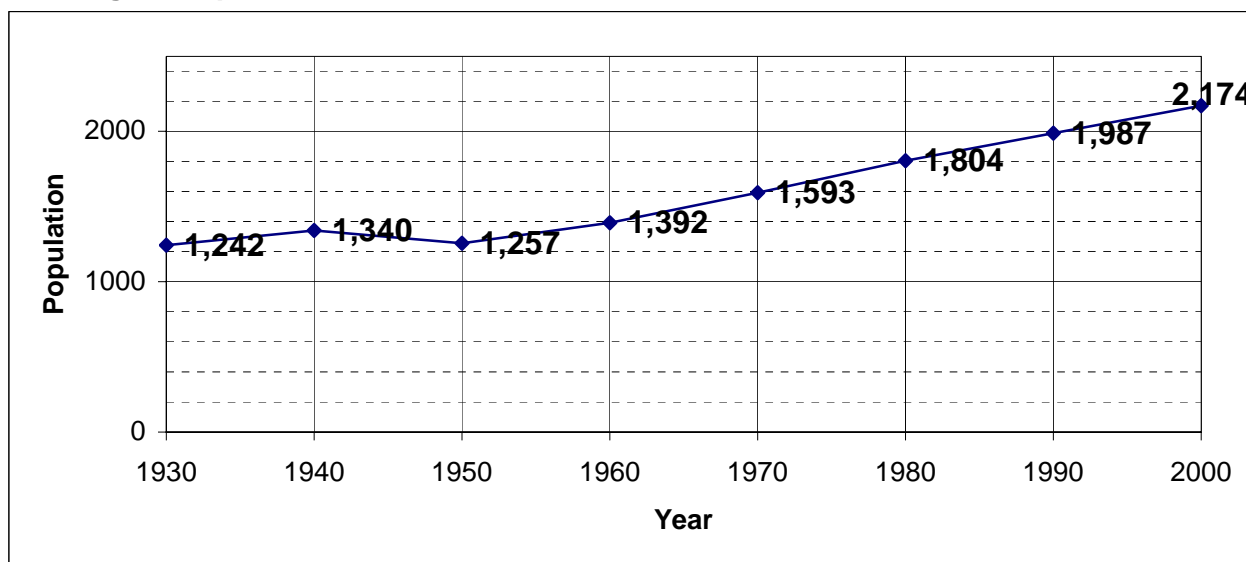
Source: ¹US Census 2000 and 1990. ²Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development April 24, 2002 and July 1, 1993 Subsidized Housing Inventory. ³*Boston Globe*, 2001 (citing Massachusetts sources). ⁴*The Warren Group, Banker and Tradesman*.

Using the Department of Housing and Community Development's formulas, 7% of Huntington's year round housing units are subsidized to make them affordable to residents who otherwise might not be able to afford decent housing. This is significantly below the Commonwealth's "fair share" goal of 10% but much closer to the actual Commonwealth average (8.45%). Huntington's 7% affordable rate is substantially higher than it was a decade ago and substantially higher than the average for rural communities in Western Massachusetts. With the ongoing development of new housing in Huntington, and absent the development of new subsidized units, however, Huntington's percentage will drop as the 60 subsidized units become a smaller percentage of the total number of housing units in town. See table above.

Most, if not all, of the subsidized units are in Hamblin Court. Hamblin Court is public housing, owned by the Hampshire County Regional Housing Authority and is used solely for elderly housing and for residents of any age with disabilities. There are no subsidized housing projects otherwise designed for low-income residents. Hamblin Court has been struggling to maintain the units due to chronic under-funding of public housing.

The median price of housing in Huntington, however, is relatively low. At somewhere in the range of \$130,000, the median priced home in Huntington is less expensive than in 90% of the communities in Massachusetts. (See table above) This relatively low median price is more significant to the ability of Huntington residents and their children to find housing in town than the relatively low number of subsidized units. Although Huntington's median wage significantly lags behind that of Massachusetts as a whole, it does not share the same housing crisis that exists within the Boston metropolitan region nor the same need for additional affordable housing. Huntington's relatively high housing vacancy rates also attests to the relatively low pressure on the housing market.

Huntington Population Growth



Sources: US Census

Huntington Demographics

	Huntington	Massachusetts
Population ¹	3,008 (2010 DET projection) ² 2,174 (2000) 1,987 (1990)	6,690,740 (2010 DET projection) ² 6,349,097 (2000) 6,016,425 (1990)
Persons per Family ¹	3.10	3.11
Persons per Household ¹	2.69 (2000) 2.83 (1990)	2.51 (2000) 2.58 (1990)
Total Area	26.91 sq. miles (17,222 acres)	10,555 sq. miles (7,840 sq. miles of land)
Density (2000) (per land area)	81.6 people per square mile 35.1 dwelling unit per sq. mile	810 people per square mile 334 dwelling unit per sq. mile
Avg Annual Wage	\$25,200 (2001)	\$43,056 (2001)
Median Household Income	\$36,490 (1989--296 th of 351) \$48,958 (1999--241 st of 351)	\$44,367 (1989) \$50,502 (1999)
Median Family Income	\$52,308 (1999--284 th of 351)	\$61,664 (1999)
Labor force (2002)	1,117	33,329,600
Huntington jobs	400	
Workforce and Unemployment	1,160 7% (2003) 1,092 3.5% (2000) 1,076 7.5% (1995) 1,054 7.4% (1990)	6.1% (2003) 2.6% (2000) 5.4% (1995) 6.0% (1990)
Employers	10 (goods producing-2001) 23 (service producing—2001) 33 Total	31,413 (goods-2001) 156,426 (services-2001) 187,839 Total
New Homes or Dwelling Units	10 (2003) ⁴ 9 (2002) ³ 3 (2001) ³ 4 (2000) ³	15,457 (2001)
Property Tax Rate	\$17.05 per \$1,000 (2003)	Varies
Property Values (2002)	Personal Property \$2,976,010 Residential \$96,933,469 Commercial \$3,775,622 Industrial \$919,200	Personal \$16,761,285,505 Residential \$453,758,412,481 Open space \$125,795,800 Commercial \$74,091,194,959 Industrial \$23,055,853,937

Sources: ¹US Census, 1990 and 2000, ²Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training (DET), 2002 and 2003. Employment and wages based on employers subject to unemployment compensation. ³Town of Huntington, Building Permit Report (2/20/2003). ⁴Al LaFrance, Selectmen and Assessor (9/20/2003) 2003 is figure to-date.

Huntington Building Permit Activity

	2000	2001	2002
New Homes/Dwelling units	4	3	10
House Demolition	0	0	1
Minor Residential (Repair, Renovation, etc.) (\$10,000 and below)	32	33	31
Major Residential (Repair, Renovation, etc. (Above \$10,000)	12	8	9
Commercial and Public Buildings Repair, Addition, Renovation	2	7	3
New Commercial and Public Structures	0	2	1
Total Building Permits	50	53	55

Source: Town of Huntington, Building Permit Report (2/20/2003)

Huntington Population Change (1990-2000) and Population Projections (2005-2030)

Age	Population		Population Projection						Percent Change			
	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2030
0-4	160	122	117	121	135	149	163	169	-23.8%	-0.5%	23.1%	13.1
5-9	180	159	137	130	137	150	169	181	-11.7%	-18.2%	15.2%	20.8%
10-14	144	201	197	172	166	176	196	223	39.6%	-14.4	2.5%	26.7%
15-19	148	171	183	183	157	155	163	185	15.5%	6.8%	-15.3%	19.3%
20-24	104	89	92	98	96	82	79	82	-14.4%	9.7%	-16.1%	0.5%
25-29	151	106	122	125	133	130	112	107	-29.8%	18.0%	3.5%	-17.6%
30-34	183	157	132	152	157	169	165	143	-14.2%	-3.3%	11.0%	-15.1%
35-39	180	202	171	147	168	176	189	188	12.2%	-27.2%	19.9%	6.6%
40-44	175	188	172	146	123	140	145	155	7.4%	-22.2%	-4.0%	10.1%
45-49	146	186	186	165	140	115	131	131	27.4%	-11.3%	-30.6%	14.7%
50-54	77	162	184	186	171	147	123	143	110.4%	14.9%	-20.9%	-2.7%
55-59	65	152	228	270	269	257	218	191	133.8%	77.5%	-4.8%	-25.5%
60-64	59	68	91	140	159	163	149	130	15.3%	106.2%	16.0%	-20.3%
65-69	84	63	66	88	132	150	150	138	-25.0%	39.2%	70.5%	-7.9%
70-74	58	45	40	41	56	82	94	93	-22.4%	-8.3%	98.2%	13.8%
75-79	41	52	49	44	47	63	96	111	26.8%	-14.7%	42.9%	75.5%
80-84	19	28	30	28	25	26	36	54	47.4%	0.9%	-6.3%	104.7%
85+	13	23	26	28	29	28	28	37	76.9%	23.6%	-3.0%	32.4%
Total	1,987	2,174	2,224	2,265	2,299	2,357	2,406	2,461	9.4%	4.2%	4.1%	4.4%
Total Hampshire County	146,568	152,251	155,183	158,057	161,353	165,210	169,418	173,634	3.9%	3.8%	4.5%	5.1%

(Source: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, "Discerning the Future for the Pioneer Valley Region, 2000-2030", June 2003.)

Housing Needs Report

For at least the next decade, the need for continued relatively rapid growth of housing in Huntington is likely to continue (15% per decade, more or less). While it is true that the population in Western Massachusetts is holding fairly steady, urban areas of Hampden County are declining in population, and current economic conditions are limiting population growth and eliminating job growth, it is still likely that Huntington, and the hilltowns generally, will continue to experience the population growth over the decade. The trend for movement to rural and amenity rich areas is likely to continue in spite of the trends in the Hampden County urban core areas.

Likewise, family size is continuing to decrease nationwide, especially as people have fewer children and the number of single elderly increases. Huntington's family size has not dropped as much as the urban and suburban areas of the state, largely reflecting the relatively small retirement population (which brings down average family sizes in other communities). Huntington's family size is similar or even smaller than that in many rural communities. In spite of this lag, it is all but certain that the nationwide and the Huntington household size will continue to decline, driving up the need for more dwelling units. Nationwide, since World War II, the average single family home size has roughly doubled while the average family size has been roughly cut in half, meaning that the average resident needs four times as much space as they did sixty years ago.

In spite of this demand for housing, the steady creation of new housing, the availability of land for building lots, and the relatively high vacancy rate indicates that housing may be available to meet these needs.

Huntington has a relatively healthy ownership/rental mix (78.1 of dwelling units are owner-occupied) which ensures stability of housing stock while still providing housing for those who are not in the homeownership market. Although this higher than Massachusetts as a whole, it is lower than many rural areas, which tend to have higher homeownership rates.

Homeownership Rate

	Owner-Occupied Housing	Rental-Occupied Housing
Huntington	78.1%	21.9%
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	61.7%	38.3%

All that being said, the slowdown in the increase in average wages compared to Massachusetts as a whole, the significant increase in joblessness during this recession, and the lack of high paying jobs, has put significant stress on many residents of Huntington and Western Massachusetts. It has increased pressure on everything from food banks to the availability of funds for basic shelter.

In addition, although housing prices are less expensive in Huntington than many areas of the region, Huntington's relative isolation means that most low-income residents must rely more on car ownership, and its related expenses, than low-income residents in urban areas.

Given low incomes, many housing units are substandard or otherwise in need of repairs. This is especially true of rental units in downtown Huntington, but is also true of residential units scattered throughout town.

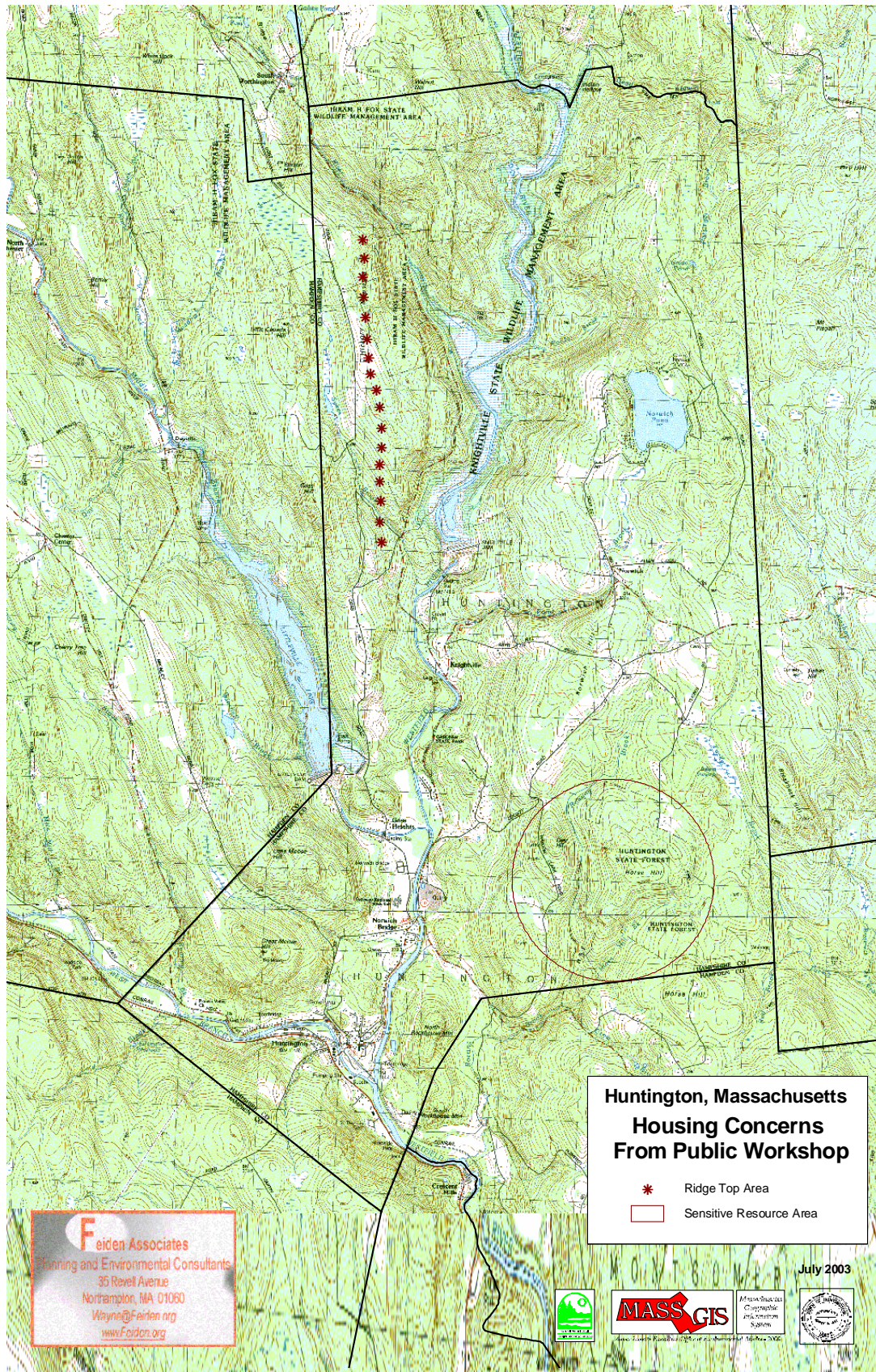
During the visioning and community development process, some workshop participants and some members of the Historical Society expressed serious concerns about slums and blight. They indicated that there were problem properties town-wide, but focused their concerns on downtown and other areas that created serious problems for the town and the neighbors. Potential health problems, unsightly trash, and junk cars were all mentioned as major concerns.

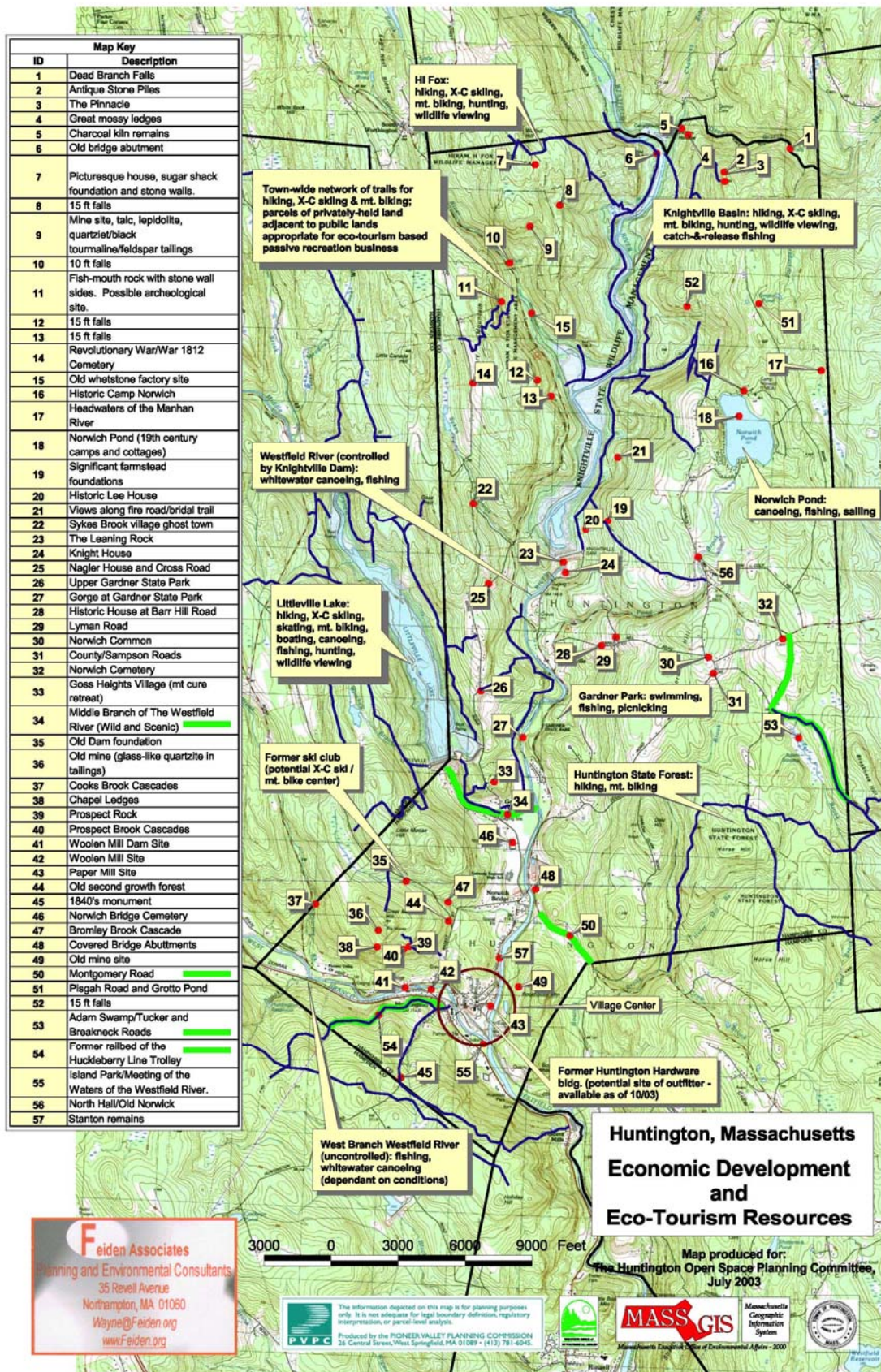
Housing Supply and Demand Comparison

As discussed above, Huntington has a relatively good supply of housing and prospects that this supply will continue. As in much of the country, the increase in housing prices has been outstripping increases in income, creating stress for many looking for shelter, especially searching for their first home. This trend is certainly reflected in Huntington, but not generally more severely than elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

Huntington's housing stock has four significant, but somewhat related, deficiencies that should be addressed to fill the gap between housing needs and housing inventory:

1. There are a relatively low number of available rental units;
2. Many of the rental units that are available, especially downtown, are substandard or otherwise in need of repair;
3. There are many units, both rentals and low-income homeownership units, scattered throughout town that are in need of repairs and rehabilitation;
4. Hamblin Court, like public housing throughout the Commonwealth and the country, is under-funded and therefore not managed and repaired as well as it should be.





Economic Development

This economic development element examines the dynamics of Huntington's economy, especially its small businesses and home-based businesses and the opportunity for economic expansion and outdoor recreation-based businesses.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Encourage Economic and Job Expansion Consistent with Huntington's Character. Huntington's natural resources must be an integral part of its economic development strategy.

Objective 1-1. Encourage small businesses and outdoor recreation-based businesses throughout Huntington. These businesses can be consistent with the historical and current job generators in Huntington, can create jobs for residents, improve the tax base, and reduce the need to commute to urban centers.

Objective 1-2. Continue to encourage home-based businesses (also known as live/work space or home occupations). These businesses follow a long tradition in Huntington and, if properly done, can allow jobs and economic development with no adverse neighborhood impacts.

Goal 2. Encourage Retail/Commercial Uses and Support Services that Provide Local Services Consistent with Huntington's Character.

Objective 2-1. Encourage retail development within Huntington Center and at the intersection of Route 112 and Route 20 at the edge of Huntington Center. Retail can improve the tax base, provide local services, provide jobs for residents, and reduce the need to drive to urban centers for basic needs.

Objective 2-2. Encourage limited retail/restaurant development at the intersection of Route 66 and Route 112.

Objective 2-3. Encourage limited economic development activities on Route 112 and Route 20 in the area just outside of Huntington Center.

Objective 2-4. Expand the cohesiveness of downtown Huntington as the town center through increased focus of the streetscape, quality of parks, neighborhood organization, and arts and cultural activities.

Objective 2-5. Use social services to expand Huntington's role as a Hilltown center providing training and education to expand Huntington's economic potential.

Objective 2-6. Create a comprehensive historic preservation plan with an emphasis on reuse of historic buildings for economic development and preservation to build on Huntington's character-defining features.

Objective 2-7. Encourage businesses to take advantage of the Hilltown Community Development Corporation's small business assistance.

Zoning Actions

1. Continue to tweak home occupation language to clarify and to encourage those uses that are art-based, support tourism and eco-tourism, and otherwise fit into residential neighborhoods. Do not allow home occupations that create high traffic, noise, runoff or other impacts that cannot readily be mitigated (such as automobile related, retail sales, other than goods created on premises, etc.)
2. Allow expanded eco-tourism uses, carefully defined in zoning, throughout Huntington in all zoning districts by special permit.
3. Address the zoning for the area adjacent to Huntington Center at the intersection of Routes 20 and 112. Retail, especially high traffic retail such as national franchises,

should be welcomed here because of the services and taxes they can provide, but only when zoning addresses the adverse design issues of such businesses. For the foreseeable future, there is little risk that franchises would expand beyond this intersection and thereby threaten the character of Huntington.

4. Examine all business zoning areas to better define and encourage a future consistent with the community's vision, including using traditional designs for new businesses.

Community Actions

1. Develop a constituency to oppose closing the Route 112/Robert Cross Bridge ("green bridge" without either keeping one lane of the bridge open or building a temporary bridge during the planned bridge reconstruction. Such an action would isolate the Route 20 corridor and downtown Huntington from Route 112 to the north, greatly harming local businesses. A two-year reduction in business (during the bridge construction phase) could severely harm or even ruin some businesses. If this is not possible, the town should continue to lobby for a temporary, or ideally permanent, pedestrian bridge as partial mitigation.
2. Efforts to build the draw of downtown Huntington during the bridge reconstruction, including efforts to create civic, community, and cultural activities in the village, will be especially critical during the bridge reconstruction.
3. Expand efforts to build a sense of community in Huntington through voluntary cleanup and beautification projects.
4. Organize more art and performance activities in Huntington Center, especially Stanton Hall, and in North Hall.
5. Expand outreach efforts, including community policing, to downtown Huntington residents to include them in the downtown community and reduce conflicts.
6. Developing a comprehensive historic preservation plan can help emphasize Huntington's economic development strategy of building on its existing character-defining features. (See also discussion in open space and resource protection section.)
7. Conduct an outreach effort to encourage local businesses to take advantage of the Hilltown Community Development Corporation's small business assistance. The Hilltown CDC offers a revolving loan fund, business development training, technical assistance, and a business director. All local businesses should be supported, but the town might want to focus its outreach to downtown businesses, home occupations, and eco-tourism businesses.
8. A formal Huntington Village or Huntington business Association should be formed, perhaps with town help, to coordinate events and activities and build a sense of identity.

Investment/Grant Actions

1. Solicit grant and outside funding for increased visual and performance arts. Take advantage of Huntington's arts community to create a sense of place for artists and performers.
2. Encourage social service providers to expand operations in Huntington.
3. Filling vacant stores must be a top priority. Façade improvement grants and other incentives should be considered when feasible.
4. Work with regional entities to improve broadband Internet access to Huntington.
5. Work with PVPC and non-profit partners to identify and then craft a Small Cities Community Development Block Grant application to fund downtown streetscape, façade, and community development activities.
6. Consider requesting US EPA "Targeted Site Assessment" funding to examine old commercial and industrial uses in and around downtown that might have hazardous releases. Such up front work would make it easier to attract future investment.

7. Downtown's streetscape should be maintained to keep its attractive small town flavor. Broken granite posts and benches should be fixed or removed and more benches should be added to the Town Common.

Transportation Actions

1. Develop a local consensus as to where a new Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) exit at Route 20 or Route 23 should be located. At some point, an additional I-90 exit will be created between Westfield and Lee, with West Becket or Blandford the most likely candidate. Either exit (but especially Blandford) would increase the accessibility to Huntington, and therefore its economic development potential. An exit at Route 20 in Russell, however, would also dramatically increase the desirability of Huntington for suburban housing, which could harm the character of Huntington.
2. Ensure that road signage is minimized to help preserve the rural character of Huntington, while at the same time improving its ability to channel interest in Huntington Center and other key community resources.
3. Request that PVPC perform a journey-to-work analysis, as part of Huntington's free local technical assistance requests, to better understand commuting patterns and resulting economic development opportunities.
4. Request that PVPC perform a downtown parking study, as part of Huntington's free local technical assistance requests, to better parking needs and opportunities.
5. Improve drainage and signage on the downtown public parking lot on the south side of Route 20. Consider developing a public parking lot on the west side of the village if private property can be obtained, safe access can be created, and the town can be assured that there are not hazardous releases below the parking lot.
6. Install signage to improve the identity of downtown Huntington, including a "Welcome to Historic Downtown Huntington" signage and an off-street parking directional sign.

See also Economic Development/Eco-Tourism Map at the beginning of this section. The map shows tourism and eco-tourism resources that represent the best opportunities to take advantage of the town's character to grow the economy in a sustainable fashion.

Current and Future Economic Inventory

Historic Huntington Center is key both to Huntington's character and to its economy. This traditional and historic downtown is the center of business, tourism, financial services, and social services for Huntington, and serves a market beyond Huntington. These services include banking, insurance, post office, legal, and tax preparation services, three restaurants, an antique store, bookstore, newspaper, dance studio, and several public-meeting buildings, including town hall, where social and cultural events are held. Like all healthy downtowns, Huntington Center is constantly evolving, although as a very small downtown changes are not always obvious. (For example, in just the first half of 2003, the pizza place moved into new and more vibrant quarters and a new gift store opened.)

There seems to be a strong consensus, or at least optimism, that even though Huntington is a small community, downtown can be an artist Mecca and the critical mass of retail that can make it stronger in the future than it is today. Although downtown is the core, the opportunity for expanded retail at the intersection of Route 20 and Route 112 should be considered. It has the potential, if it is done well, to add to the critical mass necessary to keep the Huntington's economy healthy.

As the town strives to improve its economy and define itself as a community, preserving and enhancing downtown is probably the most important economic and community development activity that Huntington should undertake.

If the southerly side of the Westfield River is the traditional and historic downtown, the northerly side of the river is less clearly defined. This area is heavily government- dominated; with large tracts of town-owned land along the river, the Murrayfield Building, Huntington Library, Recycling Center, Pettis Athletic Field, Hillgate Park, Highway Department, and water and sewer facilities. With its elderly housing and the nearby Huntington Shoppes convenience commercial center, and easy access to the river and downtown, this area is a convenient place to work and live.

The ultimate reuse of the Murrayfield building will help define the northerly side of the river. Some residents feel that Huntington could use a community center to help enhance Huntington's identity, accommodate the growing needs for social services, non-traditional educational facilities, and local cultural events, with an emphasis on the youth and elderly. This could be part of the discussion for the reuse of the Murrayfield School or, if any municipal facilities were moved to the former school, for the reuse of vacated portions of Town Hall. Several board members have indicated that Town Hall is not adequate to serve all municipal needs. It is doubtful, however, that a community the size of Huntington (both the public and the non-profit center) could afford to support Town Hall, Stanton Hall, North Hall, and Murrayfield School as public or quasi-public buildings.

Some community members are working on preliminary plans to coordinate the arts on a regional scale and provide cooperative studio and gallery space for artists and craftspeople.

The tie between Huntington Center and Route 112 just north of Huntington Center is critical. The Selectmen have discussed the possibility of a new pedestrian link, especially as possible mitigation for the replacement of the Route 112 Robert Cross Bridge, although such a pedestrian link does not seem likely in the immediate future. The reconstruction of the bridge will harm Huntington.

As with much of the hilltowns and all of western Massachusetts, the single largest employment sector in Huntington is education, health, and social services and the second largest employment sector in manufacturing. Huntington has a somewhat higher proportion its population employed in manufacturing than other hilltown communities, making it somewhat more vulnerable to the long term trends of reduced manufacturing jobs in the northeast and in the United States. (See Employment of Huntington Residents table below.)

Employment of Huntington Residents by Sector

Industrial Sector	Residents Employed
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	19
Construction	70
Manufacturing	222
Wholesale trade	59
Retail trade	117
Transportation and warehousing and utilities	82
Information	29
Finance, insurance, real estate	37
Professional, scientific, management, admin	79

Education, health and social services	304
Arts, entertainment, recreation, food service	64
Other services	60
Public Administration	40

Source: 2000 Census as summarized by Highland Community Initiative. Numbers based on small weighted sample size.

Massachusetts does not analyze tourism and travel on a town-by-town basis (except for rooms tax), so it is impossible to use public data to determine the economic effect of tourism and travel on Huntington. Clearly, a significant number of tourists travel through the community. Given the limited number of opportunities for tourists to spend money in Huntington, currently the effect on the economy is relatively small, except for the general and convenience stores and the restaurants. Throughout the public workshops, residents consistently suggested taking advantage of growing this sector of the economy, and especially focusing on eco-tourism and outdoor-related activities.

Within Western Massachusetts, largely because of the Westfield River Race, Huntington has a reputation as an outdoor recreation community, so it is well positioned to attract visitors from the region and encourage them to spend their money here. Huntington is also well positioned to attract those tourists from further away who are looking for outdoor recreation activities and/or want to visit small towns.

Clearly, efforts to attract tourists from outside of the region have to be coordinated with regional tourism efforts. 13% of tourist-trips, traveling at least 50 miles or staying overnight, within Massachusetts take place in the four Western Massachusetts counties. These tourists spend an average of 13.8% of their travel budget on outdoor activities. (Source: Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism.)

As in all rural areas, many Huntington employees work in their homes. According to the 2000 Census (based on a relatively low sample size) 32 residents (2.7% of resident workers) work out of their home. This is slightly lower than the average for the Commonwealth as a whole (3.1%) and significantly below many other hilltowns. If this figure is correct, it certainly implies an opportunity for an increase in the number of home-based employment.

There are far more Huntington residents who journey to work in another community, 827, than the 174 residents of other communities who journey to work in Huntington. (See Journey to Work table below.) Most of the residents are traveling to work in the major employment generating communities along the Connecticut River. Residents of other communities traveling to Huntington come from scattered communities throughout the area, with almost half coming from other hilltown communities. The biggest single draw of commuters to Huntington is Gateway Regional School.

While the commutes of residents leaving Huntington can be significant, they are generally still shorter than those in urban areas in eastern Massachusetts. The mean journey to work for all Huntington residents who work out of their home (including those who stay within the community) is 34.4 minutes (2000 census).

Journey to Work Summary

Town	Number of Huntington Residents Working in Town	Number of Huntington Works Coming From Town
HUNTINGTON	183	183
Westfield	195	21
Springfield	117	0
Northampton	98	35
West Springfield	67	0
Holyoke	54	0
Amherst	53	13
Easthampton	48	0
Chicopee	34	0
Hatfield	20	0
South Hadley	19	0
Southampton	17	0
Williamsburg	16	0
Pittsfield	14	0
Greenfield	14	0
Whately	13	0
Agawam	13	13
East Longmeadow	12	0
Worthington	12	19
Southwick	11	0
Chester	0	24
Russell	0	15
Middlefield	0	15
Ware	0	11
Wilbraham	0	8
TOTAL outside of Huntington	827	174

Source: 2000 Census as summarized by Highland Community Initiative. Numbers based on small weighted sample size.

Huntington Tax Base and Finances

The property tax levy (\$17.05 per \$1,000 of assessed value for FY2003) makes up approximately two-thirds of Huntington's total municipal revenue, with property tax from residential property making up most of that total property tax. Residential property owners consume the highest proportion of municipal services, especially for education, of any land use. In other words, in Huntington, the typical family living in a median priced home in Huntington probably consumes more services than their property tax bill will cover.

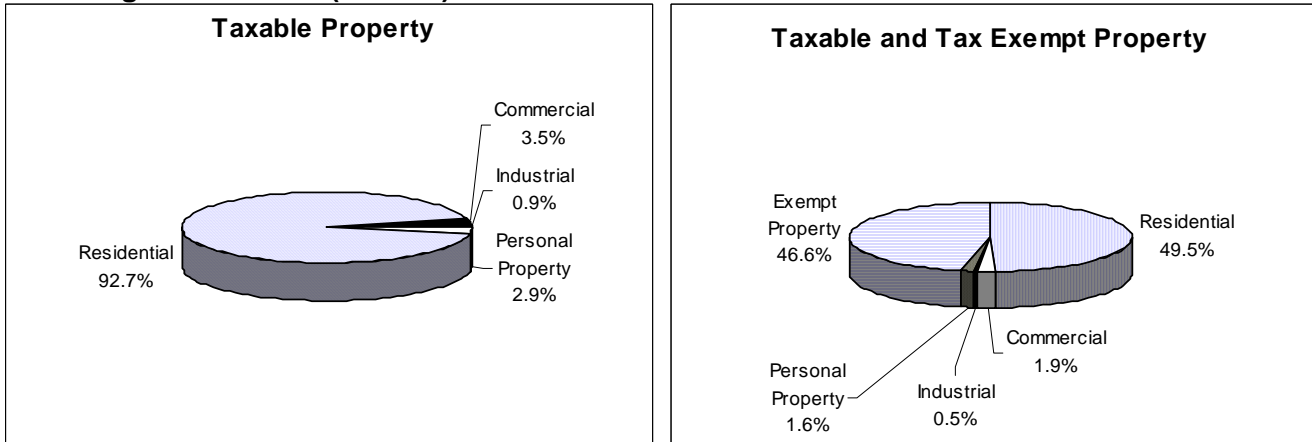
As a result, having such a high proportion of residential property creates stress on municipal finances. The average property tax bill is, however, less than in many nearby employment centers because of Huntington's lower priced housing stock. A median priced single-family home in Huntington will pay approximately \$1,700 in property tax.

In addition to a very high proportion of residential property, municipal finances are further stressed because almost half of the area in Huntington is tax exempt (municipal, state, federal, church, or non-profit). Only very small payment-in-lieu-of-tax (PILOT) payments are made to

the town. PILOT funds, especially from the Commonwealth are not dependable and only cover a small percentage of Huntington's budget (\$7,886 in FY2004, \$14,827 it paid in FY2002). Most of these tax-exempt properties demand very little services, however, and in many cases receiving no taxes from open space may still be less of a drain on municipal coffers than residential development.

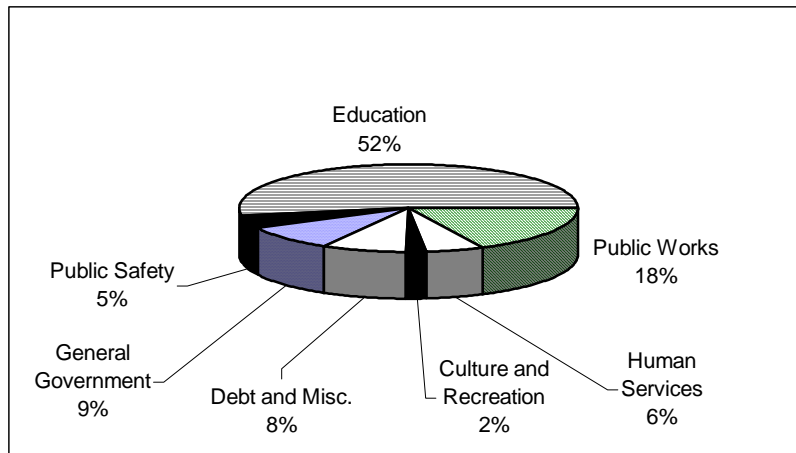
FY2003's mid-year reduction in state aid and FY2004's significant reduction in state aid is creating new stresses on municipal finance. Unlike other period of difficult finances, it is unlikely that state aid will be restored to their former levels anytime soon.

Huntington Tax Base (FY2002)



Source: 2002 Huntington Annual Report

Huntington Budgeted Expenditures (FY2002)



Source: 2002 Huntington Annual Report

Transportation: Route 112 and 20 Corridor Study

This Transportation Element is a corridor study of Massachusetts State Highways Route 112 and Route 20 within Huntington. These highways serve Huntington and serve as the regional gateway to the southern hill towns. The corridor study examines opportunities to improve the safety of the highways and examines opportunities for changes to the highway that would help Huntington achieve some of its goals and objectives. The study includes a regional growth model to allow consideration from a regional perspective, even though the town has received a waiver from the requirement that the study be done in conjunction with two other communities.

Goals:

Provide safe vehicular access, keep the road safe and friendly for abutters, pedestrians, and bicycles, and contribute to the rural and small town character of Huntington.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) completed the Transportation Element. It has been attached as a separate document.

APPENDIX—Community Input from Visioning Workshops

Huntington Vision grew out of numerous community workshops and board meetings. It builds on the hard work of community boards and volunteers from other projects, including open space planning, community development, and the day-to-day work of numerous boards, especially the Select Board and the Planning Board. While the plan reflects ideas with broad support, this appendix serves to preserve **all** of the raw comments we heard, even when those comments do not represent a consensus.

One workshop helped define Huntington's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and challenges (SWOT). Other workshops identified open space and resource protection needs, housing needs, and economic development needs. Comments shown in **bold** are those participants identified as critical. For the SWOT results only, when several participants highlighted the same comment as one of their most important comments, the percent of people selecting that item is also shown (**x%**). Other comments are listed in no particular order.

Workshop Results: Huntington's Character-Defining Features and Strengths

- **Open Space and permanently preserved open space (33%)**
- **Views of Hillsides and Ridgelines (15%)**
- **Peace and quiet (15%)**
- **People (friendliness and neighborly) (10%)**
- **Westfield River and water, including Littleville, Norwich Lake (10%)**
- **Wildlife (7%)**
- **Opportunity to run successful business in rural setting (5%)**
- **Children growing up in small town**
- **Clarity of the night sky**
- **Sense of security**
- Small but available commercial services
- Attractive community
- Dirt roads
- High quality of life
- Country way of life, but with easy access to regional jobs and services
- Dedicated community pride (not "flag-waving" pride, but a strong sustained pride)
- Farms, hillsides, ridges and scenic vistas
- Air and water quality
- Rural recreational water quality
- Vibrant arts community with a wealth of talent
- Downtown historic preservation
- Local support for local businesses
- Route 20 and Route 112 are state layouts, and state maintains
- Downtown has the critical mass to be a regional service center (banking, insurance, real estate)
- Gateway Regional Schools, Hilltown Coalition, and student-based Health Center
- Huntington Public Library
- Affordable cost of living, especially housing
- Lack of excessive regulations and restrictions
- Trains and their potential for transit and tourism-focused services
- Trails in woods and horseback riding at Knightville
- Strong social and health services offerings

Food coop	Southern Hilltowns Adult Education Center
Food pantry	Huntington Health Services Clinic
Senior meals program	Hampshire County Action Commission
Hilltown Community Development Corp.	Share program
Huntington Council on Aging	Southern Hilltowns Domestic Violence Task Force
Gateway Regional Supplemental Case Management Service	Chester/Huntington Domestic Violence Prevention Services

- Civic minded municipal and community boards, organizations, and volunteers

Jacob's Ladder Business Association (seven towns including Huntington)	Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway Advisory Board (regional)
Friends of Huntington Public Library	Friends of Huntington Public Library
Huntington Lions Club	North Hall Association
Volunteer Fire Department	Huntington 4-H Club
Huntington Garden Club	Huntington Historical Society
Westfield River Canoe Club (regional)	Westfield River Watershed Association (regional)
Huntington Arts Council	Municipal boards and commissions

- Successful local businesses with regional draw, especially:

Gateway Auto and Farm Supply	Huntington Country Store
Country Journal	United Cooperative Bank
Smith Sled Shop (ATVs, logging supplies, and snowmobiles)	Maple sugaring operations with seasonal breakfasts
Country Boy Restaurant	

Workshop Results: Huntington's Weaknesses

- **Ill-considered new construction (24%)**
- **Voter/citizen apathy (21%)**
- **Not enough pro-active steps for small business (12%)**
- **Lack of youth recreational opportunities (7%)**
- **Lack of youth job opportunities (5%)**
- **Lack of clear river vistas (5%)**
- **Lack of mass transit (5%)**
- **Drug deals (5%)**
- **Lack of privately owned elder housing**
- **Lack of enforcement of some bylaws, including noise**
- **Lack of volunteers**
- **Lack of access (such as to dam)**
- **No cable TV in many areas of town**
- **Lack of speed enforcement, especially on highways**
- **Trash, parking and other problems from out-of-towners**
- Traffic calming and on-street parking on Route 20 difficult because it is state highway
- Downtown does not have a critical mass of retail and related services to attract shoppers
- Lack of swimming for locals
- Lack of smoke-free commercial establishments
- Volunteer governance limits convenience (limited hours)
- Lack of parking downtown, or lack of public awareness of where + is.
- Insufficient downtown identity, from signage or other means
- Insufficient shoulders on County road
- Downtown draws youths to "hang-out," but otherwise not a strong draw
- Few strong commercial anchors in Huntington (e.g. Country Store or former Rapids Restaurant)
- No easy transportation to regional services
- No wide internet bandwidth (DSL, T1 or T3) available
- Very few local jobs
- Limited and narrow tax base (93% residential) with high property taxes
- Lack of pride in or loyalty to the community and local businesses
- Local businesses don't respond to customer needs or expanding customer base
- School budget is budget buster
- Lack of consensus about preserving additional open space
- New and traditional land uses often seen as nuisances (e.g. gravel pits, cell towers)

- Limited state support for regional schools transportation costs
- Some limited areas of slums and blight

Workshop Results: Huntington's Opportunities

- **Murrayfield School could be adaptively reused, as a new town hall or community center (25%)**
- **Camping facilities could be developed (13%)**
- **Control growth to maintain quality of life and local control (13%)**
- **Riverfront park/greenway, possibly with bike path, near downtown (13%)**
- **Use existing resources better, especially by preserving and revitalizing Downtown (8%)**
- **Business growth based on recreational opportunities (8%)**
- **Bed & Breakfast could serve local and tourist needs (8%)**
- **Improve downtown's river focus to revitalize downtown, including a possible footbridge (8%)**
- **Expanding Gateway Regional's role as a community focal point, including community events, community ice skating and adult education (8%)**
- **Performance/community events at town common, Murrayfield School or other public spaces**
- Linkage from downtown to the river
- Recreationally-based tourism (e.g., the Country Store, a new bed & breakfast, outfitters, a reopened Rapids Restaurant)
- Public restrooms needed
- Expansion of current local businesses
- Maintain Blandford Road all the way to Blandford
- More downtown parking possible
- Broadband/internet access could be improved
- Community identity can be enhanced based on open space and recreation
- Swimming for locals only
- Cooperative artist, office and business space
- Public relations campaign to increase tourism
- Public access cable TV
- Bylaws and other information on town web site
- Quality of life
- Twin town relationship with small town in England
- Small new media/software companies might be attracted to town
- Regular Knightville Dam water releases for white water enthusiasts (but wildlife issues)
- Opportunities for improved parking, or signage to parking, downtown
- Create better sense of place, especially downtown, through signage
- PVPC Technical Assistance—e.g. to recommend downtown signage
- Provide traffic calming on Route 20
- Many community objectives may be eligible for state and federal grants
- Telephone switching center downtown (for future DSL services)
- Public water system serving downtown (175 families)
- Preservation and revitalization of downtown

Workshop Results: Huntington's Challenges

- **Over-development and sprawl (48%)**
- **Not prepared for increased diversity (13%)**
- **Volatility of municipal budget (11%)**
- **Erosion of local control (8%)**
- **Over-regulation (5%)**
- **Cell towers (5%)**
- **Big box retail development forcing out local businesses**
- **Lack of diverse tax base to compensate for increased residential growth**

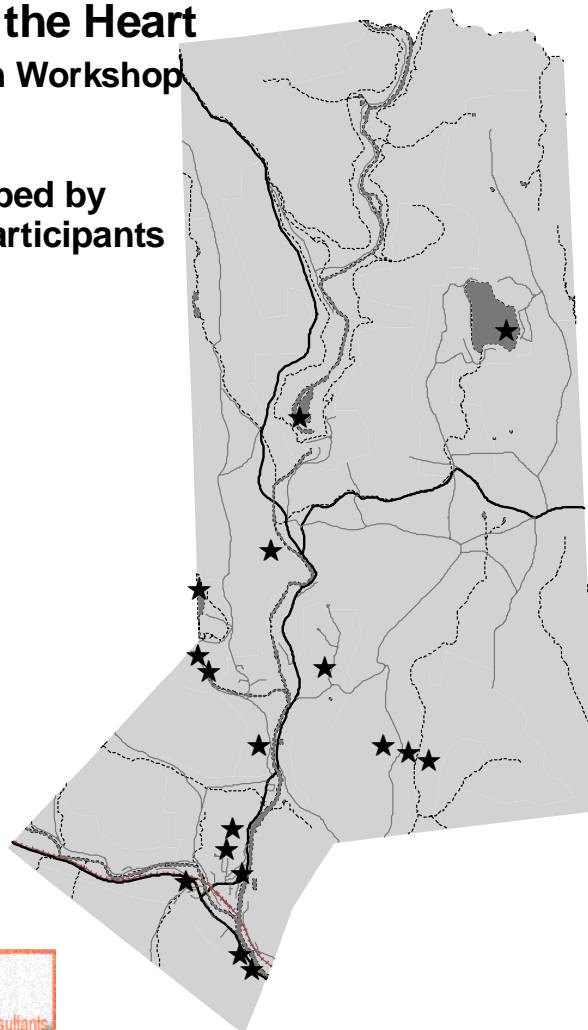
- **Loss of historic structures and features**
- **Changing character and identity of town**
- Some local businesses are vulnerable to out-of-town competition with perceived better service, greater selection, and lower prices
- State local aid (general and school) cuts could be devastating
- Loss of property rights, especially along the river
- Stress of local town services
- Demographic changes that increase school enrollment (currently stable or slightly decreasing)
- Concern about pressure for affordable housing
- Empty storefronts downtown

Workshop Results: Special Places or “Places of the Heart”

Participants identified those areas that they considered special places, or “Places of the Heart.”

★Places of the Heart
2002 Vision Workshop

**As Described by
Workshop Participants**



Workshop Results: Open Space and Resource Protection

Resources for open space preservation

1. **More open space preservation**
2. **General fund/property tax revenue considered unavailable**
3. **Use minimal amount of town funds to leverage outside funds (e.g. state self-help)**
4. **Encourage donations of open space and especially conservation restrictions**
5. **Encourage donations of funds to support open space preservation**
6. **Use zoning to preserve open space**
7. **Consider Community Preservation Act**
8. Create an open space fund
9. Use zoning to restrict open space without harming tax base
10. Focus on green belts and recreation areas (which might add value to surrounding parcels)
11. Look at trade-offs to encourage eco-tourism (short term tax base loss for long term revenue)
12. Target specific places to build community consensus (and don't try to purchase everything)
13. Concern about loss of public access to previously available areas will get people concerned.
14. Always seek the least expensive mechanism to preserve land.
15. Concern about town accepting donations of land and selling it at a later date.
16. Concern about development making it more expensive to purchase open space later (by raising property values)

What resources need to be better protected?

- **Ridge top development restrictions balanced at “appropriate” level of restrictions**
- **Areas becoming available for development with easier septic system percolation requirements**
- **Use negotiations and non-threatening language for reasonable ridge-top development by-laws**
- Education important to increase awareness of ridge top development's impact on views
- Need to preserve quality of life
- Trails
- Greenbelts along rivers and highways
- Roadside views without imposing signs
- Downtown park land
- Downtown historic features
- Historic features throughout town, including historic houses
- Cultural resources, including North Hall
- Prevent noise pollution and light pollution
- Key tracts of land for eco-tourism
- Unfragmented areas should be protected from development (focus development in developed areas).
- Land prioritized in open space plan for open space preservation.

Workshop Results: Housing

Accessory apartments

- **Should be allowed for family members (not money making). Allows children and elderly parents to remain in town!**
- **Should be allowed ONLY for family members.**
- **Should also be allowed as rentals by special permit with careful restrictions. Brings in income for property owners and fills social need, especially for the elderly.**
- Accessory apartment should be attractive and make homes look like single family
- Discourage absentee landlords
- Consider traffic impacts
- Use special permits to control

Housing needs and village center housing needs

- **Fix up and rehabilitate run-down housing units**
- **Rehabilitate multi-family housing downtown**
- **Need more housing, especially affordable units**

- Allow more multifamily downtown
- Improve management and tenant selection of downtown housing
- Preserve existing village center housing
- Maintain consistent setback line in downtown
- Don't allow multifamily to be tradeoff at expense of open space
- More downtown parking for rental housing units
- Downtown housing and housing in areas with walkable neighborhoods
- There are not any unmet needs. Housing is available.
- Rental housing is available to meet needs.
- Housing is generally getting more expensive, but not more so than everywhere else.

Where should housing be more limited?

- **Preserve ridge tops (see open space and resource protection section)**
- **Route 112 corridor, north of Brookside Glen—Route 112 critical to rural character**
- Goss Hill, Norwich Pond, Harlow Clark Road, and Wooden dinosaur parcel on Country Road
- Greenbelts to mark town/village lines, especially towards Northampton

What should housing look like?

- **Respect the natural landscape**
- Be appropriate to its immediate neighborhood
- Don't want design control from residential housing
- Well maintained and in good condition (downtown housing needs to be better)
- Discourage large subdivisions
- Appropriate setbacks and standards for appropriate areas of town
- Identify what town does NOT want in design town-wide (no pink, stucco, & glass houses)
- No substandard housing (new or existing)
- Higher standards for housing but don't create an exclusive community

What should new roads (subdivisions) look like?

- Fit in with character of the community, but: be safe and accessible (for fire, utilities etc)
- Underground power and utilities
- Quality new construction
- Change current rules which create ugly subdivision roads. 15% slopes in subdivisions are too steep
- Consider traprock instead of dirt
- Give more leeway to self-contained neighborhoods
- Low cost maintenance

Workshop Results: Economic Development

Home occupations, live/work space, cottage industries

- **Should be expanded and encouraged!**
- **Need restrictions to preserve neighborhoods and historic preservation**
- **Must be low visibility only (visual and sound), not car repair etc.**
- Only by special permit
- Homeowner only. Outside employees not acceptable or only with detailed review and restrictions

Historic downtown

- **More retail, if possible**
- **Create more accessible parking—although its generally easy to find**
- **Maintain historic character, consider design standards**
- Downtown parks and green space—make them an attractive amenity
- Fill empty storefronts before new buildings built
- Focus on encouraging businesses to reach a critical mass

- Encourage conversion of downtown housing into businesses
- More downtown volunteer and community workdays, better sense of village ownership
- Downtown housing good IF well maintained
- More cultural activities
- Could be a quaint Shelburne Falls type downtown
- Small independent businesses

What should the intersection of Route 112 at Route 20 be?

- **High-traffic retail, probably franchise (especially pharmacy)**
- **Shouldn't look like a franchise. Character of is most important. Design restrictions needed**
- Less of a dividing line in the community
- No stoplights
- Street scale lighting, dark roads are part of the community
- Area may change with bridge construction (temporary) and when bridge reopens (permanent)

What should the intersection of Route 112 at Route 66 intersection be?

- **Limited development, not a village center.**
- Currently is an eyesore. We must identify what we don't want.
- Reopen the Rapids Restaurant
- Develop as an outfitters outlet (canoes/sports equipment)
- Lots of available land, industrial park IF hidden and at limited scale

What should the section of Route 112 north of Robert Cross Bridge be?

- **Locally owned businesses immediately north of bridge**
- **Residential with mixed commercial up to Brookside Glen** (Country Store as a model--especially Bed and Breakfast, eco-tourism friendly, antique shops in barns etc).
- Preserve area from Brookside Glen north.

Town wide issues

- Signage to encourage town businesses and services
- Ecotourism and related access and preservation to key tracts of land.

Related Planning: Huntington Character Defining Qualities and Characteristics

Huntington's Community Development Plan Liaison identified Huntington's unique qualities and characteristics:

Huntington is a rural and beautiful community within commuting range of most of the employment centers of Hampshire and Hampden Counties. The Westfield River and its valley define the center of Huntington, and its tributaries and hills frame the town. Opportunities for white water and flat water canoeing, swimming, fishing, hiking, picnicking, hunting, skiing, and snowmobiling abound, motivating residents and visitors alike to explore Huntington. Huntington is a community rich in natural beauty and outdoor recreation, whether it is experienced through dramatic white water canoeing or snowtraveling, or simply by driving down a country lane.

While maintaining its rural New England character and small town ambiance, Huntington's quaint downtown business infrastructure is emerging as the Southern Hilltown's commercial and cultural center. Huntington's facilities draw visitors and retain residents. They include a bank, insurance company, newspaper, regional high school, and retail, health, cultural, and religious activities, as well as ample recreational opportunities.

Huntington from a Regional and Local Perspective

1. "Gateway to the Berkshires": Huntington is in the foothills between the Berkshires (home of Tanglewood) and the Connecticut River Valley, where Northampton and Springfield are located.

2. Confluence of the three branches of the Westfield River: Swimming, fishing, drinking water supply, and proposed federal Wild & Scenic Designation.
3. Center for Natural Resources and Open Space. Huntington has two wildlife management areas (Hiram H. Fox Wildlife Management Area and Knightville Dam Recreation Area), Littleville and Norwich Lakes, three branches of the Westfield River, numerous streams, Gardner State Park with swimming and fishing, and Huntington State Forest.
4. Central Traffic Corridor into the hill towns: Route 20, Route 112, Route 66, and Montgomery Road, all converge to feed traffic from Interstate 91 and the Mass Pike to the region.
5. A key section of the Jacobs Ladder Trail Scenic Byway: A scenic journey to the cultural centers of the region and a historic alternative to the Massachusetts Turnpike.
6. Center for Commerce for the Region: The largest downtown business district in the southern hill towns foothills region, but with a quaint New England character. Huntington has the only area bank, an insurance company, a regional newspaper, restaurants, liquor stores, dance studio, hair dressers, antiques, a regional farmers supply store, a grocery store, a motorized recreational vehicle outlet, a small commerce center with an ice cream shop, a plant store, and a regionally popular country store.
7. A Center for Cultural Events: North Hall and Stanton Hall for public meetings, performances, dances, and potluck suppers, and the Huntington Library, host to many cultural events.
8. A Regional Center for Education: Huntington has the Gateway Regional High School and Elementary School, with recreational fields, and sports and community events and fireworks.
9. A population center for the southern Massachusetts hill towns: Huntington is the largest population center in this foothill region.
10. A Center for Social Services: Hampshire Community Action Commission's Southern Hilltown Social Service Center, The Huntington Health Center, and the Free Store.
11. Huntington Center as a Village: Huntington center is a village on the Westfield River, with several scenic riverside trails and picnic areas. Very old (geologically) exposed bedrock. Regional High School and Elementary School, former Murrayfield School, senior housing (Hamblin Court), Health Center and Library.
12. A community of neighborhoods, including Norwich Hill: Residential homes with rural landscaping.

Related Planning: Long-Range Library Plan

The Huntington Public Library's *Planning for Results, Long Range Plan, 2001-2006*, (March, 2001) primarily focuses on Huntington's physical and programmatic library needs. The plan, however, also identifies the following community vision for Huntington:

The Town of Huntington will provide a safe and healthy environment for all its residents. All residents will have the opportunity to enjoy and participate in educational and recreational activities. Some of these activities are musical groups, art classes, drama workshops, swimming, canoeing, skiing and environmental workshops which would help people to become more aware of the world around them and how their actions impact all life, both environmentally and socially. Places will be provided for residents to gather socially and to take advantage of recreational and educational activities.

All residents will have affordable housing and medical care to be able to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Huntington will provide all the necessary public works and safety ... so the residents can access the town's resources safely.

Business will be able to afford to locate in town and people will be able to work out of their homes. Businesses will also have a safe and productive place to operate. Light industry will also be encouraged to locate in Huntington, in order to broaden the tax base, so everyone can afford to live in Huntington.

The Town will provide good schools so students will receive all the skills necessary to graduate high school at grade level and be able to obtain employment or continue their formal education